



TOWN OF NATICK

Winter 2008-2009

Newsletter

*Issued by Martha White,
Town Administrator*

Natick Board of Selectmen

John Ciccariello, Chair
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Holiday Greetings

The Board of Selectmen and I extend our best wishes for a happy and safe holiday season. This season seems to highlight difficult circumstances endured by many area families, conditions that have been exacerbated by national and local economic conditions. For those in a position to help your Natick neighbors there are many opportunities, including:

- Toys for Tots – bins are located in Town Hall and at the Police Station
- Natick Service Council Food Pantry – Donations may be dropped off at the Pantry's 39 East Central Street location on Mondays from 9:30 to noon, or at collection bins at Stop & Shop, Roche Bros. and the Morse Institute Library
- Energy Assistance Fund, a new initiative I have launched in conjunction with the Human Services Director to assist needy families with fuel costs. Donations may be made at any area branch of Citizens Bank
- Elderly and Disabled Taxation Fund – These funds are a critical form of assistance to elderly and disabled taxpayers who are having difficulty meeting their tax obligations. Donations may be made payable to the *Town of Natick Elderly and Disabled Taxation Fund* and sent to the attention of the Tax Collector, 13 East Central Street.

Budget Update

Economic hard times are also falling on Massachusetts communities – and communities nationwide – including Natick. The Finance

Director's recent revenue report to the Board of Selectmen outlines some significant areas of concern, including substantially lower than projected Local Receipts from Motor Vehicle Excise taxes, Investment Income and Building Permits. Lower receipts in these categories affect the current (FY 2009) fiscal year as well as next year. There is also significant concern regarding Local Aid that the community receives from the state. The Speaker of the House of Representatives has advised communities to brace for local aid reductions of 5-10% in FY 2010 (which begins July 1, 2009). Communities are also concerned that the state may not be able to fulfill its local aid commitment in the current fiscal year.

Our projections for FY 2010 suggest a budget deficit of up to \$5.5 million. This projection utilizes a 10% reduction in Local Aid and applies normal increases in the General Government and School budgets (3% and 5% respectively). While we hope that the revenue outlook will brighten, clearly cutbacks will be necessary in the operating budgets. The School Superintendent and I are preparing "level service" budgets – reflecting the projected cost to fund existing services. Utilizing Level Service budgets as a starting point will facilitate a full and public discussion as to the extent of service reductions or eliminations.

Over the coming weeks leading up to the Spring Annual Town Meeting on April 14, 2009, the School Superintendent and I, along with the Board of Selectmen, School Committee and Finance Committee will be working hard to bring the budget into balance while minimizing, to the extent possible, impacts on services.

In the meantime we are taking steps to control expenses including asking employees to voluntarily reduce their work schedule, carefully evaluating all personnel vacancies that arise and not filling them when possible and, regrettably, deferring action on capital improvements and equipment.

Recent Community Events

We have held a number of successful events recently. On November 20 the **Town Hall Open House** was held to provide residents an opportunity to meet many of the town employees as well as conduct business during the evening hours. This event coincided with the artists' reception for Art in the Hall, a display of original work by local artists. The next artists' reception is scheduled for February 9 from 6-7 p.m. to coincide with the installation of new artwork throughout Town Hall.

Natick continued its observance of the attack on **Pearl Harbor** with a ceremony on the December 7th, the 67th anniversary, attended by Natick veterans of WWII and their families and many others. Major Joseph E. Fagan from the Natick Soldier Systems Center addressed the gathering, as did residents and WWII vets Arthur Fishstine and Stanley Cohen, along with several other representatives. Thanks to John MacGillivray and Sheila Young, our Veterans' Agent and assistant, as well as the members of the Veterans Council for organizing this tribute.

The December 7 tree lighting ceremony, part of **Holiday on the Common**, was enjoyed by hundreds of residents of all ages. Thanks to the Recreation and Parks Department, Natick Center Associates, Middlesex Savings Bank, Staples, NHS Boosters, Children First and Natick Pegasus for supporting this popular Natick tradition.

Energy Expo

The Human Services Director and I are organizing an Energy Expo, to be held on Thursday January 15th from 4 to 7 p.m. at the Kennedy Senior Center, 117 East Central Street. Various vendors, municipal departments, utility companies and social service agencies to provide information as to how to save money on utility bills, weatherization improvements, fuel assistance programs, winter safety and more. The event is free and open to all Natick residents.

Affordable Housing Opportunities

A number of affordable housing units remain available throughout the town for income-eligible individuals and families. To qualify, the maximum income for a 1 person household is \$46,300; for a 4 person household the maximum is \$66,150.

The inventory includes units available for sale as well as rental units. Information regarding affordable housing opportunities, income limits and more is available on the Town's website at www.natickma.gov; keep checking back for updates if you are interested. Information and application packages may be picked up at the Selectmen's Office in Town Hall.

Natick's affordable housing successes were recently highlighted in a visit by Chicago-area municipal officials. The Citizens' Housing and Planning Association (CHAPA) – a non-profit affordable housing advocacy organization – organized the visit to Natick and other Massachusetts communities to showcase creative affordable housing initiatives. Many thanks to Joe Merkel, Natick's Housing Planner, for organizing our comprehensive presentation to our visitors.

Upcoming Town Election

We encourage Natick residents to become involved in your town government. The last opportunity to submit nomination papers for town-wide elected office is Tuesday, January 13th at 5:00 p.m. Nomination papers are available at the Office of the Town Clerk.

The last opportunity for Incumbent Town Meeting members to file with the Town Clerk is 5:00 p.m. on January 20; new candidates for Town Meeting have until 5:00 on February 10 to file their nomination papers.

As noted earlier, the Spring Annual Town Meeting begins on April 14, 2009 at 7:30 p.m. at the Wilson Middle School. Articles for Town Meeting's consideration may be submitted up until 5:00 p.m. on February 13 to the Office of the Board of Selectmen.

Again, best wishes to all for a safe and happy holiday season!