

NEWSLETTER

TOWN OF LEVERETT <http://townhall.Leverett.ma.us> FEBRUARY 2013

Annual Town Meeting, Saturday, 27 April 2013, Leverett School, 9:00 a.m.

**Running for Office?*

Elected officials with expiring terms who are running again as well as new candidates for office are asked to submit substantive statements to the *Newsletter* editor at townclerk@leverett.ma.us or leave in Town Clerk box at Town Hall, by **1 March 2013**. Offices up for election are:

Assessors: One three-year term

Board of Health: Two three-year terms

Library Trustees: Two three-year terms

Constable: One three-year term

Finance Committee: One three-year term

Assistant Moderator: One one-year term

Planning Board: One five-year term

School Committee: One three-year term

Select Board: One three-year term

Tree Warden: One one-year term

Town Clerk: One three-year term

***If you are interested in running for office (and you are) please take a minute to read the short synopsis of each "job." You may find something that suits you.**

Assessors: Includes three elected Assessors and one appointed half-time Administrative Assessor. The primary responsibility is to assure that property assessments are established and maintained in a fair and equitable manner in accordance with state mandates, and to process warrants for real estate, personal property, forestry, and vehicle excise taxes. The office of the *Assessors is the only elected position in town that has state-mandated qualifications that must be achieved within the first term of office.* Qualified individual can handle razzing about the high taxes in Leverett. **Meetings:** approximately twice per month.

Assistant Moderator: Performs the duties of the Moderator (running town meeting) in his/her absence.

Board of Health: Primary duties relate to the protection of public health, promotion of sanitary living conditions, control of disease, and protection of the environment. The Board of Health oversees soil evaluation and perc tests and approves disposal systems (for new construction, additions, and repairs or replacements of

existing systems), and applies well regulations. **Meetings:** two or more times per month.

Constable: Responsible for posting warrants for town meetings and elections. Constable is present during elections to ensure safety of polling place and ensure that the donut plate is out and coffee pot full.

Finance Committee: Oversees town spending. Works with Select Board prior to town meeting on budget issues; run the annual budget hearing; approves (or not) expenditures from the reserve account. **Meetings:** Several per year, more during the months of January-March when the next fiscal year budget is being drafted.

Library Trustees: Responsible for overseeing the library and establishing policies and plans to provide services to the community, determine final budget, and conduct public relations. The trustees value individuals who are team players, have a sense of humor, and are avid readers. **Meetings:** once per month (except in July and August).

Planning Board: Write zoning and subdivision bylaws. Members meet with individuals seeking to build or modify homes or divide land, and help decipher bylaws for the confused. The board is in the process of modifying the subdivision regulations as they relate to developments of 6 or fewer homes and make amendments to the conventional subdivision regulations. **Meetings:** once a month (except in summer).

Select Board: Official governing body of the town charged with setting polices and regulations which are not within the realm of town meeting. Members make appointments to ad hoc boards, committees, and commissions; work directly with police, fire, and highway departments; authorize spending, calls town meetings; set the warrant for Annual Town Meeting, develop town budget in cooperation with Finance Committee. ETC, ETC, ETC. **Meetings:** Second, fourth (and fifth if there is one) Tuesdays of the month.

NOTES FROM AROUND TOWN

- **Dogs:** 2013 dog licenses are in. All dogs must pass the exam and be licensed by March 31, 2013.
- **Candidate's statements:** Candidates for elected office **must submit a statement of intent to the Newsletter by 1 March 2013.**
- **Census forms** are turquoise this year. Please return them by mail or drop off at the school or town hall (yes, even if I know you and know you still live here).
- **2013 Motor Vehicle Excise bills are due on Feb. 18. Demand fee is \$10 plus interest @ 12%. Please pay your bill on time to avoid late fees.**
- Save the date!! The **Library's 10th birthday parties** will be held on June 1 and 2. Events for the whole family!

NEXT NEWSLETTER DEADLINES:

**1 March (candidate statements only), 1 April,
1 June 2013**

Send news items, candidates' statements, bouquets of freesia and other beautifully-scented flowers to Lisa Stratford, P.O. Box 300, Leverett, MA 01054 or e-mail to wstratford@aol.com Call 548-9150 for information, guidelines, and gluten-free recipes.

SELECT BOARD

Budget time is upon us once again. The Select Board and Finance Committee have begun a series of **joint budget hearings** for each Town department, including the school. The culmination of the series is an overall budget presentation and hearing prior to Town Meeting. We are mindful of all aspects of the budget, not only the needs and requests of departments, but also the ability of residents to afford proposed costs of operating the Town.

The Board has created a **Budget Review Committee** to examine the Town budget from a perspective outside the regular process. Doug DaRif, Stewart Warner, and Terry Allen have agreed work in this capacity. We asked them to begin with the Elementary School budget, since this is the single biggest item in the Town budget, overshadowing all other departments. We expect the review process to take a year.

In an effort to **improve the maintenance of all Town buildings** in the most efficient manner, the Board is developing a proposal to **consolidate Town facilities management** under a part-time position, with oversight of all buildings. This would allow us to assure the hiring of someone certified to operate the municipal water supply and septic systems that serve the School, Safety Complex, and Library, and the various operating systems in Town buildings (including geothermal in the Library). Our research shows that other towns in the Commonwealth have greatly benefitted from such consolidation.

We are in an ongoing discussion of **unfunded mandates** with the State Auditor's Division of Local Mandates (DLM), in an effort to identify any and all

budget items that are a consequence of state regulation that may be determined to be "unfunded" and therefore not binding. Julie Shively met with DLM officials during a recent meeting of the Massachusetts Municipal Association.

In other business:

* A complaint about a **barking dog** in a farm setting was referred to the **Agriculture Committee** for a possible resolution. If that doesn't happen, we will convene a hearing as required by state law.

* Plans and negotiations for a **photovoltaic installation** at the Public Safety complex are continuing, with the help of a consultant and the Energy Committee, as well as Highway Superintendent Will Stratford and facilities advisor John Kuczek. We are also looking at a potential solar project at the former landfill.

* A **Fire Department Study Committee** is looking at a variety of aspects of the Department operation, planning for the retirement of three senior officers. As part of this study, the Committee will meet with Sunderland officials to discuss their suggestion for possible shared operations. A common concern of all departments in the region is the maintenance of a roster of **Call Firefighters**. A short **video** about these two departments is on **YouTube**, linked from the Town's own website. The Study Committee includes Judy Weinthalder (Chair), Peter Reich (Secretary), Dean Alfange, Barbara Tiner, Stewart Olson (Deputy Chief), and Steve Fleiner (Firefighter). The Committee will report in September. We are just past the vernal cross-quarter day (aka imbolc, candlemas, groundhog day). By the time the Annual Town Meeting convenes (27 April), we will be a month past the vernal equinox. **Tempus fugit**. (A phrase coined by Virgil, in a sentence that says, "time flees irretrievably, while we wander around, prisoners of our love of detail.") Whether we love it or not, the details make such a difference.

Peter d'Errico, for the SelectBoard

Regional School District Planning Board

The Regional School District Planning Board is presented a report to our communities on Saturday February 2 at the Amherst Regional Middle School Auditorium. Consultants Mark Abrahams and Malcolm Reid shared their financial and educational analysis of the Amherst, Leverett, Pelham, and Shutesbury elementary schools. This was an excellent chance to understand the information that the Regional School District Planning Board is gathering to decide whether to recommend that residents in each town vote to regionalize our elementary schools.

If you missed this meeting, you can access the video of the event at www.amherstmedia.org after 2/6/2013.

Questions and answers from the meeting will be posted on www.RegionalSchoolPlanning.com

Leverett Town Forum Thursday February 28, 2013

6:30 pm Leverett Elementary School

The report from the consultants will be followed by a Leverett Town Forum on Thursday February 28th at 6:30 pm in the Leverett Town Hall. Regional School District Planning Board members representing Leverett: Kip Fonsh (School Committee), Julie Shively (Select Board), and Ann Delano (Finance Committee) will present information on the Board's work, answer questions, and gather feedback from the community.

For more information please visit the website:

www.RegionalSchoolPlanning.com

COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE

The Community Preservation Committee has funds available for open space preservation, affordable housing, historic preservation, or recreation. We have received an application from Leverett Elementary School for \$17,000.00 to improve the Preschool Playground by acquiring a climbing structure to replace the wooden structure that had to be dismantled due to age, replacing the decaying split rail fence that encloses the playground, and purchasing a now-required cover for the sandbox. A copy of the complete text and backup materials for this proposal is available at Town Hall. If the project is recommended to Town Meeting it will be voted on at the Annual Town Meeting in April.

We will also have an updated Draft Report and Plan for 2013 available at Town Hall after our February 6 meeting. Please stop by and take a look, and plan to attend our public hearing at 7:30 on Wednesday, March 6, 2013.

Laurel S. Kahn, Community Preservation Committee

Library Happenings

www.leverettlibrary.org

Library Hours

*Tuesday 3-8 *Wednesday 10-3 (story hour at 10:30)
*Thursday 3-8 *Saturday 10-3 *Sunday 12-5 (closed
Sundays Memorial Day weekend to Labor Day)

The Board of Trustees of the Leverett Library is pleased to announce the hiring of Ashley Blais as the new Library Director. Ashley holds an MLS degree from Simmons College and has valuable expertise with recent library technology as well as emerging technologies, cataloging, and grant writing. Her most recent work experience was at the Jones Library. Her past experience also involved journalism and landscaping, both talents applicable to our library. She is an avid reader of adult, young adult, and children's literature and welcomes the role of reader advisor. She looks forward

to developing programs and getting to know the patrons of the Leverett Library.

Ashley grew up in both the American South and New Zealand, but has lived in New England for many years, and Western Massachusetts for nine. Her husband, Jake, is an Art Director at Lego in Enfield, CT. They have two children; Alexander, 10, in 5th grade, and Juliette, 6, in 1st grade. The children attend The Hartsbrook School and are acquainted with several children from Leverett. Their huge, three-year-old golden retriever, Boudreaux, is very good at getting Ashley out jogging, even on the coldest days. The whole family is looking forward to getting to know the Leverett community.

Ashley began her position on January 28th. Join us in giving her a warm welcome when you visit the library. A reception for Ashley will be held in the Leverett Library Community Room on Sunday, Feb. 10th from 3:30-4:30.

Georgie Schmidt, Library Trustee

Friends of Leverett Library News

The winter months are a great time to see some of our wonderful local museums. Each year the Friends of the Library purchase passes to lend to patrons. The following passes are available for you to borrow:

Historic Deerfield (two passes available—each admits 4 people at no charge)

Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art (pass admits up to 2 adults and 4 children at no charge)

Smith College Art Museum (pass admits up to 8 people at no charge)

Clarke Art Museum in Williamstown (admission is free during the school year; during summer months the pass admits 2 adults at no charge)

Holyoke Children's Museum (pass admits up to 6 at half price; children under 12 are free)

Springfield Museums (pass admits up to 4 people for half price) because the Springfield Museum pass is not borrowed very often, we are reconsidering purchasing this pass in 2014. If there is demand for it, we will continue to purchase it.

You can borrow a pass for 2 days. Call the library for availability and/or to reserve a pass.

The library will be 10 years old this spring! We are planning some anniversary programs, and hope that membership in the Friends of Leverett Library will reach an all time high this year.

D'Ann Kelty

Keep your **aluminum flip tabs** from can lids coming for Les Allen. Drop your lids off at the Town Hall or Transfer Station. Money collected from the aluminum goes to the Shriner's Hospital.

From the Collector's Office:

2013 Motor Vehicle Excise Bills are due by 5pm Monday, February 18th. Remember, it is the responsibility of the taxpayer to pay on time, regardless of when or if a bill is received. If you own a car and did not get an excise bill, call the collector's office. If you move, be sure to notify the registry of your new address so your bill can be delivered promptly. **PLEASE DO NOT IGNORE AN EXCISE BILL;** if you don't think you owe it, contact the Assessors' office 548-4945. Late payment can cost an additional \$71 in fees plus interest, and the bill must be paid in full before you can renew your license or registration.

Market value is NOT considered for the purpose of assessing motor vehicle excise tax. It is based on a five-year decreasing percentage (90%, 60%, 40%, 25%, 10%) of the *manufacturer's list price in the year of manufacture* and billed at a statewide rate of \$25 per \$1,000 of valuation. It is assessed for a *calendar year*; so if you don't own the vehicle for the entire year, file an application for abatement with the Assessors' Office. The excise will be adjusted accordingly or, if already paid, a refund issued. If abatement is not granted by the due date, pay the bill in full and, if applicable, a refund will be processed.

Pay online at the link on the Town's homepage leverett.ma.us. (fees apply). You can also sign up for direct pay, and your account will *automatically* be debited on the due date. If paying by check, please write bill# in memo section. Mail payment to Collector, PO Box 300, or drop off at the Town Hall. If office is closed, please do not interrupt other Town Hall staff with questions regarding your tax; you can leave your check (or question) in the Collector's mailbox. Office is generally open M, Tu, Th, Sat (2:30-9:30pm) *hours may vary*; 413-548-9666. treasurercollector@leverett.ma.us.

Thank you for your prompt payment!

From the Real Estate Tax Relief Committee:

Thanks to all of you who continue to contribute to the **Real Estate Tax Relief Fund** to help reduce the real estate tax bills for low-income residents. We encourage everyone to consider making a donation of \$1.00 or more when paying your next Excise and/or Real Estate Tax. You can simply add the amount to your payment or send a separate tax-deductible contribution anytime during the year to: Tax Relief Committee c/o Treasurer's Office, PO Box 300, Leverett MA. You can also request that your payment be applied to a specific individual's bill. If you are 60 or older and having a difficult time making ends meet, call 548-9666 to request an application for tax relief.

Donations can also be made to the **Kimball Trust Fund** which provides funds to purchase clothing for children of low-income families and to the **Scholarship Fund** for Leverett students continuing their education at the college level. We thank you for your support.

COUNCIL ON AGING NEWS

You are Invited: Our COA meetings are always open to the public, but we would like to invite you specifically to our next meeting downstairs at Town Hall on **Thursday, February 28 at 6:00**. We would like you there so that more people are aware of what the COA is about and to help grow a network of people who are thinking about caring, being and becoming elderly in Leverett, even without becoming an official member of the COA.

Please check out two new resources for Leverett seniors, caregivers, family members, etc. Over the years, I have been amassing lots of resource information for seniors. Instead of keeping it safe and rarely used in my own files, I have taken brochures, information, etc. and put it all into a **Senior Resource Book**, which can be found at the Leverett Library in the senior corner. This book cannot leave the library, but I hope you'll sit and find lots of interesting info in it.

I have also created a webpage of "**Senior Links**" which I have posted at leverettlistings.net. As is my style for Leverett events listings, a brief blurb and a link are available for each resource. Please take the time to do some surfing – I would have loved something like this when I started thinking about aging in Leverett. At the end of the list are some longer documents about communities and aging.

We would love to have you enjoy lunch at the meal-site, Fridays at noon (call 367-2694 for more info) or stretch peacefully at Take-It-Easy Yoga (which is filling up to max capacity, slowly but surely) on Wednesdays at 10:00. Both activities happen downstairs at Town Hall.

I really hope to see you on the 28th.

Submitted by Tanya Cushman, Chair (soon to retire)
coa@leverett.ma.us 548-1022x5

TOWN STREET LIST/CENSUS

Annual street list/census forms were sent to each household in town in mid-January (they are turquoise). In order to stay on our voting list, make accurate predictions of our school population, and to keep reliable records for our emergency responders, it is important that these forms be returned quickly. Please note that the political party designation next to a name on this form merely indicates that you are registered, and in what party. This is not an official voter registration form, so no additions, deletions or changes will be made to the voting list based on the street list form. If you want to change parties or register to vote, please do so in the Town Clerk's office, or by mail (forms available at Town Hall).

Personal Property Tax

The Personal Property tax is a relict of the colonial era, when the number of goats, swine and neat cattle (even the language is ancient) owned was a valid measure of a person's wealth. Today it is often a source of confusion and misunderstanding. However, the law is still on the books, and the Assessors are required to collect property data and bill for qualified property.

Determining what property is subject to the personal property tax can be confusing. The Massachusetts Department of Revenue defines Personal Property as "...goods, material objects and other things capable of ownership, which are not so firmly attached to, or specially designed for, real estate as to become part of the real estate ..."

However, there are numerous exemptions to the tax. The most significant are:

- Household furnishings and effects at the person's domicile;
- Wearing apparel;
- Motor vehicles, trailers and boats subject to the Excise Tax;
- Farming utensils (hand tools and relatively simple, inexpensive farm equipment);
- Tools of trade of a mechanic (also includes instruments of a plumber, carpenter, or other tradesman).

So what's left? **Typical items Leverett taxpayers need to report are:**

- Merchandise and stock in trade; goods and wares for sale, whether in a store or any other place for sale, on consignment, or in storage or a warehouse;
- Business and professional office furnishings, fixtures and equipment; computers and other office equipment if used in a business;
- Machinery, equipment and tools not exempted above; includes stationary tools such as table saws, etc, heavy machinery, farm machinery and restaurant equipment;
- Medical and dental office equipment; professional libraries;
- Animals (Spot and Fluffy appear to be exempt, while Black Beauty, Bossy, Babe and just about any other creature that might reside in a barn, coop, pen or paddock are taxable); Noah would be in big trouble here;
- Unregistered motor vehicles and trailers (includes tractors, snowmobiles, golf carts and all other kinds and types of unregistered vehicles);
- Household furnishings not situated in the owner's primary residence, i.e. furnishings of summer/second homes. (Please file **Form 2HF**).

Personal property subject to taxation must be reported to the assessors on **State Tax Form 2**, known as the **Form of List**. Forms are mailed to taxpayers who have been subject to the tax in past years, or we believe might have taxable property. Any taxpayer who believes that they are subject to the tax and does not receive a Form 1 should contact the Assessor's office for a copy.

Steve Schmidt, Administrative Assessor
Don Robinson, Cat Ford, Jim Hicks, Board of Assessors

Broadband Committee Report

For the past couple of months the Broadband Committee has been focused on the preparation of the "Invitation For Bid" (IFB) that will allow us to select a firm to build our network. That bid package was released on January 16; the deadline for responses is February 22. So far, 20 different companies have received the bid package. This process is governed by Massachusetts General Laws (MGL) Chapter 30, Section 39M and as such, the town is required to select the lowest qualified bidder. We can define some of the attributes that will be used to define "qualified bidder"; among them is experience in connecting fiber to the home in structures in excess of 100 years old. Shortly after we've selected the builder of our network, we will prepare a Request for Proposal (RFP) in order to select the operator and service provider for leverett.net. We anticipate that the network will be operational in 2014.

Please visit our web page at:

<http://leverett.ma.us/content/broadband-committee> to see what we are doing. In order to receive ongoing information on our progress, please sign up to join a Google Groups listserv at <http://groups.google.com/group/leverett-broadband-project>.

On the regional level, the Massachusetts towns of Princeton and New Braintree have reached out for information from our committee, as they are considering constructing their own networks. That's in addition to earlier discussions we've had with Mount Washington and West Stockbridge. As the first town in the state that's attempting to build its own "last mile" solution to connect to the MBI "middle mile," it is apparent that the Leverett committee's knowledge and expertise is recognized.

Nationally, the town was mentioned on page 17 of this article:

http://www.technet.org/wpcontent/uploads/2012/12/TechNet_StateBroadband3a.pdf that ranks each state "on indicators of broadband adoption, network quality, and economic structure". MA is listed 2nd, behind Washington.

We have continued to keep State Senator Stan Rosenberg and Representative Steve Kulik in the loop regarding our project, and have met with State Senator Benjamin Downing of Pittsfield, who is the Senate chairman of the Joint Committee on Telecommunications, Utilities, and Energy.

The committee meets every Thursday at 7pm at the Town Hall. These are public meetings open to everyone, and the committee invites town residents to attend.

Rob Brooks, for the Broadband Committee

Who we are now: The Creative Spirit of Leverett 2013 Book, Website, Show

Leverett is a creative town. It is full of visual artists, musicians, dancers, writers, and actors. In 2008, I put together a book and website celebrating the visual artists of Leverett; this year I am doing one on the creative spirit of our town.

Having lived in Leverett for the last 27 years and known Leverett artists on both sides of Brushy Mountain, I have found our community both extremely artistic and diverse. This project is to document us as a group: What kind of work are we doing? What do we look like? How do we describe our work? This project intends to show the creative spirit of Leverett at this moment in time.

This documentation will be a reference for the Leverett Historical Society, Leverett library, and the Leverett population in general. It will detail visual artists, musicians, dancers, writers and actors living or working in Leverett in 2013. As a digital artist, I recognize the transitory quality of the images in the electronic age so I want to put together this resource in a book – that will be available online in the fall. I will be creating a website, linked to the town website, so that artists, dancers, musicians, writers, and actors can link to their sites, music and video. A show at the Leverett Crafts and Arts is in the works for the fall.

Want to be a part of Who We Are Now? The Creative Spirit Of Leverett?

This is a self-selecting group, anyone who feels that they are creative can be a part of it. It will show creative people who work at their craft every day, and those who work at it when they have the time. What this group has in common is the joy of creation, and the love of artistic expression. If you are curious about the last book, there is a copy at the Library.

Here's what you do:

You must live or work in Leverett. By June 1, 2013 Email Ruth West following at: ruth.westking@gmail.com with:

1. An artist statement (under 400 words)
2. A current picture of yourself
3. Two pictures expressing your art form.
Example: Visual artists- 2 art pieces, Dancers- pictures of you dancing, Musicians playing- you get the idea. Links to any videos or music that you have done.
4. A link to your website if you have one.

Questions? Call Ruth West (367-2694) or email me (ruth.westking@gmail.com)

This project is supported in part by The Mass Cultural Council

Community Events

Leverett Trails Committee

Four Seasons on the Trails of Leverett: Photography Exhibit, Leverett Library Community Room, March-April.

- How do I submit my photograph? Copies of the submission/information form are at the town hall, library, LES, Co-op, transfer station, and online at www.rattlesnakeguttertrust.org (links all over that website).
- When are my matted photographs (limit 2) due at the Library? Saturday, February 16.
- When is the reception to celebrate the photographs, photographers, and the trails? Sunday, April 7, 2-4

Thinking About the Trails of Leverett: Second Annual Community Discussion. Join us to review present projects, plan trail work days, trail stewardship, maps, and future projects. Last year's long list of suggestions is almost completed. Help create the new list. Sunday, March 3, 2-4 at the Leverett Library,

The Leverett Trails Committee is co-sponsored by the Leverett Conservation Commission and the Rattlesnake Gutter Trust. We thank all the volunteers who have worked so hard this past year to create and maintain trails, take the photographs for the exhibits and website, and write the poems now in the poetry notebooks along those trails. Thank you all!

Yoga at the Leverett Library

Thursdays, February 28-April 11

5:00 PM Bliss Class

6:15 PM Evening Class

Please contact instructor for details
413-367-2658 or enzer@earthlink.net
www.livingroomyoga.net

(Sponsored by the Leverett Recreation Commission)

LEVERETT RESIDENT

LEVERETT MA 01054

APPLICATION: 2013 DOG LICENSE

Renewal _____ or New _____ license

Name of owner _____ Phone _____

Address _____

Name of dog _____ Age _____

Breed _____ Color _____

Male (\$10.00) _____ Neutered Male (\$5.00) _____ Female (\$10.00) _____ Spayed female* (\$5.00) _____

Send check payable to Town of Leverett, business-size self-addressed stamped envelope, proof of rabies immunization, and *proof of spaying to Town Clerk, Box 300, Leverett 01054. Documents will be returned with license.

Dogs must be licensed on or before April 1st! Thank you.



Friends of Leverett Library P.O. Box 250 Leverett, MA 01054-0250

Membership Application/Membership Renewal for the calendar year 2013
Individual: \$10 Family: \$20 Patron: \$50 Lifetime: \$200

Name: _____ Tel #: _____

Address: _____

E-Mail Address: (For future annual meeting notices) _____

All Dues and Donations Are Tax Deductible