

**TOWN ADMINISTRATOR
355 EAST CENTRAL ST.
FRANKLIN, MA 02038
508-520-4949**



A Message from the Administrator

Municipal Fiscal Stability In The New Millennium - You can get there from here!

Long before the current economic crisis, we began seeking ways to cut costs and increase efficiencies while providing services to our citizens.

Since 2001 our town and student populations (customers) have increased. In the private sector, more customers usually means more business and more revenues. In Franklin, with each new customer (house) we gain more money (taxes) but generally, it is a losing proposition since it costs more money to deliver our services than we are allowed to collect in revenues. The population growth we experienced in the 1990's comes with a cost to the town that exceeds all the revenue from all the new construction that took place.

In order to balance the budget we have cut staff, consolidated departments, maximized our purchasing power, streamlined operations, pursued grants, accepted gifts, increased fees, used

savings and one time revenues, and passed an override.

We have also made great strides in upgrading the overall infrastructure of the community. While the town will always have an endless list of buildings, roads, parks, etc. to improve and maintain, we do it as part of an overall strategy of balancing the annual operation budget with the larger capital items that need to be improved or maintained.

Despite our relentless efforts to control cost, we continue to face difficult financial times. The current economic issue just makes it more obvious that something must change if we want to maintain the quality of life we now enjoy.

What's wrong? Is this unique to Franklin or do other communities face the same struggle? There have been plenty of articles in newspapers, magazines, and special reports over the last several years that show we are not alone in our battle to make ends meet. In fact, despite all the doom and gloom, we continue to provide excellent services to our citizens and we continue to seek ways to address the fiscal issues we face.

So how do we get there from here?

We have to embark on one of the most painful activities of civilization – Change. We must change almost 400 years of history, laws, attitudes, and approaches to local government. We love the fact that we live in a nice “Small New England Town”,

but we cannot afford to operate as individual villages in the 21st century. Those of us on the “inside” of local government have been saying it for years with little results. If we want to live in communities that thrive and are sustainable at reasonable costs, we must change the way local government does business.

But how?

No matter where I have worked or traveled across the commonwealth for the past 30 years, citizens in every town comment “well they are different in that town” or “we don’t want to be like them”. People identify with “their” community and the thought of sharing services, giving up a little or a lot of control, and living through change is a very scary idea to most people. On one hand they do not like increased property taxes and on the other hand we struggle with the idea of losing some of our identity and control and the potential that change may bring in the short run.

Potential “winners and losers”.

If you asked the average person “Does it make sense that we duplicate police, fire, libraries, public health, etc.?” , most will say no. If you ask them if they want to merge, most will say no or I am not sure.

Well you cannot have it both ways. If you wish to support higher taxes every year, then we can keep the current system. If you want smaller tax increases, then we have to spread the cost of doing business over a larger tax base. The math is simple the change is not.

We will continue to pursue every opportunity to streamline the delivery of services.

In FY 10, we are sharing a Library Director and providing Recreation programs to Medway and we have been sharing animal control services with Bellingham for years.

These are small steps that may open doors for us to consider shared services on a much larger scale. It will take time and there may not be immediate winners and losers, but over the long haul, change must occur. If not, then either services will erode or taxes will increase.

This is your community and your government. Your feedback, participation, and ideas are encouraged and welcome.

Respectfully,

Jeff Nutting

*Geese are but Geese tho' we may think 'em Swans;
and Truth will be Truth tho' it sometimes prove
mortifying and distasteful.*

~Benjamin Franklin

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Want to get involved? There are currently vacancies on the Commission for Persons with Disabilities, Council on Aging, Finance Committee, Historical Commission, Library Board of Directors, Municipal Affordable Housing Trust, and Public Land Use Committee. If you are interested in any of these vacancies, call 508-520-4949.