

Annual Report of the Board of Assessors, Fiscal Year 2019

The Board of Assessors, along with our assessing staff provided under contract by Regional Resource Group, continue to assure the fair taxation of all Egremont properties.

The Board of Assessors continues to organize and update assessment records, including real and personal property, as well as protected land. Other efforts included inspecting property after building permits are processed and auditing property files for accuracy and completeness.

Our Board strives to build and maintain good public relations. We provide our residents with:

1. pertinent information by placing notices in the Egremont newsletter covering topics such as property tax abatement information, statutory exemptions for veterans, legally blind and our elderly property owners, and specialty properties including Forest, Agricultural, and Recreational land.
2. abutters lists required for property permits,
3. mailings to those eligible for special tax classification and exemptions,
4. assistance in completing forms for residents who are eligible for exemptions.
5. current property ownership information by processing registered deeds, name and address changes,
6. motor vehicle excise abatements,
7. information on a host of tax and property assessment issues.

As the town's principal revenue generator, the Assessors are constantly on the lookout for properties subject to taxation. We seek to enhance tax revenues by:

1. identifying second homeowners whose household furnishings are subject to taxation; along with businesses that have inventory or fixtures that may be taxable. We have added several parcels to the Personal Property tax records that had previously not been inventoried;
2. making sure that new construction is monitored and assessed, and that property given a certificate of occupancy is taxed at the fully assessed value;
3. reviewing prior years' deeds to verify current property values;
4. monitoring individual assessments to insure that abatements are kept to a minimum, and
5. assuring that all requests for abatements are reasonable and properly processed.

Other office activities included:

1. photographing structures and attaching those photos to computerized assessment records,
2. processing land divisions,
3. reviewing and processing abatement requests,
4. processing personal property forms and chapter land applications,
5. preparing various Department of Revenue reports.

Our GIS mapping system is available online through the Town's website.

Our office hours are Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9AM-12Noon. We and our Regional Assessor from RRG are also available by appointment. Residents can contact us by e-mail at assessors@egremont-ma.gov or by phone at 413-528 0182, Extension 14. Current property information can be accessed at our website: www.egremont-ma.gov/boa.html

**Town of Egremont
Information**

Total Parcels	1164
Total Acres	13,060.55
Acres in Agriculture	2132.85
Owners of Agriculture Land	69
# of Agriculture Parcels	74
Market Value Ag Land	\$32,888,500
Chapter Land Parcels	73
61 (Forest)	17
61A (Agriculture)	54
61B (Recreation)	2
Businesses	58
Single family residences	774
Multiple	20
Vacant	213
Commercial	15
Non-profit organizations*	13

Forms Processed

Abutters lists	6
Auto Excise abatements	85
Building Permits	114
Chapter Land forms	71
New Deeds Processed	75
Personal Property forms	290
Statutory Abatements	
Veterans	11
Surviving Spouse	2
Gold Star Parent	1
Seniors	1

***Non-Profit Organizations:**

Name	Parcels	Acres
Appalachian Trail Conservancy	3	109.6
USA Appalachian Trail	10	195.53
Berkshire Natural Resources	1	50
Berkshire Village	1	10.6
Blue Rider Stable	3	12.15
Churches	1	1.10
Egremont Land Trust	7	77.07
Mt Everett Reservation	1	16
Mt. Everett Cemetery Association	1	2.77
Nature Conservancy	9	143.76
Town of Egremont and Egremont Fire Department	18	541.76
United States of America	6	95.23
Commonwealth of Massachusetts	22	2798.63

Report of the Building Commissioner

During the fiscal year July 1, 2018 through June 30, 2019 a total of 94 permits were issued.

The permit fees collected and turned over to the Treasure were \$53,865.00 based on \$8,987,755.00 of construction as follows:

New Dwellings	5
Additions & Alterations	51
Decks & Porches	2
Accessory Structures & Garages	5
Wood Stove	1
Solar Installation	9
Roofs & Repairs	21

Respectfully Submitted,
Ned Baldwin
Building Commissioner



Sunset on Baldwin Hill. Photo by Varvara Premoli

REPORT OF THE CEMETERY COMMISSION

To the Voters of Egremont:

In May of 2019 we welcomed Stephen W. Agar of Warner Road to the commission. Steve has years of experience serving the townspeople as a member of the Egremont Water Commission and prior to that on the Planning Board. Thank you for coming onboard.

We asked our voters to approve transfers of funds from our accounts for the following projects:

- ★ Place granite markers to show the location of the Jewish section of Hillside Cemetery. This area is on the most Easterly side of the first access road off of Hillside Drive.
- ★ We are working to have many grave sites at Riverside Cemetery leveled up and re-seeded this fall.
- ★ We have ordered signs for Riverside Cemetery. One will be on the Easter side of Route 71 between Boice Road and the Riverside Cemetery access road. The second one will be on the West side of the access road to show people leaving the Cemetery that they have to go out to the right end of the access road. And another showing DO NOT ENTER to the northwest end of the access road.
- ★ We expect to be grading and improving the access roads at Hillside Cemetery.
- ★ John Wells has placed waste barrels at all three cemeteries. Thank you, John.
- ★ Ongoing repair of grave stones that have fallen in all Cemeteries.

The Cemetery Commission meets upstairs at the Town Hall on the first Friday of each month at 8am.

Respectfully,
David D. Campbell, Chair
John H. Wells
Stephen W. Agar

Egremont's three Cemeteries



Hillside



Riverside



Townhouse Hill

REPORT OF THE CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Greetings.

Probably the best news we can report from FY2019 is that for the first time in several years all five Commission seats were filled. At the end of June Commission members were Alina Hsu, David Seligman, Alexis Wreden, Dave Campbell and Bill Tynan, who served as Chair. In addition, Joyce Frater joined us as an Associate member. Associate Commissioners participate fully in all activities, with the exception they cannot vote. (Note: Commissioner Hsu subsequently resigned effective the end of October 2019.)

Just as in the past the year was very active with 20 public hearings and about three times as many site visits to various projects.

For this report we decided to lay out exactly what the Commission is responsible for on the basis that few people are totally familiar with our mission. We'll follow that up with a quick guide on approaching the Commission with a project.

The duties and responsibilities of a conservation commission are set forth in the Conservation Commission Act. The conservation commission is the official agency specifically charged with the protection of a community's natural resources. The commission also advises other municipal officials and boards on conservation issues that relate to their areas of responsibility. Its work is guided by the State Department of Environmental Protection (DEP).

In Massachusetts, conservation commissions' authority comes from several sources: the Conservation Commission Act (MGL Chapter 40 section 8C) for open space protection; the Wetlands Protection Act (MGL Chapter 131 section 40) for protecting wetlands and waterways (commissions have real power - they issue the permits); and the home rule provisions of the state constitution for non-zoning wetlands bylaws.

In 1972, conservation commissions were given responsibility to administer the Wetlands Protection Act (G.L. Ch. 131 §40) in their community. Thus the commission serves the community in a regulatory capacity (to protect wetlands) and in a conservation capacity (for open space). Any work in or abutting wetlands requires a permit from the Commission.

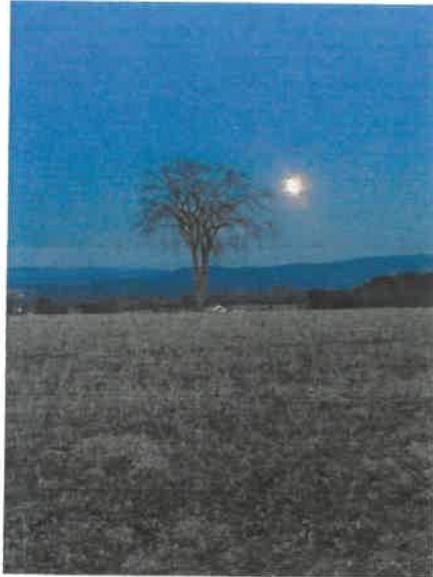
To simplify the permitting process we've developed a basic Project Review Form, which is found under Miscellaneous Forms on the Town website. This form provides the Commission with a clear idea of the proposed project and may result in the Commission saying it has no interest in the project or moving ahead and scheduling an on-site visit with the property owner.

Most simple projects require completing WPA (Wetlands Protection Act) Form 1, Request for Determination of Applicability. More complex ones, such as ones proposing to alter wetlands, require Form 3, Wetlands Notice of Intent (NOI). These forms, along with instructions, can be found by searching for Massachusetts WPA Forms. Either type of project requires a public

hearing. Any permit issued comes with a set of Conditions that must be fulfilled.

The Commission holds its regular meetings on the 2nd and 4th Thursdays of the month except during November and December when it meets only once a month.

Bill Tynan, Chair



Baldwin Hill Elm with full moon. Photo by Missy Byrne

Report of the Council on Aging

Bruce Bernstein, Chairman
Chet Delaney
Eve Goldberg
Cory Hines

Georgette Kinney
Helen Krancer
Carolyn Palmucci

Peg Muskrat, Outreach/Administrative Assistant

The Egremont COA continues our goal of reaching out to our seniors and assisting them in as many ways as possible. We continually contact our seniors to determine their needs and work on solutions to their issues. Phone calls and personal contacts are ongoing. Our goal is to help our seniors remain safe and secure in their homes, to make them aware of the many programs that are available to them and to offer them opportunities for socialization.

Our “Good Morning, Senior” program continues thanks to Police Chief Jason LaForest and to our volunteers who answer the phone. Senior who choose to participate call in to a designated number mornings between 9:00 and 10:00. One of our volunteers answers their call. If they don’t call in, a call is made to them. If they don’t answer a police officer is dispatched to their home to ensure they are safe. The program is open to all and seniors may join at any time.

“Sand for Seniors” continues our goal of keeping seniors safe in their homes. COA provides buckets that are filled with sand, covered and easy to carry. This program will begin again in mid November and continue thru the winter months. Buckets can be picked up at the Town Hall or we will deliver them to the home. Just call 528-0182 to request a delivery. We only ask that buckets be returned in the spring so that we can reuse them and not continually purchase new ones.

In keeping with our goal of offering socialization opportunities for our seniors the COA sponsors monthly (October thru June) COA Luncheons on the first Wednesday of the month at 12:00 at the Egremont Village Inn. In addition to a great lunch we offer a variety of program both instructive and entertaining. Our 2018-2019 season included a talk on Peral harbor by historian David Bosco, a first aid demonstration by Egremont First responders, a cooking demonstration by chef Bob Climo, local artist Eunice Agar shared some of her painting techniques by executing a drawing the dining room at the EVY, a performance by Egremont musicians Karen Berger and David Hodges, a luncheon catered by Mt. Everett High School Culinary Class, , a birthday celebration for seniors turning 90, “Roger the Jester”, and a picnic and program by Liz Keen who runs the CSA at Indian Line farm. In addition, we held two special events.....a Holiday Party in December with musicians Sandy & Sandy and and a special program of opera in April.

Monthly Coffee Hours are held on the 3rd Wednesday of each month from 9:30 – 10:30 at Mom’s Café or the Egremont Village Inn. A great chance to visit and get to visit, make new friends and catch up on local happenings.

Over the past year Egremont COA offered variety of exercise classes. Personal trainer Elaine Ireland offered weekly classes that stressed balance, flexibility, and agility. We help sponsor the Aquatic Fitness Program at Simon's Rock which is held daily year round at the cost of \$3.00 per class. Exercise programs at the Claire Teague Senior center in Gt. Barrington and the Sheffield Senior center are open to all seniors in South County towns

Tapping into our vast resources in Egremont we were able to offer several First Aid classes taught by First Responder David Katzenstein. Liz Jaffe returned again this summer to offer instruction on iPhone/iPad devices.

As part of keeping our seniors safe COA has "Be Seen, Be Safe" vests available. These are bright yellow and make walkers/runners highly visible. They are available for free at the Town Hall or the Police Department.

Egremont is participating member of the Southern Berkshire Elderly Transportation Corporation (S.B.E.T.C.) based in Gt. Barrington. Our seniors can call for rides (413 528-4773) and for a \$10.00 round trip fee can go anywhere in South County. Round trips fares farther north are \$15.00.

Egremont CAO and Mt. Washington regularly collaborate on programs for our seniors and share ideas and concerns. In addition, our outreach person attends meetings with other South County COAs. Conversations focus on common issues and concerns, particularly transportation issues in our rural communities. This past year we worked with Hillsdale, NY, to help them start their own COA.

Egremont COA actively participates on the boards of the Southern Berkshire Elderly Transportation Corporation, the Egremont Emergency Management Team, AGE Triad, the Advisory Council of Elder Services, the Berkshire County Regional Coordinating Council Human Service Transportation Office and the Board of BRTA. We also have several Council members participating in the Elder Services training program to become ombudsmen. In this capacity they will be advocates for seniors who are patients at South County nursing facilities.

As always, we welcome your ideas, concerns, and input.



(Celebrating Birthdays for Egremont Seniors especially those turn 90. Happy Birthday to all - photo courtesy of Peg Muskrat)



(Berkshire Strings performing at the COA birthday luncheon celebrating our seniors - photo courtesy Peg Muskrat)

Alford/Egremont Cultural Council

The Alford/Egremont Cultural Council is pleased to announce that it has awarded \$9528.00 in grants to 23 organizations that provide educational and cultural programs for community members of all ages. In keeping with our mission of focusing on programs for adult and children that celebrate diversity, serve the broadest local community, and take place locally. The funds are used to support lectures, school enrichment programs, art workshops, local artists, science and music programs, theater groups, concerts, and events to promote community building.

We invite Egremont residents who are interested in applying for grants to submit an application before October 15th. To apply go to mass-cultural.org-LCC program information. Click on Alford/Egremont for information and an application.

The Alford/Egremont Cultural Council is supported by an annual grant from the Massachusetts Cultural Council. In the past our council has supported the following events:

Alford Historical District Commission – Dancing in the District
Art That Speaks
Aston Magna Music Festival
Berkshire Bach Society Operating Support
Berkshire Boots & Bridles 4-H Club Scholarships
Berkshire Children’s Chorus Scholarships
Berkshire Lyric Theatre Inc Educational and concerts
Berkshire Playwright Lab – Berkshire Voices
Berkshire Pulse – music and dance of Africa
Berkshire Strings – Summer Strings
Berkshire South – Ukelele/Sings
Oldtone Native Dances/Concerts
Chesterwood 50th Anniversary
Community Health – Summer Fun at Botanical Gardens
Egremont Garden Clun – Fairy Workshop
Greenagers Inc
Flying Cloud – Makerspace at SBRSD
IS 183 Art School – UME
Music in Common – Amplify
Music in Common – MIC MeetUps
Sculpture Now – Trip to the Mount SBRSD middle school
Undermountain Elementary Grade 3 Plymouth Plantation
WAM Theatre – theatre season of events

Funding Provided By



FY 2019 Report
Egremont Emergency Management

The Egremont Emergency Management Team consisting of the Emergency Management Director, Fire Chief, Police Chief, Board of Health, Highway Superintendent and several other citizens, meets monthly throughout the year. Federally mandated National Incident Management System training is accomplished as courses are updated and new personnel are added. Monthly meetings of the Southern Berkshire Regional Emergency Planning Committee are attended by several members; we also meet with National Grid to keep informed about winter storm procedures and power outages from storms.

Our range of seasons provides opportunities to exercise pre-planning efforts. As a result of several lost persons calls, new procedures have been implemented for incident response and command decisions.

Emergency Management Planning Grants were used to update resources, including new radios and lights, and the mass alert system.

The Town's emergency telephone alert system has been used for several calls regarding road closures, water main repairs, meeting announcements and other timely issues with good feedback. It is reviewed and updated monthly.

The TEEM continues to work closely with the Alford Egremont Great Barrington TRIAD to provide planning and information for senior citizens as well as those in our town with special needs.

The Egremont Emergency Management Team also meets with other Town Boards as necessary and thanks them for their cooperation.

Respectfully submitted,

Edward G. McCormick
Emergency Management Director



Bob cat mom and kit. Photo by Jeanne Peck

REPORT OF THE FIRE DEPARTMENT

Roster

Chief Joseph Schneider

Deputy Chief and James Olmsted

Captain Jim Golden
Captain David Guidi
Lt. Paul Sierau
Lt. Roger Meyer
Gregory Peck
Lane Farnum
Bruce Turner
Roger Bailey
Willa Brown

David Katzenstein
John H. Wells
Tom Sierau
Robert Brown
Kevin Wheeler
Herman Trudeau Sr.
Ed Rossi
Dave Martin
Marco Bentez

The members of the Egremont Fire Department meet at least every Tuesday for training, maintenance of equipment and organizational meetings. We additionally train as a group with neighboring departments. A core group trains in rope rescue skills several times a month. We continually refresh our First Responder Medical training including the use of Naloxone and Epi pens. Chief Schneider continues his Code Enforcement classes. We were fortunate to get a new member, Willa Brown, this past year and she entered the recruit academy for call/volunteer firefighters. She will be graduating in October of 2019 from the Massachusetts Department of Fire Services Academy. In February of 2019 Massachusetts became an OSHA state for Fire Departments. We have and continue to work on being compliant and up to standards.

We have had another very busy year. There were over 200 responses to calls for help in fiscal year 2019.

Our new Rescue Truck will be put in service November, 2019, there was little delay in getting the truck built with the manufacturing company being so busy. Once again we are very grateful to the taxpayers of the town on all your support to the Egremont Fire Department.

We still occasionally encounter homes without clearly displayed 911 signs. We also encourage all homeowners, particularly those with reporting alarms, to purchase a Knox Box. Knox Boxes eliminate the need for us to use force to gain entry to your home if an emergency occurs and no one is available to let us in. Information regarding 911 signs and Knox Boxes is available at Town Hall.

We are always looking for new recruits. We are looking for motivated, disciplined men and women. Firefighting is a challenging opportunity to serve your community. If you think that you have what it takes to be a firefighter, please join us any Tuesday evening at either firehouse. We serve with pride.

We thank you for your continued support and hope that we all have a safe year.

Fire calls for Fiscal 2019

July 2018 to December had 104 calls

January 2019 to June 2019 had 101 calls

Medical	91
MVA	9
Search	4
Rescue	4
Structure Fire	6
Chimney Fire	1
Vehicle Fire	0
Appliance Fire	0
CO Alarm	5
Smoke Alarm	5
False Alarm	65
Outside fire	2
Service Call/Other	9
Tree wire	5



Towns new fire rescue truck. Photo Joe Schneider.

Total calls for 2019 205



*New Firefighter Willa Brown,
with Fire Chief Joe Schneider
Photo by Jennifer Brown.*

REPORT OF THE FRENCH PARK COMMITTEE

French Park has had some wonderful improvements over the past few years. The new tennis courts are now completed and ready for play. The community garden is fully fenced with water available for plantings. Call town hall to reserve a spot for the 2020 growing season.

Big thanks to Tom Reynolds and Scott Fountain for keeping the park well-maintained and looking great!

The French Park Committee used the annual funds to provide a wheelchair accessible picnic table. It can be found behind the band stand, just next to the play equipment. Made of 100% recycled material and weather resistant too. Another bench was added to the chapel site to rest and enjoy this special spot.

Not familiar with the chapel site? Park on Mill Rd. and Prospect Lake Rd to access the wide and easy beginner's trail. The ruins of a stone building with benches and a beautiful view awaits! Perfect for toddlers through seniors to enjoy.

A generous donation to French Park was made by Kayvon and Yassi Hakim. Donated specifically to maintain and beautify park trails. Please thank the Hakim's by discovering the these trails. Maps are located at trailheads throughout the park .

Our Dog Park is well loved by locals and visitors alike. The donations are halfway to the yearly goal .

Please consider donating to French Park. All donations are tax-deductible and payable to the French Park Fund. Larger donations can be earmarked for specific improvements. Contact Hillary Penglase or call town hall for more information.

Upcoming improvements

Phase 1 of the horse ring update has been completed. Thank you to Don Peck for laying the base material.

Please attend a meeting or write the French Park Committee with any ideas or suggestions. All are welcome!

Jennifer Brown Zoe Hirsch-Buckley Hillary Penglase Melody Lamb Lizzie Spaulding
David Guidi



Tennis Courts at French Park. Photo Tom Reynolds.

Egremont Green Committee, Annual Report, 2019

Richard Allen, Corinna Barnard, Emily Eyre, Juliette Haas, Pat Konecky, and Marj Wexler (rotating chair)

In April, we held our 11th annual Egremont Recycles Day. Because the scheduled day of the event was cold and rainy, there was no formal sorting and recycling at the Town Hall green. Instead, 97+ intrepid volunteers handled all the trash themselves, and the result was 41 miles of Egremont roads cleared of roadside trash. That evening, our thank-you pizza party at the north Fire Station was enjoyed by almost 30 volunteers. Join us in April 2020 for the 12th annual event!

Our series of articles in the Berkshire Edge continues. The 2019 articles covered the following subjects: the ups and downs of Egremont's trash collection data, the rise of climate activism, electronic vehicles and how to encourage them, and the importance of recycling correctly.

We worked with Oriana Reilly of the Mass Climate Action Network and discussed steps we could take to create a greenhouse gas inventory for Egremont. Ultimately, after much time devoted to it, we decided not to pursue the GGI this year, although we remain interested.

Transportation continues to be an object of interest. In addition to pursuing the possibility of an EV station in town, Pat is part of a GB group that is working to improve local mass transportation.

The household composting bin at the Transfer Station continues to be popular, and much of this relatively heavy component of trash is diverted from landfills. Residents take home the final product to enrich their gardens. We are grateful to the Highway Department for regularly turning the compost piles.

Members of the Green Committee and other Egremonters maintain the Transfer Station Swap Shop by regularly carting useable items (books, clothing, electronics) to Goodwill, thus reducing even further the weight of Egremont's trash.

The Green Committee has compostable tableware (plates, cups, utensils) available for residents to purchase for parties. We buy in bulk and sell at our cost. Call or email any of us for more information.

And finally, we enjoy providing the Eco-Tips for Egremont's Town Newsletter.

Respectfully submitted,
Marj Wexler for the Egremont Green Committee



Snapping turtle. Photo by Vickie Kusko Lea

Board of Health

Charles Ogden, Chairman
Dr. William Rose
Ellen Maggio

The Egremont Board of Health, which typically meets twice a month at Town Hall, continues to attend to matters relating to public health in our community following the statutes described in the State and Federal Housing, Food, Environmental and Sanitation Codes.

The following is a list of duties and responsibilities which fall under the Egremont Board umbrella:

- Housing and Dwelling
- Septage
- Solid Waste/Garbage
- Food served to the public
- Health Care and Disease Control
- Hazardous Waste
- Nuisances
- Camps
- Smoking/Vaping/Tobacco Control
- Public Pools and Beaches

During the period of July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2019 the Board of Health performed the following:

- Enacted a local regulation banning the sale tobacco products to those under the age of 21.
- Issued 20 food permits and performed at least two inspections a year at those establishments.
- Encouraged food establishments to use environmentally friendly take-out containers
- Performed numerous complaint based housing inspections.
- Witnessed 25 percolation tests for new or upgraded septic systems.
- Witnessed 25 Title 5 inspections.
- Issued 30 Disposal Works Construction Permits for new or upgraded septic systems and performed inspections at all installations.
- Held an annual flu clinic.
- Received \$15,750 in permit fees

Through inspectional services provided by The Berkshire Public Health Alliance, fully licensed and certified field agents and public health nursing staff have assisted the town with food, housing and Title 5 septic inspections and disease surveillance and flu clinics.

Prevent. Preserve. Protect. This is the motto of a health department, large or small, and the Egremont Board of Health continues to work towards carrying out this mission here in Egremont.

Respectfully submitted,
Juliette Haas, Director

Report of the Highway Superintendent

The Highway Department performed the annual grading and graveling of unpaved roads. Roadside drainage ditches were cleared and catch basins cleaned out. Storm clean-up of trees and branches was completed throughout the year. Roadside mowing and brush cutting along with weed-whacking was also performed. Guardrail was repaired along Route 71. Damaged or missing street signs were repaired or replaced. Line painting of roads was completed. Potholes were patched and blacktopped. Maintenance and repair of equipment was performed.

During the Winter months the roads were plowed, sanded and salted during and after each storm.

Reclamation and paving of Baldwin Hill Road South was completed. Catch basins and culverts were replaced along with drainage swales. Total cost of these projects was \$335,000. Sections of Mount Washington Road, Rowe Road and Boice Road were repaired and paved

The Highway Department would like to thank all those who assisted the Department this year, including the Board of Selectmen, the Fire Department, the Police Department, Town Hall office personnel, the Maintenance Department and numerous contractors. Thank you all for your hard work.

Respectfully submitted,

James Noe
Egremont Highway Superintendent



*Working on the Town Hall Parking Lot.
Photo Mary Brazie.*

Egremont Historical Commission

As 2018 ends, the final pieces will fall into place on the restoration of the South Village School with the installation of a new fence "to keep the cows out", and the installation of a new playground. This year the Commission, in partnership with the Library Trustees and the Town, will begin to update the historic engineering report initiated 5 years ago to bring our wonderful library into full ADA compliance and attend to some steeple work to keep the birds out of our belfry.

We have also begun the process of reviewing the plans for the upgrade of Rte 23 by the Mass. Dept. of Transportation with a full written response submitted to the DOT now on file. It was made clear in the DOT's initial presentation, the needs of this National Register historic working village -with its many stores and eating establishments located in the western end, and a concentration of nearly 50 residences within 1500 feet of the road in the eastern end comprised of young families and elderly residents - have clearly not been met. It is the intention of the Commission to closely monitor this project as it develops over the course of the next year so as to protect and promote the pride of place that is the right of Egremont, and every town in the Commonwealth under the Mass. Historical Commission guidelines. Promoting a visually integrated and workable stretch of road goes a long way to maintain the Town's integrity as an attractive and economically vibrant community. Our economy is based partly on how we promote our historic roots. That is done primarily through our historic architecture and its care. The impact of this upgrade will resonate for decades if not strongly directed by the Town for the growth of the Town, and not the ease of traffic flow projected at an increased 30 miles per hour, when a 25 mph design would slow traffic far more effectively in this board's opinion.

The value of historic architecture was clearly seen in the finalization of the Historic Preservation Restriction transfer from the ATC to Historic New England. With the transfer of ownership of April Hill to the Greenagers, a new chapter in the growth of this 18th century farm and its families has begun and we look forward to a continuing partnership with them and fostering new ideas for history outreach in the 21st century.

To celebrate this new arrival to our community, the Town's 244th birthday party was celebrated at April Hill on the last weekend of August. As our incorporation date is August 23rd, 1775, we host our parties at various spaces within the Town as a way to introduce people to what Egremont has to offer that might not otherwise be seen.

Nowhere is that more true than in the continued updating of our MACRIS files. Begun four years ago and with over 200 items now in our inventory, Rebecca Turner has seen that this project continues to run smoothly.

Also introduced this year is another 21st century upgrade with a new website accessible as a link from the Town's webpage. Designed by Caroline Alexander of North Egremont, and overseen by commission member Stephen Piersanti, it has begun to present stories of interest and will, over the coming year, begin to load in oral histories. Stories residents want to share, whether young or old, with the idea that whatever we hold will be history for our future!

Commission member Barbara Kalish is spearheading the oral history project and has already reached out through our Council on Aging to promote this idea. Several prior recordings in an older format have been upgraded and will be installed for access on the website this year, not the least of which is the story told by our resident poet, Stan Farnum, about his grandfather Harry Bock, and his days with the wild west shows in Oklahoma at the turn of the 19th century.

Bill Wood will re-invigorate the demolition delay by-law initiative motivated by Lenox's successful introduction of this crucial protection for structures that might find new and unexpected roles within the community if given a bit of time. And Abigail Rogers-McKee keeps a firm hand on our finances as we move forward.

The commission has lost one member this year. Chair, Susan P. Bachelder has retired. We thank her for her many years of service on this, and other boards, that have impacted the life of the Town.

We are a town that holds high the value of our roots as we look forward to working for its future so it seems fitting that we close out this year with the prayer of Rev. Edward Cobden that was delivered last year to commemorate our Village School now ready to serve our children for another one hundred years.

Gracious God, the mother of all communities, you have nourished this community - the Village of Egremont - for 243 years.

In good times and challenging times, you have inspired us to support and build our institutions.

We give special thanks today for the willingness of our town members to restore our village school. We are very excited that the mission of this school can carry on!

We ask your blessing holy and gracious God on this school to make it a center for sound learning, new discovery, and caring friendships.

Grant that those who teach and those who learn will find you to be a source of truth and love.

We offer this prayer in our confidence in your Holy Name. Amen.

Serving this year: Susan P. Bachelder; Barbara Kalish; Stephen Piersanti; Abigail Rogers-McKee; Elliott Snyder; Rebecca Turner; William Wood



Egremont Free Library
2019

Egremont Free Library is a welcoming place for community members to gather. We offer the latest novels, non-fiction titles, DVDs, children's books and audio books. Patrons and visitors also have access to 24/7 high speed internet. We have a computer with a large, wide screen HD monitor. Two computers are available to patrons for personal and work use. A cozy "nook" area with a rocking chair and comfortable reading chair are available to those who would like to enjoy some quiet time while visiting. There is also a work table for those who need some privacy while working on their computer/device.

New families have moved into the area and/or grandparents are visiting with their grandchildren. There is a fun kids area with Legos, puzzles, Calico Critters, a doll house, Thomas the Tank Engine trains and finger puppets, and of course books! There are new children's "play" area rugs for more imaginative play as well as new building toys for children ages three and up.

In October of 2019, Egremont Free Library teamed up with Mount Washington library to offer a day trip to the Franklin D Roosevelt home and library and Val-Kill, Eleanor Roosevelt's national historic site for a tour.

Lesliann regularly helps several patrons download audio and ebooks via C/W MARS digital library and Boston Public Library onto their personal devices. She has helped patrons on several devices including Kindles, Nooks, iPads, iPhones and Kobos.

EFL offers museum passes to several area cultural attractions, which have been widely used by patrons. Passes to Norman Rockwell Museum, Chesterwood, The Clark Museum, Berkshire Museum, Hancock Shaker Village, and Mass MoCA are available throughout the year.

South Egremont School is back in session and Lesliann reads to the children once per week. Students check out books from Egremont Free Library. It's wonderful to see the children back at SES!

Membership to the Central Western Massachusetts Automated Resource Sharing C/W MARS network has brought new patrons to Egremont Free Library. Egremont home owners who frequent other area libraries discovered EFL offers many "in demand" books and DVDs. As a reminder, with membership to C/W MARS, patrons may order items online and have them sent to EFL's location rather than sending them to Sheffield or Great Barrington. As always, Lesliann is happy to order books for patrons if they would rather order interlibrary loan books at the library rather than online. Also, patrons may now order audio books and e-books on their devices via C/W MARS. Another huge benefit is the ability to return books from other libraries to EFL's drop box outside the library. For example, if you have items from Mason Library and you would rather not fight the traffic in Great Barrington, you may drop your items in the "drop box" at EFL located at 1 Buttonball Lane in South Egremont. The items are checked in at EFL and delivered to Mason Library.

All are welcome to visit Egremont Free Library during library hours on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday from 2 to 6 p.m. and Saturday from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Francine Groener
Library Trustee Chair

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE PLANNING BOARD

Personnel: Lucinda Vermeulen, Chairwoman; Greg Cherin, Vice Chairman; Helen Krancer, Treasurer; Eddie Regendahl, Clerk; Jared Kelly, Berkshire Regional Planning Commission Representative. In May of 2019 Lucinda Vermeulen finished her term on the Board. The Board was reorganized as follows: Greg Cherin, Chairman; Jared Kelly, Vice Chairman; Helen Krancer, Clerk; Eddie Regendahl, Berkshire Regional Planning Commission Representative; and newly elected member Nick Keene, Treasurer.

Division of Land: The Board reviewed and approved one application for Form A land division.

Special Permits: None

Common Driveway Applications: One application was approved.

Recreational Overlay District: The proposed Recreational Overlay District Bylaw was referred to the Planning Board at the May 2018 Town Meeting. The Planning Board had reached the conclusion that the Overlay District Bylaw is neither needed nor beneficial to the town, and responded to the Select Board on October 15, 2018.

Affordable Housing: The Planning Board voted unanimously to take a positive position on Warrant Articles One and Two, to set aside land and funds for affordable housing, at the special Town Meeting of August 27, 2018. Lucinda Vermeulen spoke on behalf of the Planning Board at the Special Town Meeting.

Accessory Dwelling Units: The Planning Board began its discussion of this subject when representatives of the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission brought it to the Planning Board in January of 2019, and will write a bylaw accordingly.

Recreational Marijuana Bylaw Informational Meeting April 27, 2019: The Planning Board recommended a General Bylaw banning all state licenses except for Retail licenses.

Town Meeting May 7, 2019: The Planning Board's motion to ban all state Recreational Marijuana Licenses except for Retail, was defeated

Additional Board activities:

- The Board attended Berkshire Regional Planning Commission seminars and meetings
- The Board sought advice as necessary from Town Council
- The Board answered citizen's questions.

October 21, 2019

Bob Krupski Plumbing, Inc.

-Licensed Master Plumber – License# 10391

Oil Burner Technician–License # 022053

**Plumbing Inspector Towns of:
Alford - Egremont
Great Barrington
Monterey - Mt. Washington
New Marlborough
Sheffield**

**P.O. Box 111, Sheffield, MA 01257
(413) 229-8019
(Fax) 229-2210**

September 30, 2019

**TO: Town of Egremont
RE: Plumbing / Gas Inspections – July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2019**

During the year July 1, 2018 through June 30, 2019:

PLUMBING:

Issued 33 plumbing permits

Conducted 63 on-site inspections.

Collected \$ 3,780.00 in fees.

GAS:

Issued 4 gas permits

Conducted 5 on site gas inspections

Collected \$ 300.00 in fees

Sincerely,

**Bob Krupski,
Plumbing Inspector**

To the Honorable Board of Selectman and Citizens of Egremont

STAFF

As your Police Chief I, Jason La Forest am pleased to present you with the Egremont Police Department's 2018 annual report.

The Egremont Police Department is a full service Law Enforcement Agency staffed by the Chief of Police, three full time patrol officers, seven reserve officers and an administrative secretary. The department provides the town of Egremont with 24/7 police coverage. As an agency we place a strong emphasis on community policing. We strive to build positive relationships with the residents, visitors, businesses and other town employees. These relationships help build rapport and create lines of communication which allow us to more effectively meet the needs of the community.

Over the past year there have been some significant changes within the department. June 30, 2019 marked Erik Josephson's final day as Chief of Police. On July 1, 2019 I was appointed as Chief of Police for the town of Egremont. I am excited to be a part of this department and look forward to mentoring and guiding those that I have been entrusted to lead. I will promote a professional, proactive and community oriented agency.

After graduating high school I joined the United States Air Force where I was enlisted as an aircraft mechanic. Shortly after returning home from active duty I began my Law Enforcement career with the Berkshire County Sheriff's Office. While working for the Sheriff's Office I obtained my Associates Degree in Criminal Justice. Previous to my current role I was a police officer for the town of Great Barrington, MA. In total I have 15 years of law enforcement experience.

I would like to take a moment and thank all of the officers for their strong work ethic and devotion to the Town of Egremont. Continue the great work, it does not go unnoticed. Thank you to our department's secretary, Margaret. Her attributes make it possible for everything to tie together.

POLICE ACTIVITY

During the fiscal year of 2018 a total of 4100 calls for service were handled. Motorists were issued citations for 282 offenses. A total of 39 arrests were made.

Below is a list of the categorized offenses:

- Robberies (1)
- Aggravated Assault (8)
- Simple Assault (3)
- Burglary/Break and Enter (1)
- Intimidation (1)
- Theft From Building (2)
- Theft From Motor Vehicle (1)
- Motor Vehicle Theft (1)
- Traffic, Town By-Law Offenses (62)
- Destruction/Damage/Vandalism (2)
- Drug Violations (1)
- Weapon Law Violations (1)
- Disorderly Conduct (4)
- Driving Under The Influence (3)
- Liquor Law Violations (2)
- Trespassing (3)
- All Other Offenses 12
- Reportable Accidents (33)

THE FUTURE

Moving forward you can expect to see more of us. We will be on foot patrol both in South and North Egremont as well as in French Park. We will be in attendance at many town events and gatherings. Some may have already noticed that in the morning's and afternoon's we assist the South Egremont School with traffic control. We are privileged to be invited to the monthly council on aging meetings. I would also like to thank Chief Schneider and all of the Egremont Firefighters for the invite to their annual steak dinner. It was a well attended event that displayed a strong sense of community.

During the 2019 fiscal year, I will be implementing a traffic enforcement plan to address the many concerns that the residents have brought to my attention. This plan will not only target problem areas but ensure that all roads are being patrolled equally. The department will also go through the state certification process which will verify that we are adhering to the most current policies and procedures.

SERVICES

As a reminder we offer house checks for vacant homes. Whether you will be out of town for a few days or a few months we provide security checks of your residence while you are away. If you choose to utilize this great service all you need to do is stop by the station and

enter the station there is a secure drop box in the lobby area. The town has several speed trailers and requests can be made for their placement. Simply give us a call (528-2160), email (epd@egremont-ma.gov) or stop by the station and let us know where you would like to see one. We are continuing the Good Morning Seniors program. This program allows you to call the police department each weekday between 9:00 AM and 10:00 AM. In the event that we do not receive a call from you the police department would reach out to your emergency contacts or send an officer to check on you. If interested in joining this program you can contact the police station or Peg Muskrat with the Council on Aging.

Lastly, I would like to thank the Board of Selectman and the residents of Egremont for allowing me to serve as your Chief of Police. I am honored and grateful for the opportunity.

Respectfully,

Jason La Forest

Chief of Police

Egremont Police Department



Chief LaForest reading to students at the South Egremont School.



Photo by Bonnie Bassis

REPORT OF THE SELECTBOARD

The Board welcomes long time resident Lucinda Fenn-Vermeulen to the Board. Lucinda has in the past served on other town boards, most recently as Chairwoman of the Planning Board.

The town will issued an RFP seeking qualified vendors to provide Broadband service to the portions of the Town that have not already been lit by Fiber Connect. Fiber Connect was the only respondent. Negotiations are ongoing with Fiber Connect and the MassBroadband Institute to complete this project. It is anticipated that MBI will consider approval of Egremont's allocation of broadband funds to complete the networks build-out at its November trustees meeting.

The ADA upgrades at the historic South Egremont School house were completed. Replacement of the playground equipment and its fencing will be completed in November. The School re-opened for the 2019/2020 school and its presence has already added to Main Street's vitality and sense of community.

The Southern Berkshire Regional School District formula used to assess the Towns for the school's operating costs was updated by Town Meeting vote. The assessment change was most beneficial to other towns. Egremont did not see an immediate reduction in its assessment but unanticipated future fluctuations will be significantly reduced.

Selectboard Chairman McGurn and Finance Committee member Thomas Berkel were appointed as Egremont's representation on a newly formed Committee to consider the consolidation of the Southern Berkshire and Berkshire Hills School District. Each Town of both districts has representation on the Committee, as does the administration of both districts. Egremont will speak its own voice.

Phase 2 of the engineering work for the Mount Washington Road was overwhelmingly approved at September's Special Town Meeting - a necessary step to ensure State and Federal funding through the Transportation Improvement Program. To date the Town has approved \$735,500 for the required contribution for engineering studies. A final \$200,000 Egremont contribution to this project will be proposed for voter consideration on the 2020 Town Meeting Warrant.

The Town has been working with MassDOT to generate plans for the reconstruction of Route 23/41 in a manner that is appropriate to our historic Main Street village's ambiance and character. Shortly after publishing of this report, the 25% design plans should be available for public review and comment.

Delays due to a lawsuit have impeded Egremont's ability to receive the two donated houses from the Manville Street, Great Barrington redevelopment, perhaps till Spring 2020. These houses will be transformed by Construct, Inc. at no cost to Town taxpayers on leased town owned land behind Town Hall. An initial driveway was constructed to allow entry for construction trucks and will be completed once the homes are in place

and renovations completed. The septic system will be installed in the spring of 2020 since Egremont obtained a \$100,000 grant to pay for the driveway and the septic system again ensuring no money output by taxpayers. These houses will provide the foundation of Egremont's first four official affordable housing units, as mandated by Commonwealth law.

In July the Board appointed Jason LaForest as Egremont's Chief of Police. As of this writing, all Egremonters are witnessing a much needed transformation of EDP's culture and experiencing the benefits of true community-based policing in action. We look forward to working with Chief LaForest for many years to come.

The new, professional grade Tennis Court at French Park were welcomed with open arms. If you haven't seen it, please do so. They are truly a work of art. The footing in the horse riding ring is getting a much needed make over which started with the removal of rocks and two inches of sand. An additional three inches of sanding in Spring 2020 will finish the new footing.

The Board has had to learn about retail marijuana sales and cultivation since the Zoning Board of Appeals issued a Special Permit for a retail shop in the Village of South Egremont. The Board negotiated a Hots Community Agreement, which should have positive fiscal impacts for the Town in the near future. Currently the Board is considering another HCA for marijuana cultivation. Lacking a local By-law providing guidelines for dealing with this new governance dimension as a result of voter approval and Commonwealth law, we are launched and afloat without a voter approved compass.

The Board is pleased to recognize several public/private partnerships that bear witness to the vision, generosity and bear witness to Egremont's civic strength. For example, land donations and initial planning envision a Karner Brook walk from the Spirit Shoppe to Kenver, Greenagers have joined us at April Hill, the Mary Kellogg homestead, as their headquarters and Fiber Connect is contributing free wi-fi in public spaces in the interest of Public Safety and convenience. We may be a small town but we think big as long as it protects and preserves the memory of our past, promotes the vitality of the present and protects our environment for future generations.

The Board thanks all of the Town's officials, board/committee members and employees for their team efforts to make Egremont the well run civic undertaking that is a source of great local pride. Egremont is a well run wheel thanks to the efforts, most of whom are volunteers who have stepped up to contribute to our remarkable 246 year old civic experiment.

Board of Selectmen
George McGurn, Chair
Lucinda Fenn-Vermeulen, Vice-Chair
Mary Brazie

Sustainability Coordinator

While the world grapples with ways to mitigate the effects of climate change, the Town of Egremont has taken a local approach by creating a Sustainability Coordinator position to help lessen our impact on the environment.

The responsibilities of the position include exploring ways to lower energy use in town buildings, offer programs to residents which employ energy savings and/or renewable energy, and to decrease annual municipal solid waste collection and increase recycling rates.

As a result of becoming a state designated Green Community in 2015, Egremont received \$145,000 in grant funding. These funds have gone towards upgrading energy systems on town owned properties including new, more energy efficient heating systems, upgraded lighting, energy conservation measures including improved insulation and windows, partial funding of the solar array at the Police Department, new energy efficient hot water heaters and upgraded appliances. The Sustainability Coordinator worked as project manager for these projects and guided them to completion. At the end of FY2019, it was learned that these measures have lowered municipal building energy use by an impressive 20%.

Starting in FY2019, as part of a 20-year power purchase agreement, Egremont receives net metering credits from a commercial solar array. These solar credits are applied to the town's electricity accounts and provide 15% cost reduction on 86,000 kWh of electricity. That 15%, which comes from clean, green solar power, translates into an approximate \$3,500 annual savings in electricity costs.

Egremont continues to partner with Colonial Power to provide residents who chose to opt in to the program with electricity aggregation purchasing. The electricity supply from this program allows residents to have clean, renewable electricity serve their homes and businesses at a lower kilowatt cost than traditional "brown" power.

On the solid waste front, FY2019 was an extraordinary year for trash reduction. Through the implementation of the many town waste reduction programs, Egremont's total municipal solid waste for the year was 362 tons, down from 424 the year before, and down from the all time high of 481 tons. Egremont's waste reduction programs which include the community compost station and the swap shop at the transfer station, as well as a robust recycling educational program, allowed Egremont to receive a \$4,200 grant from MassDEP. These funds will go towards capital improvements at the transfer station.

When Egremont lowers its energy use or reduces the amount of solid waste it generates in a year Egremont residents benefit from the associated financial savings to the town's operational costs. In addition, Egremont residents can proudly say they live in a community which supports policies and participates in programs which lowers our collective carbon footprint. In doing so Egremont has demonstrated true leadership in the work needed to fight global climate change.

Many thanks to the Egremont Select Board, the Egremont Finance Committee, the Egremont Green Committee and Egremont residents for making this possible.

Respectfully submitted,

Juliette Haas

Egremont Technology Committee

Annual Report for FY 2019

Technology Committee. The Egremont Technology Committee (TC) was formed in August 2015 by vote of the Egremont Board of Selectmen (BOS) for the purpose of determining options, evaluating proposals, and recommending solutions to meet the high-speed broadband networking needs of the Town. Originally comprising seven members, the TC as a whole stepped back when on April 3, 2019 the BOS accepted a proposal from Fiber Connect (FC) to extend its existing network to unserved areas of the Town and appointed the TC co-chairs Jeff Lazarus and Rolfe Tessem (and later, Lucinda Vermuelen) to be the negotiating team for an agreement with FC (see below).

Background and history. For several years before formation of the TC, the Town had engaged in significant broadband planning work, primarily through its participation in WiredWest, a consortium of western Massachusetts towns investigating a regional approach, which ultimately failed to materialize. In summer 2015 the Town received two unsolicited proposals from private companies to build and operate private broadband networks in the Town. These proposals were the catalyst for formation of the Technology Committee. The TC reviewed these proposals and met with the vendors during fall 2015. In the end, the TC recommended that the Town dismiss these proposals and instead pursue an independent approach, similar to several other towns such as Alford, Otis, Mt. Washington, and others. Accordingly, the Town issued a Request for Proposals for network design, engineering, consulting, and project management in May 2016. This was to be followed by an RFP for construction, and then a final RFP for network operation and maintenance.

There were four RFP bidders, but in July 2016 on recommendation of the TC, the BOS voted to dismiss all RFP bidders and instead engage with the Massachusetts Broadband Institute (MBI, an agency of the Commonwealth) for management of the broadband project. Under their “Municipal Project Assistance Program,” MBI was to vet and supervise contractors for pole survey, design/engineering, and construction of a Town-owned municipal broadband network. Through a subcontractor, MBI conducted the pole survey work during fall 2016. But then in January 2017, MBI abruptly abandoned their Municipal Project Assistance Program, a setback for the Town. Instead, MBI offered a new “Private Provider” program through which they contracted with Charter Communications to provide a conventional cable TV system with internet and telephone options. On April 10, 2017, the Select Board voted to accept this program. In June 2017, MBI finalized a contract with Charter, which included a state grant of \$1,185,000 to Charter as an inducement for the Egremont buildout.

After more than a year of missed deadlines and lack of follow-through, in October 2018 Charter reneged on its offer to build a network in Egremont by demanding an additional \$1.2 million over and above the original grant amount, which, in a cost-sharing arrangement mandated by MBI, would have required the Town to contribute an unplanned \$607,500. Meanwhile, by that

time FC was well along in its independent buildout of a high-speed fiber optic network covering about 70% of Egremont.

FY 2019 year in review (July 2018 through June 2019). The Town had decided to accept the original MBI/Charter proposal in April 2017. Much of the ensuing year (FY 2018) was devoted to working through the highly regulated cable TV franchise process and resolving a number of issues with Charter and their proposed Cable TV License Agreement. Early in the new FY 2019, specifically on July 10, 2018, Charter and the Town reached verbal agreement on remaining issues with the cable TV license. The next step, as prescribed by Massachusetts Department of Telecommunications and Cable (DTC) requirements, was for Charter to update the draft License to reflect the verbal agreements. Despite repeated prodding by the Town to move the process along, Charter failed to respond, and the Town had to request a fourth extension of the DTC regulatory negotiation deadline.

On October 9 the Town received a new proposal from MBI/Charter. This was not the final draft of the License Agreement that we had been expecting. Instead, it was a new proposal. Charter had determined that their original June 2017 agreement with MBI in which the state granted an award of \$1,185,000 to build out cable infrastructure covering 96% of dwellings in Egremont was insufficient. Charter claimed that they would require an additional \$1,100,000, or a total of \$2,285,000, to build a cable TV system in Egremont because of much higher “make-ready” costs due to “exceptionally poor utility pole conditions.” As part of the new proposal, MBI had rethought their funding model. They now required the Town to contribute \$607,500 toward the new total cost. The new proposal still anticipated covering only 96% of the Town (versus the Town requirement for 100% coverage), and we still did not know the specific locations of the 4% gap. Moreover, the new MBI/Charter proposal did not include any draft of the actual cable TV license agreement, so we did not know if Charter had made accommodation for the understandings reached at the July 10 meeting.

On Monday, October 15, the Board of Selectmen met to consider this new development. Peter Larkin, chair of MBI, attended the meeting to present the new Charter proposal and answer questions not only about the proposal but also about other options available to the Town. Mr. Larkin reminded the BOS that the state originally allocated \$1,070,000 for support of broadband networking in Egremont. He went on to say that should the Town decide to end negotiations with Charter, the original funding allocation would still be available to the Town as long as the intended use met the state’s legal and financial sustainability requirements.

Given the new and unexpected burden of \$607,500 on Egremont taxpayers, the still-unsettled cable TV license agreement, and Charter’s history of poor response, missed milestones, and unfulfilled promises throughout the license negotiations, the BOS voted to end discussions with Charter. Instead, the BOS instructed the Technology Committee to prepare a Request for Proposals (RFP), consistent with Massachusetts public procurement law, to identify a vendor to complete the network build out to all parts of Egremont not already covered by the existing FC infrastructure.

The TC began by analyzing the unserved portions of Egremont and then developing the RFP. We determined that the unserved area of Egremont comprised approximately 12 road miles with 135 existing dwellings on both public and private roads with a combination of aerial and underground utility services. The RFP sought a vendor (or consortium of vendors) to design,

build, own, and operate a high-speed Internet-connected broadband network in Egremont. The RFP allowed for proposals that would provide network service the entire Town (duplicating service where FC had already built out) or, at the bidder's option, just the unserved areas. All this was documented in the RFP, which the Town issued on December 12. It was posted on the state procurement website and also distributed individually to all vendors of network construction and operations services that were known to the Town. The RFP and its related documents are available on the Town website at <http://www.egremont-ma.gov/bids.html>. Sealed proposals were to be submitted at Egremont Town Hall no later than Thursday, January 31, 2019.

Following state procurement guidelines, the Technology Committee held a "bidders' conference" on January 10, 2019. The purpose of the bidders' conference was to give prospective bidders an opportunity to ask questions, obtain clarification on the RFP, and confirm their understanding of the Town's needs and expectations. Two vendors participated in the conference: FC and SHI International Corporation of Somerset, NJ.

Only Fiber Connect submitted a proposal, which they delivered to the Town on the due date of January 31. Technology Committee members began reviewing the proposal individually after it was received, and the full Committee met on Wednesday, February 20, to compare notes and develop an overall TC evaluation. While there were gaps and open questions in the FC proposal, the conclusion of the Committee was that the proposal was strong enough to advance to the next stage of review, which required an interview with FC to discuss the proposal and resolve the open issues.

The TC met with FC on Wednesday, March 6, to go over the proposal and question FC on a number of gaps and issues. In all, there were eleven areas of concern, including how FC wanted to handle roads with underground utilities, whether they would provide all the information required by MBI in order for the Town to receive its state grant allocation (\$1,070,000), what provisions FC would agree to so as to protect the Town in the event of future business failure or transfer, their lack of a project time line, and other items.

In the interview, FC was able to address some of the Committee's concerns, but other issues remained unresolved. The TC submitted its written recommendation to the BOS on March 18. With a few remaining reservations, the TC was generally satisfied with FC's construction and service proposal regarding buildout of the remaining network infrastructure and regarding the scope, quality, and subscriber costs of the FC's Internet services. At their meeting on April 3, the BOS voted to accept the Committee's recommendation. They appointed the Committee co-chairs, Jeff Lazarus and Rolfe Tessem, to begin negotiations with FC and to follow up with them on the open issues. This process required preliminary consultation with Town Counsel and with MBI to clarify legal requirements and requirements for the state grant, respectively. These consultations took place during the remainder of April. In early May, the Town entered into direct negotiations with Fiber Connect. The Town and FC reached agreement in principle on all eleven open items although several details were still to be worked out.

Separately, the Town opened discussions with MBI on how to pave the way for the Town to receive our state grant allocation of \$1,070,000 toward the cost of the FC project. In earlier years MBI had been rigid in their approach to working with the Town. This time, though, we had very constructive conversations with MBI. For example, because MBI works with several

Town, and the FC proposal was merely an extension of their existing network. Many of the factors that must be considered when contemplating a new network service—such as technical framework, customer service parameters, and many others—are already well-established here. MBI was willing to customize their approach to accommodate our specific situation.

In parallel with FC and MBI negotiations the Town also worked with residents on roads with underground utilities to help them consider their options. The FC proposal called for aerial fiber optic cabling in all unserved areas—including roads with existing underground utility service, where FC would install utility poles as part of their buildout within the scope and pricing of their proposal. However, property owners on the UG roads also had the option of arranging for underground installation of network cabling at their own expense. The Town hosted an information/Q&A session on June 20 at Town Hall at a special Select Board meeting called for this purpose. The meeting was well attended by property owners from the affected UG roads, by Fiber Connect, by Select Board and Technology Committee members, and the public.

Current status. Subsequent to the end of the reporting year, the Town, Fiber Connect (FC), and MBI concluded negotiations on a customized version of the MBI “Action Plan,” which is a three-way agreement among the Town, FC, and MBI that lays out the process for MBI to qualify FC for the state grant award of up to \$1,070,000 toward the cost of the fiber optic infrastructure buildout in all unserved areas of Egremont. All three parties signed off on the agreement effective July 17, 2019. FC has since submitted the documentation required by MBI, and their application is currently under review by MBI. Working with the Town’s FC negotiating team, Town Counsel has completed an initial draft of an agreement between the Town and FC for construction and operation of the FC extended network covering all unserved areas of Egremont. That draft agreement is currently under review by Fiber Connect.



Photo by Mary McGurn

Report of the Tax Collector
July 1, 2018 through June 30, 2019

TAX / YEAR	BALANCE
REAL ESTATE	
2019	148,638.93
2018	35,237.45
PERSONAL PROPERTY	
2019	1,720.13
2018	494.35
MOTOR VEHICLE	
2019	11,799.40
2018	2,810.63
2017	1,615.01
2016	1,335.95
2015	242.82
Total all taxes	\$203,894.67

Respectfully submitted,

Sue Funk
Treasurer-Tax Collector