

The State of the Town's Economy

A Conversation with Sheila Vanderhoef, Town Administrator

In these economic times it was assuring to sit down with Sheila Vanderhoef to discuss the effects of our troubling economy on the running of the Town of Eastham. Although not upbeat, Ms. Vanderhoef felt confidence that her Administration held to a disciplined short range and long range planning program that emerged prepared to steer the Town through this cycle of financial uncertainty.

The operating budget is up only .63% for the upcoming Fiscal Year. This was accomplished by a team effort by all the Department Heads to be focused on the budgetary crisis and be creative on their approach to their tasks and maximizing the output out of their available resources. Additionally, the Town decided to not fund the Assistant Town Administrator position, which is vacant, as well as a Police position, which the Town is actively pursuing Grant money to fund. Along with that selective measures such as cutting the Selectmen travel, dues and memberships expenses, other administrative expenses during the course of the past year basic services for operating the Town's cell phones, Data Processing, etc. were revisited and better plans and options were obtained.

Ms. Vanderhoef insisted that the citizens must be conscious of the fact that there are several expenses in the Town that cannot be controlled but are "fixed" expenses, such as certain basic department operating expense, personal and property insurance, health care expenses, retirement assessments, etc. These expenses are real and cannot be controlled by the Town, and account for at least 15% of the total operating budget.

A key point that Ms. Vanderhoef wished to convey was that Eastham has one of the lowest per capita operating costs on the cape. However, she was cautious to note that additional cost cutting measures must be considered to avoid potential "overrides" in FY 2011.

An interesting note, made by Ms. Vanderhoef, was that she was disappointed that although she lobbied for some "stimulus package" funds for "shovel ready projects", such as Brackett Road, the State declined to assist Eastham with the available funds.

In summary, the Town's keel is steady, with an experienced Captain, First Officers and Crew aboard. What we can do, as citizens and taxpayers of the community is contact our state and federal legislatures and urge them to not ignore our community in any assistance that is available thru the trillions of dollars we will be paying for "stimulus".