

## **Spring has Sprung**

**By John Petrin, Town Manager**

Winter started out rough and then smoothed out for January and February with a couple of minor events. We spent less in snow removal than we did the last two years but still a little more than normal due to lengthy snow events in December into the New Year weekend. Those events were quite costly due to their length of duration. It did not drop a lot of snow but kept DPW busy with treacherous road conditions.

It is now mid-March and we have transitioned into spring quite early with a bit of water. The recent storm has flooded much of Eastern Massachusetts. Many communities and homeowners are dealing with having to get rid of a lot of water where it does not belong. Hardware stores are empty of utility pumps. Roads have been washed out and sewerage along the MWRA line to Deer Island has overflowed in various places. In the big picture, New England is fortunate as it still does not face extreme weather like other parts of the Country. We periodically get hit with storms of this nature that make life difficult for a short while.

In Ashland, we are truly fortunate to have the people we do in our emergency departments. They are always prepared and ready to assist during these times. The Fire Department responds to flooding basements, Police are always available to assist with various situations and the DPW are there making sure our infrastructure is supported and does what it needs to do. This type of water poses problems for our downtown area which is in a floodplain area and borders the Sudbury River. It also threatens low lying roads that were built where they probably should not have been built many years ago. The sewer system is stressed as the rain gets into the pipes for sewer and floods the entire system all the way to Deer Island. Remember, our unwanted waste is transported all the way to Boston for treatment. Your flush travels a long distance. DPW is always monitoring the system to ensure that the pumps continue to operate even when the water poses the threat of overwhelming them. When you may be worried about water in your basement, our emergency crews are away from home making sure that your systems continue to operate to provide safety in Town. This is when our people are at their best. THANK YOU.

Annual Town Meeting is scheduled for May 5, 2010. Please mark your calendar to be there at 7:00 pm at the Ashland High School Ruthfield Auditorium. Part of the Town Meeting form of government is to get citizens to attend to assist in the decision-making process. As you can see, the discussions on balancing the budget are difficult and may have impact on the services we provide. Town elections will take place on May 18. There are positions open for Selectmen, School Committee, Moderator, Board of Health, Library Trustees, Assessor, Planning Board, & Housing Authority.

We continue to work on the budget for Fiscal Year 2011. As you know, the Country is still in a difficult financial position. That translates into difficult decisions for the Town to make in order to balance. At this time, we have a deficit of approximately \$250,000. That is down from the \$655,000 I reported in my column last month. The biggest unknown continues to be the amount of state aid we will receive in the upcoming year. In this current year, we will receive a net of \$5.8 Million. This was down from \$6.5 Million the year before. We are now estimating a cut of \$250,000 for next year. This would be a cut of 15% over two years if this cut is realized.

The Finance Committee has been working on a forecast discussing the Town's financial future. They are finalizing a presentation that they will be making to various groups in Town as the Annual Town Meeting arrives. They are hoping to focus the discussion on the strategic financial view. The Town has had to eliminate and reduce for the last five years. This is in response to expenses increasing faster than resources.

Please remember the Food Pantry for donations of food and household goods. Donations can be made by dropping off items at public buildings such as the Post Office. Your consideration is appreciated. Please also consider a financial donation to **The Ashland Emergency Fund**, at P.O. Box 112, Ashland, MA 01721. The Fund supports residents in need and the Food Pantry.

To follow what is happening in your community, follow the events and happenings in the MetroWest Daily News and WACA-TV as they provide superb coverage. Our website at [www.AshlandMass.com](http://www.AshlandMass.com) has been recently revamped. There is much information on the site for you to peruse. We are the recent recipient of the Common Cause Massachusetts 2010 e-Government Award with Distinction for our website. We are proud recipients of their highest award.

