

## **Snow Season**

### **By John Petrin, Town Manager**

Winter has certainly arrived in full force for 2011. We have already had several storms with significant snowfall this season. This is where you can see our Department of Public Works in action. We are very proud of the work that these people accomplish during snow storms. I can tell you that the Ashland Public Works Department receives high marks in many areas, but particularly in snow removal. Under the guidance of Director Doug Small and Foreman Ben Bonavire, our DPW, sometimes with the assistance of hired contractors, keep our roads in great shape during storms. I often hear comments on how people know when they are in Ashland by the condition of the roadway.

This is not a matter of how much we spend but more a matter of how well our people know their jobs. Our staff understands roads and when and how to address them during a storm. On our website is a document where Doug Small highlights our procedures and how he looks at storms. There is also information as to various cautions such as not shoveling or plowing snow into roadways. We also ask that you shovel hydrants near your house for neighborhood protection. Also on our website is a handbook produced by the Fire Department discussing winter conditions. There is plenty of good information and great ideas on how to survive winter as well as having some fun in a safe way.

As always we watch the amount of salt and sand we use. We try to balance all aspects. Please take care out there and remember the speed limit does not apply in these conditions. The problem is always in braking and attempting to stop. Please use extra caution and develop patience in this weather. I also thank the Police and Fire Departments for the responses they provide during the events. Calls rise drastically during storms and the folks on duty are pulled in many different directions. Please use common sense during these conditions. Our facilities staff for schools and general buildings is also out there working hard to shovel and snow blow paths for all our buildings. Their backs are certainly getting more of a workout this year. Thanks for all you do.

We now enter the budget season for fiscal year 2012. I am going to assume that Armageddon will not occur as some predict and will budget for a full year. With that, it will certainly be another year in which we will work hard to be able to balance present a budget at the May 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Town Meeting. We are hearing plenty of talk about a reduction in local aid from the State. We have barely been getting by the last couple of years and will probably have to once again make difficult decisions. The one thing I can assure everyone is that the Town will balance its budget. I have heard the comment many times that the Town needs to live within its means. To do so this year, may mean cutting some more notches into the proverbial belt. By law, the budget must be balanced when passed. I can assure you that we will have a balanced budget to present at Town Meeting, in accordance with the law. The question is always the types of decisions that have to be made in order to balance it.

The Board of Selectmen is continuing the process whereby residents may get a break on their home electricity costs by group purchasing the entire Town. Mark Purple has been working on this with the Board who has hired the firm of Colonial Power to manage the program. They hope to have a program in place by fall so that you can see a savings in your kilowatt cost for electricity at no cost to the Town. The program will be funded from the savings.

The Board has commenced negotiating with Northeastern University on the purchase of Warren Woods. The discussions will hopefully be concluded shortly and we can release the details of a purchase and sales agreement.

The Board is always seeking volunteers to serve on boards and committees. If you have an interest, please feel to contact a board member to discuss that interest. A Talent Bank Form is located on the Town website with a list of open positions under documents for the Board of Selectmen.

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 recipient of the Common Cause Massachusetts 2010 e-Government Award with Distinction for our website. We are proud recipients of their highest award.