

## **Lincoln Board of Selectmen Annual Report for 2006**

2006 was marked by the continued growth of our resort community. The recreational activities in our beautiful mountain setting of the National Forest and at Loon Mountain have proven a sustaining interest in our town, and this attraction has become the engine of our economy. Over the past 30 years, Lincoln has reinvented itself and become a vibrant and vigorous community and a New Hampshire success story. These changes have never been easy, requiring concern and careful attention, but our townspeople have always risen to the challenge. We have had ups and downs in this process but have persevered and worked through the challenges together and have made something of this opportunity. We have made this a benefit in the present and are working to keep our town secure into the future. This year's town report honors our volunteer fire department and its dedicated members. Our firemen are a clear example of the strong character of this town. We have a citizenry that is engaged in community service; people who have held the common good as an ideal and who dedicate themselves to the success of their town. This spirit can never fail us and is our greatest wealth. More of the second homeowners are becoming "year-rounders" and they are joining us in the effort to improve and protect our community. They have "caught the spirit" and we welcome them.

Property and property values were a central focus of this past year with two significant milestones. The first was accomplished on May 22 with the approval of a "Developer's Agreement" between the town and Centex Destination Properties for the building, over a projected 10 year period, of the South Peak Resort community on the Loon Mountain side of the river. This agreement followed months of hard work on the part of town officials, legal council, the Planning Board and CDP representatives. Future financial and quality of life impacts on the town were the primary consideration for the Board of Selectmen and Town Manager during the negotiations. The final build out onto South Mountain will complete a 20 year odyssey for Loon Mountain and give our town a strong economic base for the future.

The second milestone was the completion of a town wide total property revaluation which was evidenced by the new tax rate of \$8.00 (down from \$18.82) seen on the December tax bills. This revaluation was mandated by State law for all towns and cities to accomplish a fair assessment for the state property tax. We knew our assessment from the early 1990's was undervalued but not until we saw the current figures did the full realization hit home. The good news is that most Lincoln properties, although doubling in value, saw a net reduction in actual tax dollars owed. The growth of our town has kept our taxes low and should continue to do so for the foreseeable future. The Board of Selectmen will be vigilant in following all proposed state legislation for education funding and will lobby ceaselessly against any effort to reestablish a "donor town" system that was so unfairly imposed on us in the past.

Many important improvements to our town were undertaken or completed in 2006. The Town Manager and the department head reports will detail these but the following three are highlights and represent the successful culmination of many years of effort by many of our townspeople.

- The Father Roger Bilodeau Community Center was opened after significant renovation and expansion with Lin-Wood Daycare now in enlarged facilities and Grafton Senior Citizen's

Council beginning the senior meals program. With federal grant and town money we look forward to continued expansion making this facility the true multi-generational heart of our community.

- Lincoln's Business Park was completed and LinWood Real Estate chosen to market and broker the property. The entry road will be named "Arthur Salem Way" after our town's longest serving selectman, 1921-1956.

- The Lincoln Woodstock Community Ballfield was completed and will be put into service in 2007, providing the final component in our recreational sports fields, as fine a system as any town in the state.

This year, 2007, the Board of Selectmen will have a very full agenda. Again, some highlights of the issues and projects we will be addressing:

- We are still interested in continuing a dialogue regarding the school funding formula between North Woodstock and Lincoln. 50% of this formula is based on property values and every year Lincoln's share of school costs grows at a greater rate, and yet N. Woodstock has more children in the system. Our effort in 2006 included hiring a consultant to look at alternative formulas and joining in a subcommittee appointed by the School Board. The response to our questions and the consultant's evaluation left us disappointed. We have a 7 member school committee with 5 members from N. Woodstock, a situation that makes evaluating the current formula very difficult.

- As mentioned earlier, we will be watching carefully the State Legislature regarding state wide school funding. The NH Supreme Court is requiring them to come up with an equitable and sufficient funding law and that puts Lincoln at risk because of our property values. We will work with the Coalition Communities to protect our interests.

- Not least on our list is helping to find a permanent facility location for the North Country Center for The Arts. In the 20 years of theater productions in our town, this organization has distinguished itself and made Lincoln recognized as a unique and exceptional community. The NCCA has become part of who we are as a town, an asset of which we are very proud. We want to help protect and insure their future.

- The dikes, or levees as they are called, built by the Army Corps of Engineers in the 1960's on the Lincoln side of the "Old Hole" swimming area, have recently been decertified by the Army Corps of Engineers because of their deteriorating condition. Our Town Manager and the Planning Board have been very involved over the past several months with state and federal officials and the owners of the property adjacent to the dikes to find a solution. Repair will potentially be very costly, ownership is in question, and the Town does not want to bear this cost without help from the parties involved, including the federal government.

- The private property adjacent to the "Old Hole" is the only access we have to this age old swimming hole. For generations Lincolnites and summer visitors have enjoyed the river at this location. We will be working with the new land owners who wish to develop the area to secure a right-of-way and parking so this much loved tradition can continue.

- Ted Sutton, our Town Manager will be forming a committee to study the 20 acre parcel owned by the town along the river, between the Inn Season Resort property and the Solid Waste Facility. We would like to fulfill a long-talked-about wish to create a river front park in that area. Like the community building, this dream can be realized and would enrich our community greatly.

We cannot end this report without acknowledging all the help we get as your governing body. Town employees and volunteers are involved in every aspect of our town, doing the day to day work, on boards doing town business, in services like our firemen, in support of our programs in the recreation department, the library and the school, and in the private sector bolstering our efforts and making us greater than the sum of our parts. We thank all of you residents and taxpayers who provided the hard earned dollars, but our tax dollars are only one component of this thriving community. We prosper because of our people. We pledge again for this year, as your Selectmen, to work diligently and to spend your money wisely. We welcome you to our Monday evening meetings with your concerns and ideas. Your input will help us make the right decisions.