

Government change spurs reorganization

By Mitch Evich

A form-of-government change approved by voters in Hanover in 2009 has led to changes in the way town services are delivered.

Stephen Rollins, the town administrator in Hanover since the late 1980s, became town manager in August, a few months after the Board of Selectmen increased from three members to five.

Rollins made use of his enhanced powers to reorganize town functions within five new or expanded depart-

ments. Each of the department heads reports directly to the town manager.

The new Finance Department includes the treasurer/collector and Board of Assessors as well as the town clerk and registrar. The Community Services Department includes the Visiting Nurses Association and veterans' services as well as inspections and the town library.

The other three departments are public works, police and fire.

Rollins said the change

moves the town from a "silo" to a "lateral" approach and allows more efficient deployment of staff. Previously, for example, each municipal building had its own maintenance workers. Now, a consolidated maintenance staff services all buildings. Rollins said the change is expected to result in significant savings over time.

The new organizational structure, he added, also puts the town in a better position to respond to a natural disaster or other emergency.

Previously, the official or entity in charge could be the fire chief, the police chief or the Board of Health, depending on the nature of the emergency. Now, Rollins said, the five department heads can respond in a coordinated fashion.

During preparations for Hurricane Earl, Rollins said, "We needed to transition into an emergency management group, and we realized that the right five people were already sitting at the table." *

This article appeared in The Beacon
December 2010