



## **State of the Town Address**

**February 13, 2014**

Last year, we sat together in this room and talked of strengthening relationships with our business and non-profit partners in the community, strengthening our outreach with the community, and strengthening our commitment to the success of Hanover's economy. Today, we sit here together and can look back on a year of success – and strength – in all three areas.

The Hanover Board of Selectmen has been at the forefront of that progress. Through their leadership and continued attention to goals and policies that charge and inspire our employees to build a better Hanover, I am pleased to report that we have done just that. Step by step, plan by plan, and meeting by meeting, we have made progress in building a better community.

In the past year, your elected executives, your direct voice in this historic and storied building, have continued down the bold and clear path set more than a year ago for moving this community forward and have charted a course for continued stability and success. This morning, it is my honor and pleasure as this communities' CEO to provide for the second year an update on that journey, and the steps we have made in the past year toward fiscal responsibility and governmental accessibility.

Last year, in introducing the Board of Selectmen's goal setting initiative, I offered a quote from the great American writer Henry David Thoreau. This year, our friend Henry is back in our consciousness, helping us put the peoples' work in perspective. "What you get by achieving your goals is not as important as what you become by achieving your goals," he said, ably and aptly encapsulating our progress as a community. Over the last year we have become a community that is more transparent, more responsive to its citizens, and more engaged with the people it serves, all due to the vision set forth by our elected leaders.

This progress has its roots in work of the Board of Selectmen and their set of eight clearly defined goals, supported by more than thirty detailed objectives – specific tasks designed to meet those goals. That strategic planning exercise was the springboard for every initiative and activity that has taken place since. As the chief goal-setting and policy making board in this community, the Board of Selectmen took real and tangible steps toward realizing a vision – their vision – of Hanover 2020.

Our staff – your staff – continue to be actively engaged in fulfilling those goals as they have been since I first discussed them with you last year. Tilling those soils of change and progress has not been easy – but it is bearing a bountiful harvest of advancement and improvement every day. Our work continues but our path is clear. Many tasks lie ahead, but many accomplishments forge a clear route to further success. It is my pleasure to report to you this morning that the state of our community is sound, our financial condition continues to be healthy and robust, and this more accessible and accountable government, with some experience and lessons learned, is working. It is in fact thriving. Ladies and Gentlemen, the state of our Town is strong.

Improvements can be made, though – and as the captain at the helm of the good ship Hanover set to enter my third year, I continue to work daily with our crew – many of the leaders and supervisors sit among you – to steer us on a course of constant improvement.

In the all-important area of finances, the past year has witnessed the development of a level of collaboration and transparency heretofore not seen. My proposal for the FY2015 budget is posted on our website for all to see, dissect, and contemplate. Today, our Board of Selectmen and Advisory Committee are actively engaged in a partnership. They are meeting jointly and working toward a common goal of fiscal stability and long-term security. That common goal and the trust and confidence to carry it out has been placed in the hands of our accomplished and experienced Finance Director, Janine Smith. Since joining us a little over a year ago, Janine has brought order, discipline, and a meticulous attention to detail to the stewardship of the peoples' money. Our reserves stand at all-time high levels. Our bond rating agencies continue to heap praise on our methods and approach. Our auditors recognize that we have brought order and accountability, filling a void that existed during a difficult *lassiez-faire* period. Janine has also put together a team of finance professionals dedicated to improving our customer service, internal controls, and accountability. One of those team members, who assumed his position during a time of relative tumult but has been a steady hand and calming presence, is our Town Treasurer-Collector, Scott Curtis. This Hanover native comes to work every day with enthusiasm and has brought his private-sector financial acumen to our team. (Introduce Scott)

This past year, the Hanover Police Department responded to more than 12,900 calls for service. Our professional dispatchers in our Emergency Communications center answered

nearly 4,400 emergency 911 calls. Our community is busy, and our professional law enforcement force, led by Hanover native and engaged citizen Chief Larry Sweeney, continues to respond with professionalism. This week, Chief Sweeney is at an FBI sponsored training with Chiefs from around New England attending briefings on topics as varied as school shootings to employee fraud to terror attacks. He is a regional law enforcement leader and we are fortunate to have him at the helm. During the past year, we worked closely on items as diverse as securing a grant for a prescription drug dropoff container in the police station to providing support to the Marathon bombing investigation and response. Speaking of that seminal event, our own Lt. Greg Nihan was one of two local law enforcement professionals tasked and honored to be part of an elite motorcycle response team that spent many hours in Boston and its environs helping track the ideologue monsters who perpetrated that heinous act. Lt. Nihan is here with us this morning representing the Hanover Police and this morning we pay him a debt of gratitude. (Recognize Lt. Nihan)

The Hanover Fire Department also had an eventful year, responding to more than 3075 calls, 53% EMS based vs 47% Fire based calls, making 2013 the department's busiest ever. Even with that ever-increasing volume, the department, led by Hanover native Chief Jeff Blanchard, continued to search for ways to deliver swift, efficient, and affordable emergency response. The department has just launched its new squad vehicle, a more nimble and adaptable piece of modern equipment, capable of responding to medical calls, fires, and mass casualty incidents with the same state-of-the-art capabilities. It is the result of input and brainstorming from our civilian decision makers – a direct result of conversations between former Chief Ken Blanchard and current selectmen Barthelmes and

Barry - but has been embraced by both our command staff and duty crews. This shift in our operations – a deliberate effort to be more efficient in our response to each and every call – is an example of a department poised to meet the challenges of an ever-changing world of EMS and Fire suppression. During the past year, from a fall inside an industrial wind turbine to several large coordinated storm responses, to everyday life-saving ALS proficiency, our Fire and Rescue personnel continue to be the pride of the South Shore - and beyond. During the last year, it was my pleasure to support Chief Blanchard in making the all-important selection of the person who will stand by his side in managing the dollars, assets, and challenges of running a modern fire department. Deputy Barbara Stone was and is that able and professional “number two” and we are honored by her presence today. (Recognize Deputy Stone).

It is said in Public Administration circles, that as long as you collect trash and plow snow effectively, the people are generally happy. As the guru of making people happy, then, DPW Director Victor Diniak has some pretty weighty (and sometimes stinky) responsibilities. In the past year, our DPW has dealt with more than 60 inches of snowfall and 3,000 tons of trash, making for a busy Victor and a challenging year, all while trying to fix a vexing and sometimes maddening wind turbine. I’m happy to report, by the way, that as we enjoy our breakfast, our wind turbine is spinning happily, providing electricity to our water treatment plant. If you see Victor poking feverishly at his phone like an anxious contestant on ‘Jeopardy’ punching his buzzer, it’s because we recently obtained the ability to track and diagnose the activity (or lack thereof) of our turbine from a PC or mobile device, again fulfilling the Selectmen’s goal of a more responsive and transparent government. Public works is also about water, that precious and irreplaceable resource.

The last year in the Hanover Water Department saw the addition of a new CWO – a Chief Water Officer. His real title is Deputy Superintendent of the DPW for Water and his experience and reputation are outstanding. Neal Merritt comes to Hanover with more than a decade of experience in water treatment and distribution and is working daily to replace water meters, modernize our distribution system, and be the public face of our most important utility. Today, it is my pleasure to introduce a public information newsletter that is being sent to more than 6,000 postal customers in Hanover, providing information and outreach on our water system and some of its challenges. Neal was a leader in this outreach effort. Welcome, Neal, and thank you for your tireless work to keep our water clean and our community hydrated.

We are now in the second full year of a modernized and organized public facilities department. Each department is a customer to this busy organization, and Facilities Engineer Bob Murray continues to maintain a smile and positive attitude despite being busy. The previously quoted sage Thoreau said of being busy, “It is not enough to be busy. So are the ants. The question is: What are we busy about?” Well, our facilities department is busy about cleaning, repairing, and upgrading tens of millions of dollars worth of public assets. In the last year, they have installed new communication equipment at our Schools and access controls at several buildings, upgrading critical emergency communications and security, installed nearly a million dollars in energy efficiency additions to our buildings to reduce energy costs using grants provided by the Commonwealth’s Green Communities program, made our buildings more accessible to people with disabilities, and provided a level of customer service that continues to draw praise and gratitude. Our field general in this battle for cleanliness and modernization is Deputy Superintendent Jerry Peterson.

With more than twenty years of facilities experience, Jerry has brought an attention to detail that would make Madge, the white glove lady from the Palmolive commercials, proud. Jerry, we are proud and pleased to have you on the team and welcome you here today. (Salute Jerry)

I continue to affectionately call our Community Services department “everything else.” Led by Director of Community Services Tony Marino, this wide-ranging public agency encompasses building, health, conservation, zoning, and planning – all of our regulatory functions – and in addition the bustling hub of information that is the John Curtis Free Library and our vibrant, activity-filled Senior Center, as well as our Visiting Nurses and Veterans Agent. In the past year, everything else has tackled everything under the sun, from providing permitting and assistance to our commercial and residential development representing the busiest year for construction since 2008, to introducing a new senior workoff and veterans workoff program, where eligible Hanover residents can earn up to a \$1,000 discount on their property taxes by providing a public service, this has been a busy and productive year. Just recently, we welcomed Nurse Administrator Karen Lynch to our team of caring public servants. Welcome, Karen, to the best everything else team in the Commonwealth. Speaking of the best, our Library Director Lorraine Welsh has brought a quiet determination to her pursuit of one of the finest local libraries in the Commonwealth spanning three decades. She and her trusted trustees respond to changes in technology, provide a myriad of activities, and continue to operate one of Hanover’s public jewels. Lorraine joins us today and we thank her for her service to lifelong learning. The best also describes a Senior Center that boasts activities from cribbage to karaoke – from cooking to canasta. Overseeing this little engine of progress and productivity that could – and does – highlight what’s right with Hanover is someone who understands – and cherishes the

notion that our seniors bring the experience, passion, and ability to contribute that forms the heart of any community – is Senior Center Director Robyn Mitton. Thank you Robyn, for making the Hanover Senior Center one of the finest around.

One of the Selectmen's most important ongoing goals is to strengthen partnerships. The presence of our School Superintendent Matt Ferron here today is evidence of the strength and enduring nature of the partnership we have been able to forge. More than just colleagues and executives at the helm of this community, we have become trusted and valued confidants, sharing experiences and ideas to together build a better Hanover. My proposal for next year's budget fulfills a promise that Hanover and its leaders – both elected and appointed - value education and are committed to restoring Hanover as a leader on the South Shore in educating our youth and preparing them to be good – and competitive – citizens. In the last year, I have spent many hours out in our community strengthening our relationships with many partners in the community – from our non-profit friends at the YMCA and Cardinal Cushing, to our Chamber, who enjoys an office here in town hall today, to our regional South Shore chamber, who recently asked us to join their regional economic development committee. We have worked hard to forge and today demonstrate a vibrant working relationship with our most prominent and important partner on Route 53 – our friends at the Hanover Mall. The presence of Ed Callahan here today demonstrates that our partnership works – and will continue to thrive.

We are also working closely to encourage a new crop of tomorrow's leaders, having worked with several of shining stars of the next generation. Today, Hanover native Will Barrett, a student at Bridgewater State University and an active intern in the Selectmen's office, joins us. Will is overseeing both the production of our annual town report and the Town Meeting



warrant, making him an engaged and important part of our team. We salute his efforts and those of all of our young people who are part of building a better Hanover.

We strive daily to be more transparent in the work we do. A working group of employees and citizens worked for months on a revamped and more interactive website that was recently recognized by the MMA as the finest municipal website in the Commonwealth for communities between 5,000 and 15,000 residents. This honor was a true community effort – citizens and employees working together, side by side, toward a common goal set by our elected leaders. That's community. That's progress. We continue to recognize that we work for you –and are working every day to reach out and engage, to make ourselves more open and available, and to improve our service delivery to our most important customer – the taxpayer.

Our Boards and Committees, whose members are the backbone of our citizen-based government, many of whom are here this morning, continue to add to the success of our community. I have spent dozens of hours over the past year with the Chair of our Parks and Recreation Committee finalizing construction and planning at Forge Pond Park. Our Advisory Committee is in the middle of spending hundreds of hours reviewing next year's budget. Our Selectmen continue to challenge me and our staff to seek constant improvement and lead the way through their policy making. This government functions because of the thousands of hours donated annually by its citizens. I salute their – and your efforts toward a continuously improved Hanover.

It has been quite a year. We've had some zeniths and an occasional nadir. We've plowed through snow and plodded through budgets. We've honored our employees and our citizens at a community cookout and we've celebrate community with the Cultural Council

at another successful Hanover Day. Through it all, we have maintained that the “WE” in those events, the unity through the peaks and valleys, are what makes Hanover the place that it is. As I often say, it takes a name to make a town, but people to make a community. Today, and every day, we salute the people that have made the last year one of this communities’ best.