



## **State of the Town Address**

**February 12, 2015**

In August of 2009, the Governor signed into law Chapter 67 of the Acts of that year, profoundly and forever changing the manner and form by which the people of Hanover are led and governed. The Hanover Town Manager Act, and the citizen visionaries who conceived and supported it, envisioned and foresaw a government more responsive to and more in connection with the people it served. The Act promised a government with clearly defined centralized authority that could make decisions and elected representatives that were unfettered with the grind of daily operations and able to focus on a vision for Hanover's future. More than five years later, that vision has come to fruition. Government in Hanover works. It works. This morning, I have the pleasure of addressing you for the third time as Town Manager – the peoples' CEO – and sharing how our government and those you have elected to lead it are making it work every day.

Vice Chairman Setterland is correct. To paraphrase Super Bowl champion Coach Bill Belichick, this Board of Selectmen has done their job. They have led the community to new heights of financial stability and governmental accountability. Through a living and frequently updated strategic plan, they have charted a course for better government – and we continue on that course every day, guided by their commitment to excellence.

The most recent iteration of this strategic plan includes four broad categories that guide our daily work: Community Relationships, Rte. 53 and our town's vital business environment, The Fireworks Site, and Finances. These comprehensive areas of focus are then broken down into twenty specific objectives, all designed to provide measurable and quantifiable progress for our community.

Our staff – your staff – continue to be actively engaged in fulfilling those goals as they have been since I first discussed them with you two years ago. We continue to till those soils of change while seeking constant progress and improvement. The results have been noteworthy and I am glad to share them with you today. Ladies and Gentlemen, the state of our Town is strong.

Community relationships and partnerships continue to be a strong focus for the Board and our team. 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. Matt deserves a big thumbs up for leading the Hanover Schools to a bright future. 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 continues to fulfill a promise that Hanover and its leaders – both elected and appointed - value education and are committed to maintaining Hanover as a leader on the South Shore in educating our youth and preparing them to be good – and competitive – citizens. This year, we are taking that partnership to even greater heights, actively supporting Matt's vision for a new math curriculum and working in partnership with Chief Sweeney to establish a School Resource Officer. Our other partners in the community are here with us today. We have spent many hours together in the last

year, from planning and implementing new sidewalks to improve the safety of the students and faculty at the Cardinal Cushing Centers, to working with the South Shore YMCA to enhance their scholarship and charitable offerings for Hanover citizens, to regular meetings with the management of the Hanover Mall, strategizing on economic development opportunities, Hanover continues to be a place where businesses and non-profits can – and do – thrive. The South Shore Chamber, a critical link to business and economic development resources in the region, is represented here today by its President and CEO Peter Forman. Peter, thank you for your leadership and advocacy. There is still a sign on my door that says, ‘Open for Business.’ We’re glad to have a strong partner in the south shore chamber that gets that.

Our daily work in town hall keeps us focused and energized. In the all-important area of public finance, the past year has seen a continuation for our quest for collaboration and transparency. My proposal for the FY2016 operating budget conforms to the tenets of the Government Finance Officers Association and is a three hundred page volume of information that provides narratives, details, and insight into our allocation of the peoples’ resources. This format is designed to demystify our finances and open the books of the town to all. It represents a new level of transparency and is posted on our website for all to see, dissect, and contemplate. This project was quarterbacked by our project manager Art Ceurvels, who has distinguished himself as an invaluable member of our team, coordinating multiple efforts simultaneously, juggling the visionary whims and demands of an energetic CEO. Art, thanks for your dedication to building a better Hanover.

Today, our Board of Selectmen and Advisory Committee continue their partnership. They are meeting jointly and working toward a common goal of fiscal stability and long-term

financial 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 two years ago, Janine has brought order, discipline, and a meticulous attention to detail to her work. Our reserves continue to grow. With the allocation proposed at this Spring's Town meeting, our stabilization fund will top \$2 million, the highest amount in more than a decade. We have also created a capital stabilization fund, and an OPEB trust fund, keeping precious resources set aside rather than simply spending because we can, smartly planning for our financial future. Once again, the Selectmen do their job. All of these initiatives have their nascence in the Selectmen's financial policies.

As Finance Director, 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 is our Acting Town Accountant, Chelsea Stevens. This Bridgewater State University graduate brought an excellent work ethic and a "can do" attitude to the Accounting office. She continues to grow professionally and will take the exam to become a certified Town Accountant this spring. She has been a great addition to our team and joins us here today. (Introduce Chelsea)

This past year, the Hanover Police Department responded to more than 13,000 calls for service. Our professional dispatchers in our Emergency Communications center answered nearly 4,400 emergency 911 calls. Chief Walter Sweeney continues to be a steady presence leading Hanover's men and women in blue. Representing Chief Sweeney today is Lt. Greg Nihan, who works directly with the Chief in overseeing a professional local law enforcement agency consisting of experienced, educated, and dedicated officers and civilians. One prominent example of Hanover's respect within the law enforcement

community - during the past year, the department participated in an FBI national training initiative for shopping center shootings. The FBI, Hanover Police, Hanover Fire & EMS participated in an eight hour drill at the Hanover Mall at which they implemented recently accepted responses to active shooters. More than 100 cross jurisdictional professionals participated. This, too, was the result of a goal set through the professional evaluation process inspired by the Selectmen and introduced by the Town Manager. Our collaboration extends far beyond exercises. Chief Sweeney worked closely with Chief Blanchard to address the opiate epidemic that stands as the most pressing and urgent public health issue in our community – and our Commonwealth. We worked to train and equip our first responders with the opiate antidote Narcan – and our police cruisers were furnished with this life saver on July 2<sup>nd</sup>. A life was saved here in Hanover two days later. With Lt. Nihan representing the department today is newly named Detective Stephen Moar. Steve has been with the Hanover PD more than 20 years, and was recently selected as a Detective based on his years of honorable service. We're glad you're with us today and recognize your commitment and sacrifice.

The Hanover Fire Department continues to be a leader on the South Shore, responding to more than 2,600 calls, with nearly 60% EMS based vs 40% Fire based calls, making 2014 another of the department's busiest ever, following a year that held a similar moniker. This year's numbers are again on record pace. Each year, the non-storm event call totals increase and the demands of multiple and simultaneous calls stack up. Even with that ever-increasing volume, though, the department, led by Hanover native Chief Jeff Blanchard, continues to search for ways to deliver swift, efficient, and affordable service. The Department's new Squad vehicle has increased efficiency and lowered vehicle costs,

representing a more nimble and modern department. Chief Blanchard is working with UMASS Boston to bring best practices to our fleet of vehicles, using successful methods from other communities and copious amounts of data to drive our decisions locally. Acting Captain Justin Reed joins us today, representing Hanover's professional fire and rescue team, fresh off working tirelessly during the recent storms, even joining our National Guard in digging out hydrants. They serve because they care.

Whether you call our recent weather the blizzard of 2015, Snowmagedon, or just winter in New England, one thing is certain: the epic snow that has fallen on the Town over the past few weeks has tested but not beaten the resolve of the Town. Thanks to herculean efforts by DPW employees and our local business partners, the Town has weathered the storms, literally and figuratively. Highway Foreman Shawn Gokey, Public Grounds Foreman Steven McNamara and Deputy Superintendent Curt MacLean have worked around the clock, skillfully leading the Town's team of 35 plow operators and 47 contract plows to ensure that all roads remain open. While other Towns may have struggled at times, Hanover has remained opened – fulfilling both the 'black roads' policy of the Board of Selectmen and our commitment to the citizens.

The efforts of the DPW's water division should also be recognized as the division's staff continues to improve water quality throughout town. Vigilance by treatment staff in optimizing quality at the treatment plants as well as improvements within the distribution system are paying off, reducing incidents of discolored water throughout the system but especially in North Hanover. Challenges remain as we fight to comply with ever stringent regulation, but the Town continues its drive towards excellence.

While the DPW responds daily to infrastructure challenges, Hanover has been fortunate to have the support of residents and businesses in the Town's quest for sustainability of its infrastructure. The past year saw the completion of major work funded through the 2010 road bond. While Hanover, like all communities, have roads in various states of repair, we are pleased to report that there are currently no roads in the Town of Hanover that require major reconstruction. We are hopeful that efforts on the state level to fund Chapter 90 at the \$300-\$400 million level will allow Hanover to maintain its roadway network at a very high level. This, coupled with ongoing improvements to dams and the completion of Forge Pond Park, show that the Town is committed to maintaining its investment in its infrastructure and providing a community where quality of life can take a front seat to many of the problems that plague other communities. Thank you Victor – and your team – for your tireless efforts.

We are now in the third full year of a modernized and organized public facilities department. Every department is a customer to this busy organization, and Facilities Manager Bob Murray continues to maintain a smile and positive attitude despite being always hectic, usually frenetic, sometimes frantic, but never just lck. Bob and the nearly three dozen custodians and maintenance employees are busy cleaning, repairing, and upgrading tens of millions of dollars worth of public assets. We have a skilled custodial foreman in Chris Coviello with a background in hospital cleanliness standards overseeing a staff of 24 custodians who continue to upgrade and improve the cleaning standards and methods in our schools and town buildings. Superintendent Matt Ferron recently noted that our buildings never looked better. Our 4 skilled maintenance personnel completed 2,400 work orders over the past year involving everything from clearing clogged toilets in

schools, to modernizing the kitchen in Town Hall, to building attractive sheds over the irrigation wells at Forge Pond Park, to clearing snow-covered sidewalks and plowing the snow in our school lots. The department also completed a capital project involving installation of new electronic access controls in our schools which now affords keyless entry for all school department staff as well as our emergency responders – a critical safety improvement in today’s uncertain times. The department is just completing installation of over \$350,000 dollars in energy efficiency improvements to our buildings to reduce utility costs, funded completely through a \$250,000 grant from the Commonwealth’s Green Communities program along with \$102,000 in corresponding incentive grants from our 2 utility companies. They have 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 three decades of combined facilities experience, Jerry and Chris are a model for other communities seeking to streamline like Hanover has. We are proud and pleased to have you both on the team and welcome you here today. (Salute Jerry & Chris)

I continue to affectionately call our Community Services department “everything else.” Led by Assistant Town Manager/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, Veterans Agent and just recently, our Cable access channel. In the past year, Tony has tackled everything under the sun, from providing permitting and assistance to our commercial and residential development to launching our View Permit online service. We



are proud to say that our permitting for all inspectional services is now online and we continue to look for additional permits and services we can offer utilizing this online permitting program. Among the most important developments in the last year, was the arrival of a new Town Planner, a position that was vacant for over two years. After several searches we have promoted from within and are proud to introduce Peter Matchak as our Town Planner, Pete's impressive education is now matched with valuable experience gained in Hanover as he continues to look for new ways to revitalize Rt. 53, update our master plan, and help bring new businesses and opportunities to Hanover. Continuing the trend in Community Services to create a more nimble department, we have also filled the position of Assistant Town Planner with Heather Lamplough, Heather has an impressive resume, education and a desire to prove herself in the planning community. Heather and Pete continue to make improvements in the Planning office as they work closely with Tony and me as we continue our plans to revitalize Route 53 in partnership with those here today.

We are also working closely to encourage a new crop of tomorrow's leaders, working actively with several of shining stars of the next generation. Today, three interns from Hanover High School work here in Town Hall, learning the tools of the trade of professional public administration, and helping provide customer service to our most important customers – you – the citizens of Hanover.

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 and we now have a public jewel in Forge Pond Park – a project

that stands as a beacon to other communities of the possibilities when citizens and governments work together. 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 and goal setting. 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 is my honor to lead this community on your behalf, and I was pleased and honored to work with the Selectmen to confirm a new three year contract, for it is that collective commitment to constant improvement, to public accountability, and to governmental excellence that pervades our work every day.

As many of you know, I begin each day by writing and distributing an original inspirational quote. It's my way of staying grateful and of sharing that gratitude. Here is today's quote: "Progress is not measured by notes on a page, your status in life, your wealth or your age. Progress is measured by the lives that you touch – not just by how many but more by how much." Thank you for being here today and for working with me to make progress – toward working together to touch the lives of others.