

Town Clerk/Treasurer's Report

In late fall of 2012, our office lost a dear friend and co-worker. Joyce Henderson, assistant town clerk since 1999, passed away November 2 at the age of 60 after a four year battle with lung cancer. She was ahead in that battle for most of those years, and maintained a regular work schedule. She was in the office every week where her primary responsibility was to keep up with the document recording, and she was scheduled to work on election day, November 6, as she had most all election days from 2000 forward. Needless to say, her absence was felt immediately and acutely.

Joyce and her husband, Bill Pierce, owned the Chipman Inn for 27 years and had just sold the place in September 2012 and moved to Middlebury. Bill served on the Ripton planning commission from 1991-2001, for some of those years as chair, and recently held the position of "facilities coordinator" overseeing the maintenance of our town buildings. Joyce served several terms as our delegate to the Regional Planning Commission. Ripton bids farewell to Joyce and Bill with much appreciation for their many years of service.

Recording deeds requires meticulous attention to detail and I am so fortunate that Joyce had the patience and willingness to do it all these years. I am able to pick up where she left off by following her excellent example and crib notes. When the previous town clerk began the task of computerizing records, it was Joyce who pored over the old vital record books and entered every detail into the town database. That effort, which included the entry of over 8,000 names of Ripton residents since the mid 1800's, became the basis of our expanded database that now includes land records. With all those names in the system, data entry of our land records history goes much faster. Joyce was also the go-to-person for all things language and grammar; until her diagnosis four years ago, she was responsible for writing town meeting minutes and usually got first shot at proofing the town report (so, forgive us if it's not up to its usual high standard this year!) All her wonderful office contributions aside, however, I simply miss Joyce's wisdom, her laugh, her unique way of seeing things - and, of course, numerous conversations about cats, hedgehogs and knitting.

Land Records

In the town report for 2001, then town clerk Tim Hanson wrote in his report, "We hope to start computer indexing the land records this year... the system we have now is antiquated and inefficient. We expect this project to take several years..." Well, I am happy to report that since November 2012, we are no longer continuing the "antiquated and inefficient" system of indexing land records on index cards. All documents received for recording are entered directly into a database from where an index is printed. The next step is to enter historical data from the existing index cards and general index until we have at least 40 years of history, the required time frame for a title search. The computerized record also includes a scanned image of each document.

Property sales have picked up in Ripton (see the listers report for details) and re-financing continues to be a popular activity while interest rates remain low.

| | 2012 | 2011 | 2010 | 2009 | 2008 | 2007 | 2006 |
|--------------------|------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Property Transfers | 18 | 26 | 44 | 24 | 18 | 18 | 26 |
| # Pages Recorded | 641 | 494 | 630 | 583 | 476 | 648 | 633 |

Vital Statistics

In 2012, seven births, two marriages, and four deaths were added to our vital records. Additionally, three Ripton residents died elsewhere (and the record will reside in the town where the event occurred).

| | 2012 | 2011 | 2010 | 2009 | 2008 | 2007 | 2006 | 2005 | 2004 | 2003 |
|------------------------------|----------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Births | 7 | 5 | 5 | 9 | 7 | 3 | 4 | 6 | 5 | 6 |
| Marriages* / Civil Marriages | 2 | 4 | 2 | 3 | 5 | 9 | 10 | 3 | 4 | 7 |
| Civil Unions* | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| Deaths | 4 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 7 |

*in 2009, "civil union" and "marriage" were replaced by "civil marriage" as the legally recognized union of two people.

Town Clerk/Treasurer's Report (continued)

Tax Collection

Property tax bills go out around July 20th of every year, so if you don't receive your bill by August 1, please contact us to make sure we have your correct address. We can send you a bill electronically – just e-mail me at townclerk@riptonvt.org to set that up. If you want to make partial tax payments anytime during the year, that is perfectly fine – it is no problem to track early payments of any amount. The tax due date is voted on every year at town meeting and is generally the first Thursday in November. The proposed tax due date for 2013 is Thursday, November 7 and postmarks are accepted. Any payments received or postmarked after November 7 are turned over to the collector of delinquent taxes for collection.

Dog Licensing

108 dogs were licensed in Ripton in 2012. State law requires that all dog owners license any dog over six months of age with the town clerk on or before April 1 of every year. Fees are: \$8 for neutered/spayed dogs, \$12 for unneutered/unspayed dogs. Licenses issued after the deadline include a late fee. We need to have a copy of your dog's rabies vaccination certificate on file to issue the license. If your dog's rabies certification expires later in the year, get your license now based on the current certification and send us a copy of the new one when you get it. The law further requires the town clerk to turn over to the selectboard a list of any known unlicensed dogs on May 30 of each year; further action to enforce the law will then be up to the board.

Elections

2012 saw three elections with average voter turnout by Ripton standards - we always have a higher than national average of voter turnout for general elections. Town meeting election day is Tuesday, March 5; the polling place will be in the town office from 7:00 am to 7:00 pm. (Since it will be a moderately attended election and held in the town office, it's okay with me if you license your dog at the same time!) For further information about elections and election issues, contact the town office during office hours, visit the town website at www.riptonvt.org or the Vermont Secretary of State's website at www.sec.state.vt.us.

Ripton Voter Participation

| Town Meeting | | | State & Federal Elections | | |
|--------------|--------------|-----------|---------------------------|--------------|-----------|
| Year | Total Voters | Voted | Election | Total Voters | Voted |
| 2012 | 450 | 153 (34%) | General 2012 | 472 | 337 (71%) |
| 2011 | 447 | 116 (26%) | Primary 2012 | 454 | 96 (21%) |
| 2010 | 446 | 125 (28%) | General 2010 | 451 | 291 (65%) |
| 2009 | 433 | 137 (32%) | Primary 2010 | 447 | 167 (37%) |
| 2008 | 424 | 269 (63%) | General 2008 | 444 | 355 (80%) |
| 2007 | 424 | 172 (41%) | Primary 2008 | 431 | 48 (11%) |
| 2006 | 450 | 110 (24%) | General 2006 | 453 | 316 (70%) |
| 2005 | 436 | 107 (25%) | Primary 2006 | 428 | 92 (21%) |
| 2004 | 405 | 152 (38%) | General 2004 | 444 | 332 (75%) |
| | | | Primary 2004 | 438 | 87 (20%) |

Personnel changes

After 17 years as assistant town clerk/treasurer, Alison Joseph will not continue that role in 2013. Alison became the clerk of the selectboard in August 2011 and, combined with her responsibilities as chair of the board of listers and planning commission membership, has plenty enough to do. There was a time when one person could wear many hats, but that is less and less the case as all town jobs have become more complicated and time-consuming in this complex age. I am especially grateful to Alison for getting me through my first years as town clerk, and as I am not losing her as an office mate, look forward to many more years of working together. Along with Joyce Henderson's passing, this means I will be appointing a new assistant clerk/treasurer following town meeting when annual appointments are made.

When Joyce Dicianna sold her home and left Ripton in 2012, she had to resign her positions as moderator and justice of the peace. JP's play an important role in elections and serve on the Board of Civil Authority (BCA). I want to thank Joyce for her willingness to serve above and beyond normal expectations by often working the early morning shift on election days, the late night shift counting ballots at the high school town meeting election day, and chairing the BCA.