

# Columbia Chatter

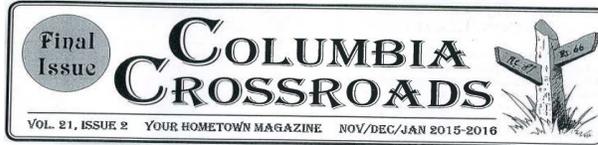
The Official Town of Columbia (TOC) Newsletter



**Special points of interest:**

- > Like the TOC Facebook page!
- > Residents can save money by switching to LED bulbs
- > Burn smart this winter!
- > "Lost" Bicentennial coin found!
- > New events at the Senior Center & Rec Dept!!
- > Last day to pay taxes without penalty is 2/1/15
- > Presidential Preference Primary is 4/26/16
- > Snow removal tips & salt
- > Volunteer to fill committee/ commission vacancies!

## Farewell to the Beloved *Columbia Crossroads* by Kim Bona



On behalf of the Town of Columbia, we would like to thank all of those involved in making "The Crossroads" the wonderful, hometown magazine it has been for the past 20 years. A huge thank you is due to Astrid Belanger, Marge and Barry Grant who got the whole thing started in the 1990's.

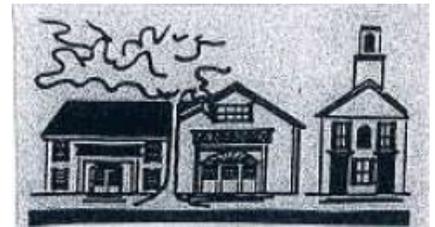
A small group of approximately 15 people, including Astrid, Marge and Barry, met on a weekly basis and gathered interesting stories about the townspeople, as well as bits and pieces of "this and that" around town. While doing this, they had one important thing in mind and that was to keep this

community magazine "warm and friendly." It is safe to say, the mission was accomplished. Even though attempts were made to continue the Crossroads business, it just did not pan out. The Crossroads will be sorely missed.

Although bittersweet, Columbia Town Administrator Natasha Nau has begun this quarterly newsletter with the intention of keeping residents informed of events and news taking place in town. Town Departments, committees,

boards and commissions will submit news and articles on a quarterly basis discussing upcoming news, events, etc.

The newsletter will be issued quarterly at the end of the quarter. For 2016, that will be on March 31st, June 30th, September 30th and December 30th. It will be distributed electronically via the website and/or the email notification system. For those who wish to receive a hard copy, they will be printed upon request at the Town Administration office.



## Senior Transportation by Cathie Rowe from Commission on Aging (CONA)

At the 12/1/15 BOS meeting, CONA made a presentation that outlined several requests. Using data collected and analyzed from the CONA survey sent out in February 2014, research collected on transportation options in surrounding towns and reviewing WRTD data, CONA made the following requests:

► Apply for a 53-10 Grant in March which provides 2/3 of the cost to purchase a van to provide flexible, reliable and affordable transporta-

tion for seniors and disabled adults in Columbia. This van would supplement WRTD services NOT replace them.

► Put at least an additional \$47,052 into the BOS operating budget for FY '16-17. This includes \$20,000 for the town's 1/3 cost of a van and \$27,052 for operational expenses associated with this new service. This number may be conservative.

► Work with CONA to get the program up and running. CONA will continue to

advocate for transportation services that could improve the quality of life for many Columbia residents. The BOS will now decide the next steps. If you have questions about the work of CONA, please contact Chairperson Cathie Rowe at 860 228-0203.



**Inside this issue:**

Town Admin., LED lighting, Burning tips	2
First Selectman, Rec. Director	3
Historian, Senior Center Director	4
Assessor, Tax Collector, Town Clerk	5
Public Works, Rec. Commission, Board Clerk	6
Fire Marshal, Registrar, Building/Land Use	7
Tree trimming, CAC, Root Homestead	8



### From the Desk of Town Administrator, Natasha Nau

*"Please 'like' our Facebook page so the news pops up in your feed."*

Since I began working for the Town in April, I have been learning the ropes inside and out! I also have tried to implement new ideas and improve certain functions/services. The Town now has an official Facebook page that is updated daily. Please "like" our Facebook page so the news pops up in your feed. There is also a new "Receive Notifications" email service on our website that residents can sign up for town news (including this newsletter). The Community Calendar on the website now includes all town related events for easy reference.

In other news, Baker Hill

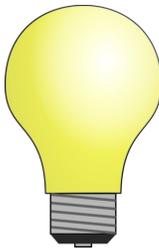
Bridge rehabilitation was completed jointly with Lebanon in October and Roses Hill Bridge replacement was completed jointly with Coventry in November.

I have been working with Fire Chief Peter Starkel on determining whether or not Columbia will be hiring day-time staff beginning in FY 17-18. Updates will be provided at BOS meetings. The beach erosion and ADA non-compliance issues will be addressed via proposals from consultants as well as the Town Planner. These will be discussed at public meetings over the winter and a plan will be put into motion after

the season in September.

The Town is completing its 10-year revision of its Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD). The Planner received over 200 responses from residents to her survey and is analyzing the results. Some comments will be included in the revision. The final product should be ready in June.

The 21 foot Holiday Tree was delivered from my father's tree farm in Vermont and LED lights were purchased to decorate it for residents to enjoy. Thank you to the Lion's Club for organizing the annual gazebo and tree lighting ceremony!



*"There should be very little visible smoke coming from your chimney and no smell of smoke indoors."*

### The Benefits of LED Lighting by Bryan Tarbell, EAC

If every American home replaced one incandescent light bulb with one that earned the ENERGY STAR, we would save enough energy to light 2 million homes a year (nearly \$460 million in annual energy costs). In a Connecticut home today,

switching one 60W bulb with a LED will yield annual savings of approximately \$17.00.

#### LED light benefits:

- Instant on – perfect for outdoor and/or cold climates
- Most are dimmable
- Emits soft light as traditional bulbs

- 'Day Glow' - excellent daylight quality light
- Durable - no breakable filaments
- Safer to operate, produce about 70-90% less heat, last longer
- Environmentally friendly - do not contain mercury

### 5 Tips for Burning Smart in your Outdoor Wood Burning Furnace (DWFs) this Winter by Carole Williamson, EAC

1. Burn only clean, well-seasoned firewood to reduce smoke and creosote buildup. Properly seasoned wood has just under 20% water by weight, is generally darker at the ends and weighs much less than freshly cut wood.
2. When kindling a new fire, fully open all air inlets of the stove to cre-

3. Burn smaller, hotter fires in order to ensure complete combustion of the wood. There should be very little visible smoke coming from your chimney and no smell of

smoke indoors.

4. Avoid slow, smoldering fires by ensuring that sufficient air is coming into the fire through the air inlets of the stove in order to maintain the flame. Do not damper down overnight!
5. Properly maintain your wood stove and chimney for efficiency and safe operation.



### From the Desk of First Selectman, Carmen Vance

With Natasha Nau's arrival as Town Administrator we have now moved into the digital age! The electronic newsletter is her idea as a way of updating residents on what is happening since the Crossroads is no longer being published. Hopefully you will find the newsletter informative about town issues.

The construction work on the expanded library has finally begun. Although, it is a later start than we would have liked, the warm weather has allowed them to pour concrete and hopefully have the structure enclosed before severe weather hits.

I always think of January as budget time! The Town Administrator works with department heads on their budget requests. The most difficult piece is figuring projected income. This involves knowing what the town will get from the state, what percentage of taxes will be collected, what the mill rate will generate. For the school, knowing what they will get from the state gets even more complicated. In February, the Selectmen review the town budget and decide what should be presented to FiPAC in both the operating and capital requests. The Board of Education fol-

lows the same basic schedule. FiPAC then has to decide what to propose to the residents for their approval in May. So stay tuned!

A special thank you to all those volunteers who helped prepare the Thanksgiving and Christmas baskets for those in need in Columbia. Deb Smith and Dixie Silvestri organized it. The fire department provided gift cards for Ted's Market and several people helped deliver the baskets. The effort was much appreciated by those who received baskets.

I learned recently that the nonprofit agencies in the Windham area have

set up a central telephone number (211), that the homeless can call for assistance. An individual will work with them to find shelter, food, clothing, etc. Please encourage anyone needing this kind of assistance to make that call.

If you have an idea for a project or program that you think would benefit residents please do not hesitate to let me know. We can discuss and perhaps find a way to make it happen! Contact me at [cvance@columbiact.org](mailto:cvance@columbiact.org) or on my cell 860-336-8119.



### From the Desk of Recreation Director, Marc Volza

The new hours for the Department are as follows: Mon-Thurs 8 a.m. – 3 p.m. Contact: (860) 228-8513 or [recreation@columbiact.org](mailto:recreation@columbiact.org)

In the upcoming months, we will be hosting a couple of events for residents to take advantage of. On *January 31<sup>st</sup> from 2-5 pm*, the **3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Columbia Cupcake Challenge** will be held in Yeomans Hall. Residents can either enter their cupcakes into the contest or be a taste tester. On *March 1<sup>st</sup>, 6-8 PM* there will be

a **CRPA Hot Shots** competition at Porter school. Children ages 9-15 can show off their talents in a basketball shooting competition. A boy and girl from each age group advance to the state level competition.

In addition we have our always popular classes for the public:

- **Youth paint nights:** *Jan 8<sup>th</sup> 630-8pm* ages 7-12, and *Jan 9<sup>th</sup> 3-430pm* Ages 3-6, in Yeomans Hall.
- **Paint and Sips:** Return in February Dates TBD

- Fitness Classes:**
- **Fit Fusion:** Mon/Wed 430-530 PM Yeomans Hall
  - **Zumba:** Mon/Wed 7-8 PM Yeomans Hall
  - **Yoga:** Thurs 7-8 PM



On *January 31<sup>st</sup> from 2-5 pm*, the **3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Columbia Cupcake Challenge** will be held in Yeomans Hall.

### Bicentennial Coin



*"I look forward to your inquiries, and most of all, information you are willing to share about Columbia's past!"*

### From the Desk of Town Historian, Ingrid Wood

In July, Anita Ramm, Town Historian Emeritus, was congratulated for her many years of fine service. During my few months in this position, the Town of Columbia Historical Archive and Collection was packed up for temporary storage and inventory until late 2016. The collection and I are now temporarily located in the Town's Finance Office. I will gladly meet visitors by appointment or respond to your inquiries at [townhistorian@columbiaact.org](mailto:townhistorian@columbiaact.org).

The Town of Columbia gratefully acknowledges the following gifts: papers of former resident Charles Wesley Hill, a Korean War Veterans belt buckle, and a Town of Columbia, Connecticut commemorative bicentennial

coin found by the City Manager of the City of Maquoketa, Iowa. Recent inquiries and outreach include: Discussed with Horace Porter School Superintendent Fearon the developing State and Local History standards; provided local history books and pamphlets for the second grade curriculum; Prepared the Korean War Memorial Exhibit at Beckish Senior Center and an article for Veterans Day 2015; Responded to Boston Center for Education and Professional Development, Inc., a Massachusetts-based Sino-American educational consultant's questions regarding Eleazar Wheelock's preparatory school in Columbia and his subsequent move to New Hampshire in 1769; and

also on Yung Wing's Chinese Educational Mission (1870-1881) students in Columbia; Researched an 18<sup>th</sup> century property now on Lake Road, known as "Lebanon Springs House" during the American Revolution; Confirmed the location of a cemetery plot near the corner of Pine Street and Route 66; Represented the Town of Columbia in Tolland, Connecticut's 300<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration; Contributed an article "Remembering Saxton B. Little" to the Crossroads.

I look forward to your inquiries, and most of all, information you are willing to share about Columbia's past!

Best wishes for a Happy New Year!

### From the Beckish Senior Center by Director, Bernadette Derring

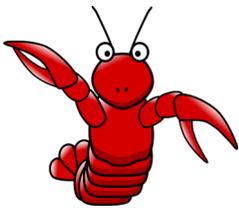
The Beckish Senior Center seems to be the place to be these days! Over the past few months we have offered day trips to the 9/11 Museum, Boston Fine Arts Museum, Frank Sinatra Tribute, Valley Railroad and Riverboat, Rockcats Baseball games, and many more. In addition to wonderful day trips and many overnights, we offer hot meals Monday, Wednesday and Fridays through TVCCA. In addition, there are Pizza Parties, Pot lucks, game days, playing cards of all types, and other various activities.

Over the next few months we will be having a New Years Eve Pot Luck and White Elephant Gifting Party, a special catered lunch by Chris Urban, a Chili Cook off, and lunch with Scott Gray.

**The new trips for 2016 will be available for sign-up on January 11, 2016.** Some of these trips include the following: Chocolatorium in Vermont, Pilgrim Belle a "paddle-wheelin" trip, Thimble Island Cruise, Lobster fest Cruise, Atlantic City overnight and many more!

Please stop by the Senior Center at 188 Middletown Rd (Route 66), Columbia, and pick up the Town newsletter. Our newsletter, *The GEM*, can be found at the Saxton B. Little Free Library, Town Hall, Columbia Ford, Dunkin Donuts, Gina Maries, and Ted's Supermarket.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions at (860) 228-0759. The Beckish Senior Center welcomes everyone from everywhere!



### From the Assessor's Office by Mary Lavallee

The **Homeowners Program** will begin accepting applications again as of February 1, 2016. If you are already in the program you will receive a letter from us reminding you to file. New applicants need to bring a copy of your 1040 income tax forms for 2015 to our office once they are completed or all your income information if you do not file income taxes. This year's maximum income limit for married couples is \$42,900 and \$35,200 for unmarried filers,

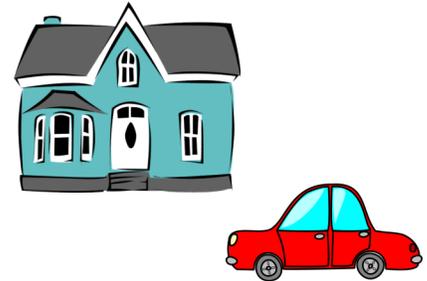
which includes your social security income.

**Supplemental motor vehicle adjustments:** In order to have a motor vehicle bill adjusted we need two forms of proof. The first is a copy of the vehicle plate return or registration cancellation receipt that you get from DMV when you return your plates or from online. The second is something proving you got rid of the vehicle. Generally accepted proofs are a copy of the bill of sale,

an out-of-state registration, an insurance statement that specifically states your vehicle was removed for sale or because it was sold, stolen or totaled. You can also submit a junked vehicle statement from the junk yard or a copy of your purchase agreement if you traded in a vehicle and bought a vehicle with lower value. If you traded a vehicle and kept the same plate do not bring us any documentation because DMV will automatically process it.

Please call us at 860-228-9555 with any questions.

*"In order to have a motor vehicle bill adjusted we need two forms of proof."*



### From the Tax Collection Office by Carol Price

The second installment of the real estate, personal property and the supplemental motor vehicle taxes will become due on January 1, 2016. The last day to pay without a penalty is February 1, 2016. This office uses the postmark as the date of payment.

The Columbia home page click on the view/pay button. On the next page click on view/ pay button again. The search criteria will need to be written exactly how the tax bill is written. Enter your last name, a space, and then your first initial.

above then hover over the icons in the option column and click on the one that says tax payment history.

If you have any problems using the system please contact the Tax office at 860-228-0230 and we will gladly assist you.

Columbia residents are now able to view and pay taxes online. To find your bills online, go to [www.columbiact.org](http://www.columbiact.org) . On

You can also utilize this site during income tax time to look up your payment history. Locate your bill using the instructions

Happy Holidays!



### From the Town Clerk's Office by Gail McGrath

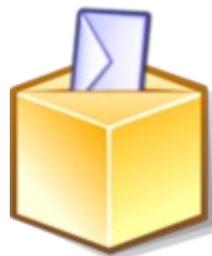
The Presidential Preference Primary will take place on **April 26, 2016.**

Absentee ballots will be available in the Town Clerk's office on **April 5, 2016.**

If you have any questions, please give

us a call at 860-228-3284.

From our office to your home – We wish you a Happy & Healthy New Year!

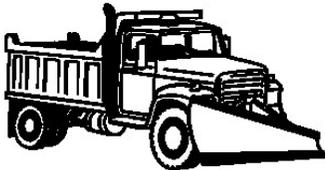


### Commission/Committee Vacancies

Columbia encourages volunteers to serve on:

- Recreation Commission (RC): 2
- Youth Services Committee (YSC): 2
- Economic Development Commission (EDC): 6
- Szegda Farm Management Committee (SFMC): 3

*\*Interested? Contact the Town Administrator*



*"We want to ensure that the development and planning of the land will not only support our current recreational needs as a community, but also that it will be thoughtfully designed to support the needs of future generations."*



### From the Desk of Public Works Director, George Murphy

**The winter season is upon us! Please see below for Snow Removal Tips:**

▶ Make sure that your roadside trash bins stay on private property and do not venture out into the road. The Town is not liable for any damage as a result of bins that get damaged by passing traffic.

▶ Refrain from plowing and blowing snow into or across roadways or onto town right-of-ways. Doing so creates unsafe conditions for drivers and vehicles.

▶ Refrain from parking in town roadways or in Municipal and School parking lots during snow events.

▶ Check your mailboxes to ensure that they are intact and in good working order.  
▶ Refrain from using snowmobiles, using all terrain vehicles and engaging in snow skiing on town roadways.

#### **Salt**

Residents with stickers are allowed (2) 5 gallon buckets of salt per storm event from the transfer station on Wednesdays & Saturdays.

### From the Desk of the Recreation Commission (RC) by Nikki Keldsen

This year we celebrated the 150<sup>th</sup> year of Columbia Lake and 100 years since the Browns first opened the Columbia Lake Beach! The Rec. Dept. celebrated these anniversaries at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Dinner & A Dip. The weather was perfect and we had another fantastic event. Hundreds of residents and friends came out for a delicious meal, games, sand castles and fun. Thank you to all

the volunteers who made this party a success!

There have been staffing changes in the Rec. Dept. Marc Volza and Nell Reinwald are already a great team and we look forward to seeing all that they are going to accomplish!

During our last meeting, First Selectman C. Vance, Town Administrator N. Nau and Town Planner P. Stahl attended to discuss the newly purchased Rec-

reation Property off of Rte. 66. The Commission desires to have the Town allocate some of the Brand family's generous donation to hire a landscape architect to map out the best long-term plan for this property.

If this is something that interests you, I invite you to join us! The Rec Commission has 2 vacancies and this is going to be a very exciting time!

### From the Desk of Board Clerk, Linda McDonald

Appeals to the Board of Assessment Appeals on the Grand List of October 1, 2015 for all property in the Town of Columbia must be filed in writing no later than February 20, 2016. Applications must be completed in their entirety.

Hearings will be conducted during the month of March by appointment only. Letters confirming appointments will be mailed to applicants who have filed applications in a timely manner. Applications are available in the Tax

Assessor's Office or at [www.columbiact.org](http://www.columbiact.org).

Applications may be filed in the Columbia Tax Assessor's Office or mailed to: Board of Assessment Appeals, Assessor's Office, 323 Route 87, Columbia, CT.

### From the Desk of Fire Marshal, Mike Lester

The 2015-2016 Fire Prevention poster contest has concluded. This year's theme was "Fire Prevention - Everyone/Everyday". We received a total of 59 entries from the 4th and 5th graders at Horace W. Porter School. All of the posters were fantastic and it was very difficult for CVFD to select finalists. Anna Reagan (4th grade) and Maya

Morales (5th grade) were this year's winners! Congratulations! Maya has also been chosen as a Tolland County finalist. She will be attending a special luncheon on March 31st with her family where the State's winner will be announced.

#### Home Fire Prevention Tips:

1. Only use extension cords for temporary use.

2. Do not forget to turn off your holiday lights.
3. Never leave an open flame unattended.
4. Be extremely careful while cooking.
5. Dispose of any alternative heating ash properly (see article below).
6. Install and maintain smoke and carbon monoxide (CO) detectors in your home, per the manufacture instructions.



3:00 a.m.



### From the Desk of the Registrar by Karen Butzgy

**Canvass of Voters:** CT State Statutes require all Registrars to conduct a canvass of voters beginning in January of each year. Due to the Presidential Preference Primary (April 26, 2016), the canvass will not begin until after that date.

**Party Transfer:** There is a 3 month waiting period if an elector transfers from one party to another. Therefore, **January 26th** is

the last day enrolled electors can transfer and still be eligible to vote in the Presidential Preference Primary. Unaffiliated voters may enroll in a party until 12:00 noon on April 25th.

**Permanent Absentee Status:** Any elector who is permanently physically disabled and who files an application for an absentee ballot with a certification from a primary care provider, in-

dicating that he/she is unable to appear in person at the polling place, is eligible for permanent absentee ballot status and shall receive an absentee ballot for each election, primary or referendum. In January of each year our office will send a notice to determine if their information remains the same.

For more info, visit our Registrars of Voters page on the website.

*"Due to the Presidential Preference Primary (April 26, 2016), the canvass will not begin until after that date."*

### From the Building and Land Use Department by Cindee Hodge

#### Please remember to pull your permits!!

A few miscellaneous items this time of year that require permits are: wood stove installations, gas fireplace/logs, pellet stoves, chimney repair, generators, ductless heating & cooling systems and LP tank instal-

lations. If you are unsure as to whether or not you need a permit feel free to call Cindee at 860-228-0440.

#### Proper Ash Disposal tips:

- Allow ashes to cool in area where you had the fire for several days.
- When it is time to

dispose, transfer ashes to a metal container and wet them down

- Keep the metal container outside your home and away from any combustibles until the refuse is hauled away.
- DO NOT use a combustible container.





**We're on the web!**  
**Visit:**  
**[www.columbiact.org](http://www.columbiact.org)**  
**Click on Receive**  
**Email Notifications to**  
**receive this**  
**Newsletter & other**  
**town news!!**

## **Tree Trimming/Cutting Jan-March**

The inform you of impending utility tree trimming in Town starting January, 2016 and extending for approximately 2 to 3 months. The following is a list of roads to be trimmed and/or have tree removals:

- o West Street
- o Basket Shop Road
- o Lake Road
- o Erdoni Road
- o Thompson Hill Road
- o Macht Road (upper section)
- o Whitney Road
- o Route 66
- o Pine Street
- o Hunt Road

All property owners will receive prior notification from either Asplundh Tree Experts or the utility company for work in front of their property. Should anyone have issue with that proposed work they will need to call the number on the notification card left at their house.

**Volume 1, Issue 1**



### **Columbia Town Hall**

323 Route 87

Columbia, CT 06237

### **Town Administration**

Phone: 860-228-0110

Fax: 860-228-1952

## **From the CAC**

The Conservation and Agriculture Commission (CAC), a group of volunteers responsible for the care and protection of the Town's natural resources, is in need of volunteers. We plan to organize a subcommittee on the Commission to help maintain the hiking trails.

If you would be interested in joining periodic work parties to do some light trail maintenance on our beautiful hiking trails, or to monitor conservation easements, please send an email with your name and contact info to [adunnack@charter.net](mailto:adunnack@charter.net).

## **Root Homestead Property by Joan Hill, Historical Society**

The acquisition of this parcel was voted on at a Town Meeting held on 11/12/13 in order to preserve and protect its historical value. It was donated to the Town by H. David Ramm/Lyman Woods LLC. It is approximately 2,729 square feet located on Wells Wood Road.

The history is as follows: In 1818, John Welles of Boston became the owner of 812 acres of woodland and created a "highway" down the middle. 27 year old Ira Root of Hebron was the first purchaser in 1820 buying 42 acres. He lived his entire life there with his

family and ultimately increased his acres to 110. Ira was elected town representative to the state General Assembly in 1844. He had 3 daughters but no sons so he took a nephew, Ralph Curtis, as his foster son and heir. Ralph then left it to his son, Clayton Root, who lived there

until 1904. The nearby cemetery holds the graves of Ira, his two wives and his sister. The property was recently fenced in by the Dept. of Public Works. An informational sign will be placed and a grand opening ceremony will be hosted by the Historical Society in Spring.

