

Citizens of the Town of Chilmark:

The last three years have gone by quickly and as this years Chairman of the Board of Selectmen I submit this report. We have worked on many issues this year and I will touch on a few of them.

The Board of Selectmen collectively supported and encouraged the addition of a pre-school at the Chilmark School, and by the tireless efforts of the Pre-School Committee and many others, it opened last fall. This program, I am happy to say, has fit into the school perfectly and is a real success, at no cost to the taxpayers. We have two dedicated and qualified teachers, Christine Abrams and Laurisa Rich, ensuring a creative start to our student's academic career.

Chilmark's web site has been up and operating for some time now and is under a state of constant improvement. This is an important medium for information and reporting of our town government. We are working hard to provide an open government, and the web site, coupled with the airing of our selectmen's meetings on cable television, gives the general public valuable ability to understand the current issues. Issues vary in complexity and some decisions can take many hours of research and discussion. Being able to view the various discussions and/or read meeting minutes is a great way to get the information if it is difficult to attend the actual meetings.

Our affordable housing efforts are moving along and our Housing Committee is doing an admirable job. There are many issues and obstacles to overcome and our concern for details at times, slows the process. The outcome will be 12 much-needed residences built with both the future of the recipients and the town's taxpayer's interests in balance. There is no age limit on affordability and these units will be openly awarded under our Housing Committee's guidelines. Molly Flender was a moving force for our affordable housing initiatives and her contribution will long be remembered and appreciated.

There have been efforts to improve our harbor operations by computerizing our information. This will allow for better management of our assets and efficient collection of town revenues. There is a considerable waiting list for moorings and slips and efforts have been taken to best manage the fair usage of the limited supply. The Selectmen have moved the awarding of moorings and slips to the calendar year with the renewal of prior holders to be completed by mid-January. This will allow the harbor department time to process the renewals and award any available positions to residents on our waiting list prior to the start of the summer season. Moving this process back will allow our Harbor Department time to concentrate on seasonal issues more effectively. Menemsha Harbor is a valuable town asset and the Selectmen also want to support it to remain a viable fishing port. There are very few harbors left in support of the fishing fleet and it adds so much of the character to our harbor and our fishermen's ability to make their living. With diminishing fishing stock and intense regulations there are many pressures in trying to retain this heritage. We are working with lease holders to encourage and support the ability of our fishermen to be able to conveniently sell their catch at a fair price.

During the months of January and February the Finance Committee and the Board of Selectmen meet weekly and review all town departments, school, regional, and other budgets line by line. This joint effort works well in efficiently managing all town costs, and is a major contributor to controlling our tax rate. Tim Carroll works tirelessly to make sure any and all information we need is available to us. The presentation that he, our financial team, and others produce is professional and greatly improves our ability to make informed decisions.

I am continually thankful to the many town employees who contribute every day to the success of Chilmark's ability to serve its residents and visitors. We are grateful for the numerous volunteers on town boards and departments who give countless hours to serve our town. Together they help to shape and service the town we are so proud to be a part of.

Lastly, I would like to thank my colleagues, Warren Doty and Riggs Parker for their time and commitment to the service of Chilmark. We are working well as a team which I believe has greatly contributed to the efficient operation of our town and our ability to accomplish many tasks. We all respect and appreciate your valuable input in the management of our town.

Respectfully submitted,
Frank M. Fenner Jr.