

Report of the Overseer of Public Welfare

The year 2007 saw several increases in expenditures over 2006. Many factors play a significant role in our most expensive year to date.

Housing and shelter costs were up over 2006 figures by \$17,521.71. Of the total costs for shelter, \$8,944.20 was for out-of-town homeless shelter payments and in-town hotels. The crashing housing market and lack of decent paying jobs contributed to several households who faced foreclosure and eviction. Additionally, the overwhelming increase in fuel oil, created a large number of requests for fuel assistance as households were forced to choose between paying for rent, paying for heat, or buying groceries. An increased number of applicants came in with long-term illnesses, new injuries, new diagnoses, terminal diseases, and permanent disabilities, all facing these challenges without medical insurance.

Larger numbers than ever are seeking assistance as 2-income families become 1-income families or no income families due to divorce, separation, domestic violence, abandonment, employment layoffs, and position terminations. Partners of substance and alcohol abusers are asking for assistance with rent and food, as their living situations deteriorate out of their control. Also on the rise are the numbers of absentee parents not paying child support, leaving many low-skilled, one-parent families seeking assistance to stay in their homes.

A tragic fire on May 11, 2007 left 21 people homeless. The Town of Jaffrey disbursed \$5,873.00 to the survivors of the fire, to go towards security deposits for new apartments, to replace household furnishings, and for food and clothing.

So is there any good news?

A new Jaffrey non-profit, *Shelter From the Storm*, is helping to minimize sheltering costs to the town by providing long-term, supportive shelter to Jaffrey residents, with intensive case management and appropriate service referrals.

— *Public Welfare Director* —

The River Center in Peterborough, is asking several towns to get involved with its public transportation initiative, *Contoocook Valley Transportation Cooperative*, which will offer rides for citizens to and from work, medical appointments, shopping, and school. For information on the program and volunteering, please call 924-6800.

General Assistance recipients will now be required to meet with a financial advisor should their individual situation warrant the extra help. There will be mandatory financial education workshops exploring money management, prioritizing bills, earned income tax credits, and homeownership opportunities. In 2007, several families met with retired financial analyst, Larry Swartz, who kindly volunteers his time helping others get and stay out of debt, and with great success.

If you find yourself struggling to make ends meet, please call the welfare department before things get out of control. We are here to help each other, and the earlier you ask for help, the sooner we can find a solution.

2007 General Assistance Breakdown

Food	(including fire assistance)	\$ 2,579.52
Shelter	(including fire assistance)	\$ 146,972.69
Medical	(including fire assistance)	\$ 15,107.31
Other Fire Assistance		\$ 2,390.38
Utilities		\$ 7,409.73
Fuel Oil		\$ 11,979.04
Other		\$ 4,768.61
Donations Fire Victim Disbursements		\$ 4,607.48
TOTAL.....		\$ 193,424.38

Respectfully submitted,

Mary M. Drew
Director of Public Welfare
Town of Jaffrey