

SELECT BOARD

William Chabot, Chairman

As in the previous year, FY2004 presented Dalton and the Select Board with a host of challenges. As a result of continued reductions in state aid, our biggest challenge has been the struggle to maintain adequate town services while at the same time controlling the growth in the tax rate. With the assistance and cooperation of our employees and the many civic-minded individuals who staff our various boards and commissions, I believe that we are successfully addressing this challenge.

Our other major challenge is to continue to move forward on necessary infrastructure improvements. Engineering required for the redesign and reconstruction of both South and Housatonic streets continues to make progress and we anticipate that the state will move forward with both of these projects in the very near future. In addition, we continue to advance our plans for the construction of a new Town Library and a Senior Center for our community. The voters of Dalton have expressed a desire to use the site of the former Dalton High School for this project and to reuse the original portion of the high school for the Senior Center. The Library/Senior Center Designer Select Committee has completed preliminary plans for the library and a grant application has been submitted to the state for financial assistance in the cost of construction. If we are successful in bringing these two projects to completion, we believe they will be the first major town facilities, other than schools, since the construction of the current town hall in 1893.

As in the past, addressing all of these challenges and concerns would not have been possible without the support of the other members of the Select Board. I would like to express my gratitude to Lawrence A. Gingras, Timothy F. Kirby, Thomas S. Sczcepaniack and Russell B. Sears for their assistance and cooperation. I would also like to express a special thanks to former board member Denis E. Guyer for his service to this board and for his initiative in establishing a Dalton Web Site Committee. We now have an official Town site (dalton-ma.gov) that will continue to be expanded and updated as necessary.

A special thanks to our Town Manager Ken Walto. Ken has been doing a great job of guiding us through the budget minefield of the last couple of years and of keeping the various capital improvement programs moving in a positive direction despite the financial challenges imposed by decreased state aid. Projects such as the Community Development façade improvements, contract development and negotiations, and the responsibility for the pursuit of new business as the Chairman of the Development and Industrial Commission are but a few of the many day-to-day operations required to run our town smoothly that Ken has done very effectively. Special thanks also to our administrative assistant Debby Merry for her continued cheerful support and to assistant clerk Dawn Fahey for her help in relieving the pressures of an ever-increasing administrative workload.

Finally, on behalf of the entire Select Board, I would like to express our deepest gratitude to all our faithful town employees for their day-to-day efforts that are so necessary for the smooth operation of the town's government. And, of course, our sincere appreciation to all the many elected and appointed individuals who have given of their time and talent to staff our various boards and com-



*Select Board members Timothy Kirby, Thomas Szczepaniack,
Chairman William E. Chabot, Russell Sears, Lawrence Gingras*

missions. The quality of life for the people of Dalton would be considerably diminished if it were not for their service and commitment. As a final thought, please consider joining us in service to one of our many boards and commissions. You can make a difference and you will find it a rewarding life experience.

INDUSTRY

In the beginnings of the Ashuelot Equivalent 'community,' which started at the base of Washington Mountain Road, there was lumbering, trapping and farming. Pittsfield had been incorporated in 1761, and provided a market and a source of sustenance to the growing settlement. There is a limited source of waterpower in this area, but not like the great Housatonic.

The early settlers were investors and risk-takers from Hatfield, Hadley, Westfield and elsewhere along the Connecticut River valley. The French and Indian Wars were over, and the Indians were now a minimal threat in the county. Many of the settlers were 'of private means,' or otherwise had been 'favoured' by the Crown. These 'newcomers' were loyal Tories. Soon, a different line of settlers arrived. They were a fiercely independent and freedom-loving people in a western provincial frontier. They despised the remoteness and power of those easterners in Boston. Their independence and potency became evident during the Shays' Rebellion in 1786. Their spirit would live on (to this day).

Excerpt from "The Dalton Papers" by R.W. Fischer