REPORTS OF THE
TOWN OFFICERS OF
WESTON,
MASSACHUSETTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDING
DECEMBER 31, 2004

www.weston.org
IN MEMORIAM

JOAN B. VERNON
(1932 – 2005)

The Board of Selectmen dedicates this 2004 Annual Town Report to the memory of Joan B. Vernon, a dedicated civic leader whom some have called the mother of our town. Throughout her remarkable life she always held hope for the future and provided inspiration to those with whom she worked.
Joan Vernon served on the Finance Committee, Youth Commission, the committee to study public buildings, Board of Health, committee to examine town governance, steering committee for recruiting and selecting a town manager and for eight years on the Board of Selectmen, (from 1974 – 1980 and from 2003 – until her death in early 2005), which she chaired for two of those years.

Joan’s view of town government was not abstract but operational. It always focused on the human dimension: how to get people organized, to meet a need that should be provided in whole or in part through town government. Institutional forms were of secondary importance to how best to accomplish a task. She got to know town employees, was very sensitive to how they interfaced with the community. She helped with their personal needs from health care to hospice. Out of this grew her unique contribution to our town, which was weaving a fabric of people seeking common goals. She returned to the Board of Selectman out of concern that we were reflecting a distance between those who were serving and those who are served. She saw Weston as a small community, people’s needs mattered and impersonal bureaucracy should be avoided.

Joan was a perpetual student of government at all levels; a voracious reader whose interests ranged from Paul Tillich to Tom Clancy. She constantly sought an intellectual challenge through her reading. She possessed a demanding curiosity, which had to be satisfied, and if you stood in the way of that pursuit by withholding information, you were in deep trouble. She had the nose and determination of a good intelligence officer. To deny her access to information would bring about a real confrontation. On one occasion when the Town was engaged in a very ambitious open space acquisition program, she inquired as to what chairmen of the Conservation Commission and the Board of Selectmen were up to in cutting bargain sale deals for conservation land. “What is this bargain sale talk all about?” she asked. Upon receiving the reply: “Well, that’s kind of complicated; leave it to us,” there was a steely look on her face as she walked away. At the next Board meeting she said, “I’ve been checking into this bargain sale thing, and it seems like it’s a situation where the seller of land wins, the town wins because of a lower price and the Internal Revenue Service loses.” Now can you ask for a better understanding of a bargain sale?

Joan may have had a motto which goes like this: In error perhaps but in doubt never. She abhorred the vacuum of indecision. There were times in which she would charge ahead beyond any predictable limits. One of those occasions was when after the blizzard of 1978 she seized control of the AAA market and sent the manager who wanted to close upstairs to his office. She organized a circle of friends who had four-wheel drive vehicles to deliver the necessaries of life, limited to 12 items, to those who were snowed in. The owner of the AAA called one of her colleagues during this siege and asked what he should do. The response was: “Only one thing: don’t get in her way.”

In 1980 Joan retired from the Board of Selectmen and before returning to town service on the Board of Health became involved in a governance study of First Parish. She discovered that the church had committees which served children at risk, substance abuse, domestic relations, urban education and diversity. This led her to the pursuit of many of the same issues which she had dealt with on the Board of Selectmen. Joan had leveraged into faith based community outreach. Covert action was a natural for Joan.

Throughout her service in town government there were many continuing issues. One was the need for low-cost housing and housing for the elderly. Two results of this concern were the Brook School conversion and Merriam Village. Joan saw this as a continuing need and chided one of her fellow Selectmen on many occasions for helping to buy up conservation land and thereby inflating the value of the remaining land making alternative housing a more critical need. At the time of Joan’s death this remains a major piece of unfinished business. The most
suitable living memorial to Joan from the Town would be to continue to embroider the fabric of community, which she worked so hard to create and which reflects the soul of our town.

--Adapted from the comments made by Harold Hestnes at Joan Vernon’s memorial service.

Cover: New addition to Brook School Apartments.
Photograph by Richard Mandelkorn Photography, Lincoln, MA. Submitted by: ICON architecture, inc. Boston, the building’s architects.

Thanks are due to the following people for supplying the photographs that appear on the pages of this Annual Town Report:

- Weston Town Crier, Art Illman, photographer, -- pages 2 and 15;
- Members of the Board of Selectmen -- page 15;
- Weston Historical Commission -- page 41;
- Weston Police Department - pages 56 and 59; the photograph on page 59 was taken by Environmental Protection Officer Keith Robinson;
- Weston International Affiliation Committee - pages 94 and 95;
- Thomas Selldorff and the Weston Forest and Trail Association - page 160.
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CALENDAR*

Board of Selectmen - Normally meets on 2nd & 4th Tuesdays - 7:30 p.m. at Town Hall

School Committee - Normally meets twice per month on Mondays at the Weston High School Library

Planning Board - Normally meets Wednesdays, 7:30 p.m. at Town Hall

Board of Health - Normally meets the 3rd Wednesday of each month, 9:00 a.m. at Town Hall

Recreation Commission - Normally meets on 1st Tuesday of each month, 7:30 p.m.

Board of Library Trustees - Normally meets the 1st Tuesday of each month, 7:30 p.m. at the Library

Commissioners of Trust Funds - Meets on an as-needed basis, generally once per quarter, at Town Hall

Board of Assessors - Normally meets twice per month (more frequently from December–March) on Tuesdays, 6:45 p.m. at Town Hall

Board of Appeals – Normally meets Mondays, 7:30 p.m., Town Hall

Conservation Commission – Normally meets Tuesday, 7:30 p.m., Town Hall

Historical Commission – Normally meets Tuesday, 7:00 p.m., Town Hall

*All schedules subject to change - Call offices listed

LEGISLATIVE REPRESENTATIVES
(as of December 31, 2004)

Senators in Congress
Edward M. Kennedy, Squaw Island, Barnstable
John F. Kerry, Boston

Representative in Congress, Seventh Congressional District
Edward J. Markey, Malden

Councilor, Third District
Marilyn Petitto Devaney, Watertown

State Senator, Fifth Middlesex District
Susan C. Fargo, Lincoln

Representative in General Court, Fourteenth Norfolk District
Alice Hanlon Peicsh, Wellesley