

Town of Milton

115 Federal St
Milton, DE 19968



www.ci.milton.de.us

Phone: 302-684-4110

Fax: 302-684-8999

TOWN MANAGER REPORT JANUARY 2012

The Town of Milton enjoyed mild weather this January. A lack of snow storms is not only convenient – it also saves a lot of money in removal expenses. We're not out of the woods yet, though. February and early March often bring the biggest storms...so be prepared!

Here's a tip to keep in mind: text messaging works when cell phone calls will not "go through". If you don't use this feature of your phone, take a few minutes to learn - or to teach your family, friend or neighbor. It's easy to do and can help to lessen concern about the well-being of someone you love.

Traditional phone lines sometimes come down in a heavy snowfall. Many people have moved to a cell phone-only service, too. When too many people make cell phone calls at the same time, such as during a weather emergency, the circuits are often too busy to handle additional calls. Text messages require a much smaller bandwidth and can get through during these peak use times. A little practice ahead of time can help you to stay in touch during anxious times.

Election News

Municipal Elections are scheduled for Saturday, March 3, from 8am until 6pm in the Town Hall at 115 Federal Street in Milton, Delaware. There are four candidates and two Council seats up for election. Council members are elected at-large and their term is three years.

The Municipal Election will be conducted by the Milton Board of Elections. The election will be held in accordance with Title 15 of the Delaware Code (www.delcode.delaware.gov) and Section 7 of the Charter of the Town of Milton (see link on the town's home page www.ci.milton.de.us).

Voter registration prior to the election is required. U.S. Citizenship, having a primary residence in Milton for at least sixty days and two forms of identification are required for eligibility to vote in the Milton Municipal Election. Registration occurred in the Town Hall during the month of January, which included Saturday hours during the last two weekends of the month. The deadline to register was 4:30 pm on Friday, February 3, 2012.

Property Tax Appeals

On January 24, the Town Council heard appeals from several property owners who filed an appeal regarding the assessed value of their property. An assessment is different from an appraisal and, therefore, not as volatile as market values. The town has contracted a professional assessor to conduct this type of valuation. The process of assessing property values, as well as appealing the same, is detailed in Section 25 of the Charter of the Town of Milton. Appeals that followed this process were heard at the meeting and a report from the assessor regarding these particular cases will provide guidance to the Council.

Audit of Town Finances

During the month of January, representatives of the State of Delaware Auditor of Accounts Office interviewed several members of the town staff, the Mayor and Treasurer. Their interviews relate to the audit of finances for the 2009-10 fiscal year. Audits, in general, help to determine not only the accuracy of financial statements, but also help to validate the quality of the many processes which affect finances. Segregating duties such as accounts receivable, accounts payable and the authority to sign checks helps to ensure accuracy and to protect against fraud, for example.

It is common for audits to be completed with “findings”. These findings are most often particular processes that could be improved so that come closer to the ideal of accounting practices. In a small business or government, it can be quite a challenge to meet this ideal. The staff required to check and double-check each step is typically more than is available. Nonetheless, the upcoming reports for the audits of the fiscal years that ended September 30, 2010 and 2011 will be a guide to improving practices.

The 2010 audit (by the AOA office) should be complete in late February. That same office wrote the Request for Proposal, solicited bids and made a recommendation regarding the selection of a firm for the 2010-11 audit. Pigg, Krahl & Stern of Salisbury, MD was rated the highest and was also the lowest bidder. The bid for two years of service was as follows: 2011 - \$22,550, 2012 - \$18,000.

On January 24, the Council approved this firm as the auditor for the next two years. Work will begin in early February.

New Web Site Design

The preliminary draft of the new web site design is back from the Government Information Center of the Delaware Department of State. A copy of proposed “looks” for the home page is attached to many of these reports. If one is not included with your report, please ask to see one held by someone near your seat (color copies are expensive, so not too many were printed).

You will note that both designs incorporate the “clipper ship” as well as the logo adopted by the Council through the Milton branding effort sponsored by the Delaware Economic Development Office.

Document Management

In the first month of installation, the town has scanned more than 5,000 pages of documents through the ShoreScan system. Some documents, such as copies of business licenses from prior years, have marginal value and can be destroyed after being scanned. This will help the town to better manage limited storage space. In other cases, the system helps to organize documents and more efficiently retrieve them at a future date. This will make customer service better and the staff be more productive.

Hazard Mitigation Grants

The State of Delaware manages grants that are made possible through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Grants for assistance in disaster recovery are familiar to most of us. After that, though, grants that would help to diminish (or mitigate) the damage from disasters may be available in selected areas. This is true of Kent and Sussex County in the aftermath of Hurricane Irene.

This grant program requires a 25% match from the recipient and provides the balance, or 75%, through the State of Delaware. Private homeowners and business owners often partner with towns in order to realize the benefit of this program. A downtown business district with a history of flooding would be a prime candidate for such a program. If you or a neighbor believe that you may be eligible for this funding, please contact me at your earliest convenience. – Win Abbott, Town Manager