

Communication

Ralph Perkins • Candidate for Selectboard, Colchester

Election

As I talk with Colchester residents, I am hearing they are feeling disconnected from local government. Last March, only 25% of Colchester voters cast a ballot. We need to address why 9,000 residents that have voted in the past did not feel their voice mattered or informed enough to vote.

It would seem to me that communication is a key component in any relationship.

To further engage the community, as a selectboard member I would be committed to supporting the following:

- Solicit ideas from experts who live in the community
- Increase citizen taskforces
- Follow the Vermont League of Cities and Town's guidance on selectboard time behind closed doors in Executive Session
- Present information in a way we as residents can consume it
- Allow for more discussion time for projects approved by the selectboard before putting them to a vote by the residents

A change that may be impacting our ability to feel connected to local government might have something to do with the decrease in the number of media outlets researching and providing journalism.

Additionally, it seems we all have become very busy, not by choice but from necessity. By the time the dishes are done in the evening, there may not be much bandwidth remaining to research something happening in town.

The State is very specific on the requirements of how local government must keep its residents up to date, and Colchester follows these rules to the letter but we may need to do more.

One good resource we have here in Colchester is the Town Manager's Newsletter. If you aren't signed up for it, I would recommend giving it a try.

For Colchester to engage residents we need to have discussion as much as we need presentation. I believe my work on the Selectboard must include being approachable and a bridge for anyone in the community with questions. I would make myself available via email and in person to increase dialogue.