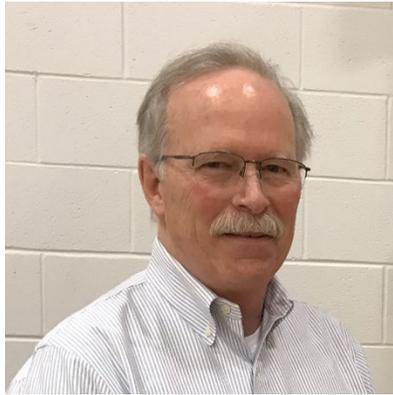


Honoring the Service and Leadership of Mike Houghton



With the news that Mike Houghton has decided not to seek re-election, the Select Board wishes to formally recognize and thank him for his profound dedication to the Town of Stratham.

Mike has devoted decades of tireless service to our community, lending his expertise to numerous boards and committees. By integrating his professional management experience into town operations, he has modernized and improved the essential services our residents rely on. His impact is woven into the very fabric of our municipal government, and the benefits of his visionary leadership will be felt for generations.

Over his nine-year tenure on the Select Board—including seven years as Chair—Mike provided a steady hand and vital continuity. His commitment went above and beyond last year when he stepped forward to serve as Interim Town Administrator for five months during a critical leadership transition. This spirit of service extends back even further: Mike served eighteen years on the Planning Board (five as Chair) and has dedicated the past nine years to the Heritage Commission.

Mike's leadership style is best described as thoughtful, deliberate, and innovative. He navigated the Town through pivotal transitions, presiding over the hiring of two Town Administrators, our Police Chief, and several department heads, ensuring Stratham remained stable and forward-focused.

A champion of fiscal responsibility, Mike prioritized long-term capital planning and empowered department leaders. His approach to modest, consistent budgeting maintained stable tax rates while simultaneously expanding the quality of town services. He spearheaded the creation of capital reserve funds for Public Works and Fire Department equipment, protecting the town from sudden financial shocks. Furthermore, his restructuring of Public Works to include park maintenance has ensured that Stratham Hill Park receives the high level of care it deserves.

While Mike's legacy includes accomplishments too numerous to list, several milestones stand out:

- **Public Safety:** Transitioned the Fire Department to a per-diem model with paramedic services and achieved Police Department accreditation.
- **Infrastructure & Innovation:** Implemented automated trash/recycling collection and established managed IT services.
- **Conservation & Heritage:** Secured the Smyk property donation, the Barker Farm conservation easement, the Lane property donation, and the preservation of the Old Town Hall.
- **Crisis Leadership:** Guided the town through the COVID-19 pandemic and the strategic management of ARPA funds.
- **Planning:** Overseen the Master Plan update and addressed PFAS contamination in the Town Center.

Mike, on behalf of the Select Board and the entire community, we offer our deepest gratitude for your unwavering dedication, your steady leadership, and your years of selfless service. Stratham is a better place because of your contributions.

Please join us in expressing our sincere appreciation to Mike Houghton.