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Town Hall hums with new software, administrator

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LITTLETON - Town Accountant Bonnie Holston is finally able to take a deep breath.

It's been a busy summer and fall, really she hit the ground running for the year that she's been here, because the town lacked a chief administrator until Keith Bergman was hired some three weeks ago and Holston and Treasurer Don Armstrong had to fill in on both sides of the aisle on the third floor of Town Hall.

But Holston is also glad that the town has upgraded its software.

An article on the November 2006 special Town Meeting approved \$117,000 for new software that was installed over the summer.

Now, most of the department heads have been trained in the new Softright product that Holston said is working out well. She said approximately 30 other communities use the Softright product. She said the product comes from a company in Westford.

"It's a good Windows product," said Holston. She said the previous DOS software was clumsy, awkward and very, very slow. The old software had been in use for 12 years, a century in software terms.

"It needed to be changed," she said.

After the vote gave the town the authorization to buy new software, Holston said she worked with a small group of professionals on finding the best product.

"We've been working for six months on the conversion because it is so large," said Holston.

She said the tax collections, treasurer's receipts, payroll and accounts payable all come together on the computer in her office, sent in by other department heads in remote locations.

"It's been a big nut to crack," said Holston.

She thinks about 30 people or more use the software to send in bills and other paperwork.

"With any conversion there can be hiccups and glitches, but Softright has provided great tech support," said Holston.

She said the town and the company held training sessions where the department representatives "sat down with their laptops" and learned the ins and outs of the software.

"They designed the system knowing the end user," said Holston. "They know what we have and what we do."

Bergman brought his own organizational skills with him, Holston noted.

At his first selectmen's meeting, he unveiled a yellow sheet for each agenda item that required a vote by the board, listing the proposed motion, and a record of the vote, so that the board could see what had been proposed and accomplished.

"Little organizational things are going to help all of us," said Holston.

She said with Bergman and the new software, and the interest in developing parts of town, Littleton is "poised for some good things."

"We are going to see a good couple of years," said Holston.

About SoftRight, LLC:

The most customer focused provider of municipal software in Massachusetts, SoftRight provides integrated, windows-based applications in Accounting, Collections, Utility Billing and Payroll/HR to over 60 cities, towns and school systems within the commonwealth.