

JENNIFER L. WOLOWICZ, Deputy Town Administrator

## Deputy Town Administrator Report

March 2, 2020

To: Selectboard  
From: Jennifer L. Wolowicz, Deputy Town Administrator

In October of 2019 I was directed by the TA to handle the PBE's for the DPW staff in an effort to assist the Acting DPW Superintendent. The TA suggested I spread the evaluations out over time to be able to spend time onsite. This suggestion was made so that I would have the opportunity to view the operations, staff and general practices of the DPW as we have received complaints from residents and town officials (some photographs as well) of employees not actively working and that volunteers were directing our paid staff.

I meet with the TA after each visit to update him on what I have learned during my visits. From there, we often meet with other staff including the Acting DPW Superintendent, Facilities Manager / Health & Safety Coordinator & the IT Coordinator to discuss matters and collaboratively come up with ways to improve our service output and internal operations.

Administration is taking this time of transition before a Director of Public Works is hired to review all areas in an effort to enhance the operation and talk about the ways we can streamline, provide better services to the public, include the staff more in operational discussions and to create a bridge between the DPW and Town Hall as that was lacking in the past due to circumstances beyond our control.

During the PBE's with staff a common theme was brought up to me and that was the operation and management of the transfer station. I explained to all employees that once I was done with the PBE process we would then be moving onto the transfer station to educate ourselves about the operation. Staff was also told about the hauler contract that expires in June and one of the areas the SB is looking at is whether or not the next vendor will take over the operation of the transfer station.

As we all know trash and recycling is a major financial conversation for the town and to learn that we have residents bringing trash bags to the transfer station weekly instead of leaving them curbside (this costs us double), people coming with trailers/trucks filled with construction debris, landscape debris, "stacks & stacks" of cardboard from businesses, more mattresses than we thought were even sold in a year etc. I myself witnessed a resident with two pickup trucks unloading construction debris from what was obviously a home remodel that was not from his own home. Some of the questions staff posed to me, Why don't we have a commercial rate for businesses to use the transfer station, why don't we charge a per weight of vehicle fee, why do we not say "no" more to residents? We can't continue to take on the cost of the disposal without it creating a financial disaster.

Our Facilities Manager / Health & Safety Coordinator has been involved with this process of transition as well. He has visited the DPW several times with me or on his own to again view the operations and provide us with suggestions for health & safety improvements both inside and outside.

On February 5th myself, Acting DPW Superintendent, Facilities Manager / Health & Safety Coordinator met with the Solid Waste Coordinator at the transfer station to review the operations. We chose a Wednesday so we could see the traffic and in general to view the operation while it was open. The Facilities Manager / Health & Safety Coordinator had many concerns about the traffic pattern, residents parking at one dumpster and walking across the driving path to deposit items in other dumpsters, the use of a loader being driven around & backing up on the site at the same time. The Facilities Manager / Health & Safety Coordinator stated this should be viewed as a construction zone and we should implement as many safeguards for residents and employees. In the pictures you see a donated book box that is no longer used as the company that was picking it up went out of business. When that happened the box should have been removed from our site by the company but it never was so now we have become the owner of a box we have no use for. The Solid Waste Coordinator was directed to have the box removed from the property. We also took a walk to the brush debris drop off area and I have attached a picture of a sign that was off the frame and this had been that way for quite some time. The Solid Waste Coordinator was directed to have the sign reattached.



Following this meeting I emailed the TA to update him on the morning. The TA was clear in his directions to me that we needed to get this under control sooner rather than later.

We met on February 7th to discuss the records & equipment that were in the trailer. Following this meeting I emailed the TA with the options that Tighe & Bond presented to us to get guidance on how to proceed. The TA directed that the records get organized into what we need to keep, what DEP has on file and what can be disposed of. This work was started on Saturday by Tighe & Bond. Once we have the records that need to be kept we will have them integrated into our records room in town hall by King Information Systems. I contacted our landfill post closure oversight representative from Tighe & Bond and scheduled a meeting to review the contents of the trailer.

The Solid Waste Coordinator was told on February 5th that it is not "best practice" for the cans/bottles to be removed from municipal property once they are dropped off by residents. The directive to him was to not let the cans/bottles be removed anymore and that we would look for other ways to recycle them. He was also told to contact the volunteers who come on site to remove the cans. As we have found out this directive was not carried out properly from the employee. The employee placed a lock on the can/bottle shed and put a sign up on the shed that we were not accepting cans/bottles. These two actions were taken solely by the employee and he was spoken to about this miscommunication on his part. We have realized that this employee may not have received proper training and management from the former DPW Superintendent when he was recommended for the role of Solid Waste Coordinator. We are working with the employee to rectify this situation and to provide training to improve communication skills as well as understanding of Administration directives.

The TA and myself researched companies that are certified by the state to be bottle/can depositories and found one in Springfield that provides pick up service along with boxes and bags at no charge. They provide a pickup on Saturdays and we will receive a check for the full amount of the can/bottle deposit. These funds can be designated by the SB towards a town purpose they choose.

I have attached some pictures that I took at the transfer station, the entrance to the brush drop off and the trailer that was left on site from Advance (company that managed the landfill) after they vacated when the landfill closed. The trailer was left with equipment that Advanced used such as printers, fax machines, refrigerators, file cabinets, tables, and a money bag of change. This trailer has become a "dumping" ground of its own with boxes and boxes of files that were moved from the DPW Admin building over time. As you can see in the pictures they are not in a neat orderly fashion and if someone needed to find a file they would be there for days.



The time I have spent at the DPW has been very rewarding and positive as I have noticed a change in culture and attitudes from the staff. We have had staff suggest areas where we could improve, employees have brought forward ideas to us and we have met with staff members to hear more about the operations. Many of the employees have shared with me that this has been a true morale booster for the staff.

We acknowledge that change can be difficult for everyone including employees and residents and it is certainly not easy for us but to be good stewards of South Hadley we must bring things to light that not everyone is going to be in favor of or agree with at times. The TA has acknowledged that the communication of the cans/bottles matter was lacking and I take responsibility for any part I had in that as well. We will and "can" do better. See what I did there?

I appreciate your support to us as we continue to bring important matters forward in the best interest of South Hadley.

Respectfully,

Jennifer L. Wolowicz  
Deputy Town Administrator, South Hadley