

Jeff Cyr, Chair
Andrea Miles, Vice-Chair
Renee Sweeney, Clerk
Carol Constant
Nicole Casolari

Lisa Wong
Town Administrator

Town Administrator's Report to Selectboard January 10, 2023

Administration, Finance and Operations

- The Mass Municipal Association has detailed bills that they will file for the upcoming legislative cycle, including requesting that the meals tax doubles (South Hadley voted to adopt this local option): www.mma.org/mma-announces-legislative-package-for-2023-24-session.

Community

- The Age and Dementia Friendly Resource booklets have been published in English and Spanish and can be found at the Library, Senior Center and Town Hall. Special thanks to the many partners involved in its creation! The guides are posted on the Town's website.

Planning

- **Titus Pond Wetlands Restoration:** South Hadley is currently using Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) funding to complete design and permitting for an ecological restoration project and community recreational access trail at Titus Pond on Route 116/Newton Street, as well as downstream improvements to the Mountain Avenue culvert and adjacent wetlands. Restoration and ecological enhancement of the Titus Pond impoundment to a series of wetland systems will increase flood storage capacity and habitat function, and allow for the declassification of the Queensville Dam. Titus Pond itself is part of an underutilized town-owned Conservation Area that is impacted by stormwater runoff and impaired by significant algal blooms during much of the season—conditions which are expected to worsen as temperatures and precipitation-driven nutrient inputs increase with climate change.

Rather than spend money on perpetual upkeep of the dam, the Town would prefer to declassify the dam and restore the surrounding ecosystem for improved stormwater retention capacity to prevent flooding of densely populated downstream neighborhoods and improve water quality/alleviate potential public health concerns associated with nutrient and bacteria impairments. The Town anticipates pursuing FY24 funding to finalize construction documents, issue an Invitation for Bids for construction, and complete construction of the wetland restoration project, including removal of the outlet control structure which currently impounds water at Titus Pond. The Town will simultaneously refine the precise design of, and finalize construction plans for, associated community access points/trails into the Conservation Area, which will ultimately function as part of a larger network of accessible walking paths and sidewalks within the Town's Newton Street Smart Growth District and surrounding area. The Town intends to pursue other trail and access-focused funding to construct the trail components of the project as a second phase of construction.

The Town will also be continuing outreach and engagement in the larger watershed to build further understanding about the connections between watershed health and climate resilience and working to advance additional downstream improvements in future project phases. The Expression of Interest for the MVP Grant is due on January 20, 2023.

Public Health

- **FREE Test kits**, masks, gloves, bandages, and other PPE was delivered to the Town from the State. Test kits delivered to the library and senior center are available to the public on a first come, first serve basis.
- **COVID Monitoring:** The Massachusetts Department of Public Health informed us that the wastewater monitoring program for Covid-19 is being extended for the full 2023 year and will continue to be funded by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. The most recent BioBot data show a big spike in COVID detected in local wastewater. The Town posts all the reports on the town website: www.southhadley.org/1026/COVID-19-RESPONSE

Public Safety

- **Mental Health:** The South Hadley Police Department is partnering with Gateway, Community Behavioral Health Center (CBHC) for 2023. This team approach allows for the clinician and police officer to provide services to those community members who struggle with mental health and wellness or are in crisis. Community Behavioral Health Center services are always available by calling 1-833-CHD-TALK.

Public Works

- **Paving:** The Town is keeping an eye on asphalt prices for paving projects expected to be done this spring. The prices have fallen over the winter and the Town should be able to get much more paving done with the lower prices. Streets scheduled for paving include River, Lathrop, Alvord, Sunset and the Wastewater Treatment Plant Parking lot. BETA is finalizing the street and sidewalk analysis and prioritization for the Town in the next few months. This will help the Town in longer term planning.