



October 16, 2015

Honorable Selectboard;

Please accept this as an abridged accounting of recent activities of the Town Administrator on your behalf, related to various projects and initiatives.



**King Information Systems/Records Retention;** Phase I of this project is in full swing, the expert team has been on site for a week and is making great progress to install the new shelving, organizing records in properly designed boxes, departments are assisting in working out what is needed to be preserved and what can go to recycling.

This contractor is fully versed in the applicable rules for record retention and has stated they have seen far worse situations (no consolation or discount for this distinction). The goal is to retain what we must, keep what makes sense and properly dispose of what is not needed while improving on the system. Much of the collection (and it is a collection) can be tracked through a Microsoft system.

The picture does not necessarily easily reveal the amount of work the contractor has put into this endeavor and certainly does not expose the work behind the scenes. I can assure there has been a good measure of both and more to come. Once this phase is completed we will reassess the additional phases and may seek funding in the future in that regard. Municipal hoarding is commonplace and a difficult disease to treat, Town Clerk Carlene Hamlin with assistance from her part-time staff person Paula Katz is bringing us to a cure to our challenges with records.

**Telephone System Upgrades:** IT Coordinator James Doolittle continues to work with Concept Telecom to evaluate our present system and prepare the Town to consider a fully integrated "Voice over Internet Protocol" (VOIP). Concept Telecom has no affiliation with companies which install or sell phone services and acts a third party independent expert for companies and municipalities. I had the opportunity to take part in a meeting with Mike Ebner from Concept and the IT coordinator on Wednesday to discuss next steps

Phase 1 of this project evaluated the present system to identify defects of areas of technological weakness of the present system. Needless to say with the changes to technology over the past seven years has left us a little bit behind. I have already heard from people who have stated they have had the same phone for the last 30 years and it is still fine for making calls, none of those testimonies come from an organization which serves 17, 0000 or more people and is seeking to harness all emerging technologies for deliver 21<sup>st</sup> century delivery service in the most cost efficient ways.

Through the initial review it has been demonstrated that there is no service agreement in place for the equipment, if there was it would likely be difficult for the provider to get equipment, there is some training gaps and the system does not reach all departments with ease.

As we rely more on “systems” to assist a smaller staff it will be essential to have a telecommunication system which is fully operational. Using automated attendants and voice to text technology should provide more workplace efficiencies and increase productivity. I know we field dozens of calls each day in the SB Office from people roaming looking for the right office, I realize that many people want to hear a “human” voice, but there is a cost to the system and from the system to meet that end and if we can provide an easier path to answers I think the public will be pleased. I have included a request for a Town Meeting warrant to fund Phase II which would allow the IT Coordinator to move forward with Concept to create an RFP for the project. The total cost of the installation will be close \$200K and would be compatible with the telecom system the South Hadley Public Schools have recently installed (\$250K). That request would be made at a future meeting. Mr. Ebner would be happy to make a presentation to the Selectboard at your convenience.

We continue to have outages at the Ledge’s and the Senior Center systems and transfers to the DPW are not always smooth, if even possible. Each of the outposts have had technicians try to solve some of the problems with little or no success. I am sure you would agree it is crucial to have a dependable and integrated system. Even the experts see somethings they never saw before and that happened when Mr. Ebner went to our Senior Center in South Hadley to observe the backbone, even to me it looked a little odd. It does work, just not well. See below.



**Moody’s Investors Rating Interview:** Town Accountant Bill Sutton, Treasurer Deb Baldini and I participated in a conference call about the upcoming bond issuance for the final Library costs and nearly the final Plains School bonding. The issuance will be \$3,000,000 in Multi-purpose Municipal Bonds and will go to sale October 27, 2015.

The largest continuing concern for the rating analysts is the Ledges underperformance. The increasing subsidy from the General Fund is not seen as positive for the overall financial health of the town. I impressed upon Moody's that we are going to continue to be aggressive in closing the operational gap between revenues and costs. I also let them know that recently play has been very strong and the course conditions continue to be reviewed positively by the players. They were encouraged also to hear the Golf Commission and the Selectboard were meeting at the chair level to look at a long-term solution to the problem.

They were also very encouraged by the recent cooperative effort between SHELD and the Town to solve some of the decades old deficiencies in the intra department accounting and reconciliation. I thank Bill Sutton, Debbie Baldini and Mike Conchieri (SHELD) for driving that effort.

**Capital Planning Committee Meeting:** I attended the recent Capital Planning Committee meeting to discuss some new requests and give updates on some projects already in play. The committee spoke about the synthetic field, road projects, Town Hall boilers and vehicle purchases.

The Police Chief attended and reviewed his fleet situation and was approved to purchase another cruiser in FY 16 pending the article on the upcoming warrant. Bob Smith the Cable Studio Manager also came to discuss the need for "remote" broadcast equipment. The idea was received well and it is likely to be approved for FY 17 pending additional information. This continues to be a dedicated committee!

**Gaylord/South Hadley Public Library Integration Presentation:** On Wednesday evening October 15 I attend the presentation from the Library(s) Integration Committee. Like Cheryl Bryan the facilitator stated "change is hard". There were concerns about ownership, autonomy, expanded hours, loss of culture, handicap accessibility and capacity. Library Director Joe Rodio did a tremendous job answering some difficult questions, Gaylord Librarian Chris Quigley was also impressive.

The primary focus was on the operational costs and it was suggested that if the two were combined and service levels remained the same the overall combined budget would be about \$50K higher than presently expended (on both). This certainly would not be insurmountable.

While there were many well considered questions asked I thought the most profound was from Town Meeting Member Marilyn Gass. Her line of questioning was centered on the capital costs which would be placed upon the broad shoulder of the Town Of South Hadley. This has to be the most precarious of all obstacles from a municipal perspective to answer and to satisfy. It would likely be a large number once determined and how it would be realized with other failing buildings (Town Hall, Olde Fire House Museum, Senior Center) and numerous other aging buildings with less serious defects is a difficult question to answer. My hat is off to Marilyn, as a supporter of Gaylord, to ask the tough questions. Perhaps we should be focused on whether we should accept the responsibility, as opposed to blindly making this a municipal building. Do we have the wherewithal to respectfully care for this beautiful antiquity? What else would suffer if we redirected resources to this building? All legitimate things to consider.

When I went to the presentation I was hoping there would have been a more aggressive approach to Mount Holyoke in making sure they are aware of the situation facing Gaylord and in turn the town. It seems to me the college would want to be aware of the challenge and perhaps welcome being part of the solution.

**HCHIT MEDEX 2 Rate Increases:** I attended both the Executive Committee of the Hampshire County Health Insurance Trust and the subsequent Insurance Advisory Committee meetings in Deerfield on October 15 as well. The most unfortunate, but important news to come out of those meetings was there will be a 6.6% increase in Medex rates, there is not much that can be done because these rates are based on the feds. The HCHIT rate will go from \$294 (per month) to \$314. You may recall we went to a MEDEX II plan with PDP from the MEDEX III plan. If the trust had not changed the MEDEX III rate would have gone from \$394 to \$434.

These rates will go into effect January 1, 2016, we will hear what increases we face with our active employee plan in January or February. In the case of the active plan we may be able to use some of "trust" to offset or blunt the increase, I suspect the rates will likely go up

I apologize for not having this report with the packet, but today has been very busy, but still wonderful to be part of.

Respectfully submitted;

Michael J Sullivan

South Hadley, Town Administrator