



June 3, 2016

Honorable Selectboard;

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

**Stakeholder Meeting HG&E;** Both Planning Director Richard Harris and I were invited to attend the HG&E "Stakeholders" meeting which is usually an annual event, but the first one in a few years South Hadley was placed on the invite list. PVPC pointed out the oversight to Paul Ducheny and Sarah Larose and the immediately placed us back on the roster.

Much of the discussion was about South Hadley, so we were thankful we attended. The Texon Park section should be open as of May 26<sup>th</sup> 7 to 7 every day weather permitting (if there is a flood event or other dangerous condition they close). The bladder repair staging has been removed after the mending and there is no construction vehicle traffic going to the apron, so the park is back open.

We did discuss adding picnic tables back near the entrance gate where they can be easily observed. Mr. Ducheny noted the request and he said they would give it some internal consideration. The request to create kayak and canoe portage on Cove Island is not off the board, but will be considered in the future when there is less tenants on the island. HG&E reiterated it has always been their intent to increase open space and recreational access at Cove Island, as the inhabitant population dwindles, they continue to move towards this goal.

Some of the groups represented at the table expressed an interest to expand camping at Brunelle's Marina. Planner Harris pointed out some health code and zoning issues may need to be resolved before it would be allowed. I believe some attendees took that as a hostile remark. We tried to diffuse the situations by suggesting having the landowners present for this topic may be advisable. There was also a suggestion to establish kayak or canoe access closer to the dam. There are some significant safety concerns with the idea. It was asked if we could add a trail to the Bike/Pedestrian Plan which would allow people carry their canoes along to the Chicopee boat ramp, I referred the suggestion to Chris Curtis at PVPC to consider as part of the comprehensive plan.

Did you know if you are traveling by canoe or kayak down the Connecticut you can make reservations on the HG&E website? They will pick you and your canoe up at Brunelle's and take you to the Chicopee Boat Ramp to continue your journey. They will accommodate up to eight travelers. Next time I attempt to canoe down the Connecticut I may just see about this service.

**CareerPoint;** Recently I had the opportunity to rekindle an old working relationship with a great agency CareerPoint and the Executive Director David Gadaire. This agency provides workplace training, job

matching for displaced or unemployed workers and skill enhancement. It also plays a critical role in assisting employers to connect with potential employees who possess the skill sets an organization or a company needs in a fast pace job market

The meeting was initially to see if CareerPoint may be helpful with some of the challenges we have been facing in identifying trained restaurant staff for the Ledges, something we understand the industry as a whole is struggling. I also spoke with Providence Ministries Executive Director Karen Blanchard about a training program they are hosting to build commercial kitchen skills for clients. Unfortunately they are weeks away from having any graduates and the list is long for requests from other restaurants.

There has been an initial conversation with Superintendent Young on ideas how we may partner Ledges and SHPS in the future. It would be an added benefit for all parties to the South Hadley High's culinary program. Although, for now the district focus is getting this program up and running with a shoestring budget. The talent drought for chefs and line cooks is predicted to get worse before it gets better with the opening of the casino in Springfield.

**Abandon Housing Project,** The work continues as does the cooperation on this seemingly growing problem. We average about five calls a week a properties, while most are quick fixes, some are not. We continue to work on 19 Ludlow and others from the inaugural list, but 2 Overlook and 34 Searle have been a couple of new additions to be added to the "complex" group of properties.

Often we have owners who have moved on and their property is a lingering reminder to their neighbors that they were ever even here. The task force will continue to send letters, go to Housing Court, seek fines and penalties and generally cajole the owners to take a more responsible approach to their stewardship of their investment.

**67 Amherst Road,** After more than two years of hoping to resolve this amicably the Town was forced to take action through the courts. The Fire District and the Building Commissioner were professionally compelled to seek action to avoid a tragedy. Judge Fields immediately ordered the evacuation of the house after testimony from Fire District 2 Lt. Scott Brady. His ability to describe two different incidents where students may have been placed in danger due to lack of understanding of fire protocol was convincing and essential to the action.

The owner is reported to have abandon future plans to use the house as a dormitory for foreign or other students. We are hoping no matter how the property is used it is made to be safe for the occupants. We will do all we can to make this happen and have this building properly occupied.

**MassDOT Public Hearing,** This hearing was held Thursday May 26 and well attended. I made it part of the official testimony of the South Hadley Selectboard's support to include any bike or pedestrian accessibility improvements in the final design. Appropriate signage, access ramps, increased shoulders and appropriate pavement markings should all be part of the upgrades.

It was a wonderful opportunity for citizens to express their concerns and make their voices heard on this project, unfortunately there were a number of residents who have inquired about making this area safer who were informed of the meeting, but not in attendance. I cannot express enough how attending a meeting like this can shape a project. Thank you to the BWC who came out in force, it makes a difference.

**FY 16/17 Project Update;** Just a quick update the Toth RFP is out on the street and we have already received 11 inquiries, hopefully it will produce a lower than expected bid. The final binder is going down on Pheasant Run and Cedar Ridge. The RFP for the fire detection system upgrade in Town Hall is next to go out, we also will have the elevator RFP out soon. The Selectboard Office renovations are nearing completion and we hope to be in the new space by the close of FY 16. Summer hiring is nearing completion for most departments. I am sure I am missing some other updates, but suffice to say there is a lot going on!

**Entrepreneurship Conference;** The Town of South Hadley, MHC and the South Hadley/Granby Chamber of Commerce partnered to present a talented panel to an eager audience (45 approximately) of entrepreneurs from throughout the region.

Rick Feldman Valley Venture Mentors spoke to the gathering about refining and adapting an idea, the panel was in agreement about worry less about “keeping a secret” and work to sculpt your pitch by making it over and over to whoever will listen. Farid Khelfaoui from the Greater Holyoke Chamber of Commerce SPARK Program, Steve Longpre Barnstorm Studios, Tamara Stenn a MHC Professor were the other panel members.

Selectboard member Frank DeToma brought the greetings of the town and Kevin McCaffery of MHC hosted the evening. If just one of these “entrepreneurs” establishes and grows their business in or near South Hadley it could be the next Yankee Candle or Acacia Communications (Google it) and the jobs, investment and other residuals will benefit the community..

**Town Meeting;** The Town Clerk has submitted all the material required to the Attorney General’s Office for review, I appreciate the Clerk’s efforts in expediting the process. We have been informed the submission review of the articles will be finished by August 21, 2016. Articles which changed bylaws, such as the “Abandon Housing” and “Domestic Animals” will be in effect after the review, but not until such time as the review is completed.

There continues to be positive feedback about the most recent Town Meeting. There was the appropriate level of discussion and discourse about various articles and the “business of the Town” was done in an efficient and effective manner. We look forward to the Fall STM where I am hearing there may be some zoning articles and by-law changes suggested, both always are a public discussion stimuli.

Thank you to ATA Jennifer Wolowicz, Administrative Assistant Laura Krutzler, Assistant Accountant Lynn Roberts, Town Accountant Bill Sutton, Cable Guys Bob Smith and Dan Pease for all their help. I would also like to compliment Moderator Ed Ryan and Town Clerk Carlene Hamlin for their making the process open and efficient. Congratulations to Town Meeting Members for their extraordinary level of preparedness!

Thank you for your input in to the matters expressed above and your guidance, as we work to make South Hadley a great place to live and work!

Respectfully submitted,

Michael J Sullivan

Town Administrator, South Hadley