



October 28, 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.

**South Hadley Fuels;** There was great representation from the governmental officials at South Hadley Fuels unveiling of their new line of products. State Representative Scibak was accompanied by colleagues from Westfield and Longmeadow, Selectboard Members Forcier and DeToma attended, as well.



South Hadley Fuels unveiled their “B-5” low Sulphur fuel. The nearly \$500,000 investment South Hadley Fuels has made in their storage capacity is only rivaled by their growing fleet of services. Creating jobs, tax benefits and a substantial economic catalyst. The question was posed more than once more than once “what if this investment, this business or these jobs were never created”. As bad as the eyesore Mill 6 remains, without this investment which Town Planner Richard Harris’s inventiveness was at the very heart of making this happen, things would be markedly worse.



We remain hopeful that Mill 6 becomes a priority for the property owners. It seems the only solution would be to raze the structure altogether and free up the space to be part of revitalization of the Falls.

President of South Hadley Fuel Services Steve Chase also spoke about his other clean product Bio-fuel which he has been an industry pioneer in this region for decades. There is a lot of good things happening on Gaylord Street.

**Valley Bike Share;** Town Planner Richard Harris and I were in attendance at the most recent meeting of Valley Bike Share at the PVPC Offices in Springfield. All the partners were in attendance at this meeting (Amherst, Holyoke, Northampton, UMASS, and Springfield).

Much of the discussion was centered on the disbursement of sponsorship fees. As NoHo has secured some sponsors they wanted to make sure it was clear those sponsorship would be directly tied to specific kiosks. While no one objected to having the kiosks physically branded for those intended sponsors, I agreed that contributions or sponsorships to this coalition should be seen as a shared resource, after all that is what coalitions are all about. The \$1.7 million dollar Federal TIP grant is certainly seen as a shared resource.

South Hadley is somewhat removed from this conversation, as our stations will not be until Phase 2. It is likely the municipality will have to take some underlying fiscal responsibility (as are the other communities are presently) less what would be raised by sponsorships.

We will work with BWC to determine the exact location of the stations/kiosks, but hypothetically one should be in the area of the Village Commons and the other somewhere in the Falls, if each was costed out a \$12,000 annually we would be on the hook for \$24,000 a year, less sponsors. I would hope we could convince a major sponsor such as MHC to commit for \$18,000, as I believe this program will benefit their students and they will likely be early adopters.

The balance would be hopefully covered by other sponsors (i.e. HMC, South Hadley/Granby Chamber of Commerce, the Village Commons, Peoples Bank, E-Ink) also known as the “usual targets”. There is the risk if grants and or sponsorships did not pan out we would have to reconsider the program or self-fund. I do think this initiative would be attractive to residents and visitors in SoHa, particularly as we continue to encourage bike and pedestrian activity.

I could see someone jumping on a bike in South Hadley Falls and riding up to the Commons for lunch and taking the Tiger Trolley or walking or cycling back to the Falls. When I picture it, by the way, I am driving by seeing the person, sorry.

**E-Ink Tour;** I was asked by Governor Baker’s Western Mass Liaison Mike Knapik to setup a tour for Representative Scibak, Mike Knapik and myself. Wayne Ashworth E-Ink Plant Manager and his team was accommodating as always.

As I have said if I visit the plant another twenty or so times more, I may actually start to understand the concept of electronic ink and all the possible applications. It was interesting to see they now have bought another company which will allow color to be introduced into their process.

They have some exciting outdoor signage uses they are starting to test, including info signs. We advocated and offered to the parties present to ask us how they can help enlarge their presence in South Hadley. They are growing at a significant rate at their Billerica plant, we just want them to know we encourage them to consider South Hadley in those expansion plans. Having Rep Scibak and former Senator Mike Knapik adding their voices was greatly appreciated and helpful.



**Early Voting;** What is the old saying? “Rain nor Snow nor Tigers ..... will not stop early voting in South Hadley” or something to that effect. As of Friday over 1,500 people made their way into Town Hall (and another 188 at the Senior Center) to cast their ballots. We are very much on a learning curve, but my compliments to the Town Clerk and her election workers for making this process flow smoothly.

It was impressive to see South Hadley is avoiding the long lines which have plagued other cities and towns, we have not run out of ballots and the our Town Clerk approached the training and the responsibilities set forth by the Secretary of State William Galvin in a professionalism and serious manner to be admired.

This will have an interesting effect on the traditional voting day. We will certainly seek input from elected officials and voters to see what they liked and what they would like changed. We are aware that a small number of people have expressed concern about some of the prescribed process from the

Secretary of State in how the ballots are protected and how they are recorded. We have encouraged them to make their concerns known to Secretary Galvin, but not by email.

**MPIC;** I recently met with Chair Judy Gooch, Margaret Jodion. Michelle Wolfe of MPIC in our preliminary annual meeting (we will meet again I suspect in January or February) as they start their annual process of reviewing the Master Plan. We discussed some housekeeping issues, projects in town and a few items I may be able to help.

They are very much interested in getting some new members, particularly as we move closer to a Master Plan update being considered. Another item was their encouragement to have all boards and committees update their minutes and have them connected to the corresponding agenda on the website. It is a great suggestion and we will do what we can to promote the idea.

**HCOG Purchasing Program;** Chief Parentela, Superintendent Reidy, Procurement Agent Wolowicz, Payroll and Benefits Coordinator Jackie Iskander (oversees central office supply purchases, as well) met with Ellen Batchelder (HCOG) and Julie Gentile South Hadley's Representative to HCOG about our joint purchase history, areas which we may utilize HCOG joint purchases and also new agreements they are exploring and conversely we discussed ones we think HCOG should explore.

It was a useful meeting and it was nice meet Ms. Batchelder who is newly employed at HCOG. Most of the attendees were very familiar with the program, but it is always useful to revisit these opportunities. We continue to compare prices and we have found a couple of situations where we find better prices from the same vendors.

**General Code Update;** Everything seems to be ready for a Town Meeting vote for the General Code update. I have the sample language for the three necessary articles, we should have the electronic draft version on our website in the next week for Town Meeting Members and the public to review.

Remember this exercise it four fold, to make our by-laws consistent within the by-laws, agreeable with state law, allow by-laws to be more easily deciphered and to automate the system of finding appropriate by-laws.

**Tax Takings/Abandon Building Program;** Recently we completed two tax title takings one was redeemed, which rarely happens at that point, but 16 Ludlow Street is now owned by the Town of South Hadley, Atty. Brown's office is working with Treasurer Baldini on the eviction process. While the owners have found housing there is another person who has not vacated.

The "Abandon Building Task Force" has been reassembled and we have a new member representing the Attorney General's Office, she comes to the issues we face with an abundance of experience as she worked in the City of Holyoke's Law Office on property issues for about seven years. Atty. Kara Cunha will be a great asset and she has jumped in both feet on a couple of the cases.

We will begin to send out letters to property owners explaining how we will deal with our new by-law just recently approved by the AG's Office about registering your vacant property and having an annual inspection. We will be one of the first communities which do not have a commercial exemption. So in South Hadley it will not matter if it is residential or commercial we will still have to inspect it annually vacant buildings for an escalating fee.

**Buildings Assessment;** We have finally engaged a licensed professional to assess the building conditions, prioritize needs and apply estimates to the various projects. Zbigniew Lewantowicz will begin his reviews in the next 45 days, just finding someone interested in doing this labor has been difficult. Mr. Lewantowicz is very qualified and has completed successfully similar work

We hope to have a completed report by the end of February. The Senior Center will be assessed for conditions, but the replacement study will be conducted separately, but in concert.

**Overtime Law Change;** There will be significant changes to overtime benefits by law beginning January 2017. The employee who are presently exempt from overtime and make under \$47,475 annually may be entitled to “extra” time which is calculated differently than overtime.

Other noteworthy changes will be to “travel” time and work away from the jobsite. Each has some added nuance which must be addressed by policy. ATA Wolowicz and I are doing our best to stay on top of the issue, consult with our labor attorneys and consider policies or changes which will best protect the municipality.

This January will truly be challenging as we continue see substantive changes in diverse areas for towns, overtime, records requests and areas covered Governor’s Municipal Efficiency Legislation. It will all take some adjusting but it will work in the end.

**Library Donation;** Republic continues to be a good community partner, as Joe Rodio accepts a check from our Area Service Manager Dan Higgins and as I try to wrestle it away from him. Their continued involvement in community projects and programs really sets them apart from the field. Thanks, Dan! (sign the back Joe)



**FY 18 Budget Parameters;** Another budget season is upon us here is the text below in red related to the parameters and process for the FY 18 Budget, there will be more information to follow:

*It has been duly noted how much everyone looks forward to the start of the budget planning process. We are all trying to figure out, how your budget made it by FY16, if you budgeted enough for FY 17 and now we have to start thinking about FY 18. Like last year we will be using Google Docs to track the progress. Assistant Town Accountant Lynn Roberts will be preparing the material for distribution and will distribute them to you electronically mid-November.*

*Your budget requests should include any contractual increases on the personnel side, if an increase has not been agreed upon for salaries it should not be included (non-union, individual or union) in the request. Also, do not add any staff from your present staffing levels (October 25, 2016), if you have a*

*vacancy we will discuss whether it will be in the subsequent budget. I am confident you will do everything you can do not to increase “other expenses”. Every avenue should be used to limit increases and reduce costs. All increases of more than 1% will receive a special level of scrutiny. The Town Administrator is charged with presenting an overall budget that is balanced and prudent for the entire operation, therefore he reserves the right to reduce individual budgets below FY 2017 if necessary.*

*We have already gotten indications we will be receiving a healthy health insurance increase, as much if not more than \$400,000, debt increases of greater than \$150,000 and we must begin the process of building capacity to borrow within revenue for large projects and without 2 ½ overrides. These and other factors are adding to the pressures of the FY 18 budget. Please be aware we are still in a “maintaining services” mode, many of you have had some great ideas to expand services. I will continue to listen to those ideas.*

*The cautious side would be that our revenues continue to be healthy, so much so it may cause us to revise some of our projection, although they will remain conservative. Growth has been positive and unreserved free cash is again healthy for South Hadley. Yet it remains a watchful process.*

*The initial department manager/town administrator meetings will begin November 28. We will also review Performance Based Evaluations at this meeting so please be prepared for that conversation, as well. I would like to complete the first round of meetings by December 16, you can send me a schedule request at any time. Please update Capital Requests and submit any new requests through 2022.*

*Most departments will be invited back for a final discussion (if necessary) and review in January, the final budget will be delivered to the South Hadley Selectboard and Appropriations early March for their consideration. Call as soon as you can to schedule a meeting, avoid the Holiday rush!*

There is more information in this week’s Selectboard Agenda Packet in respect to the FY 17 budgets first quarter. If there are any questions on either please feel free to call me (413 538 5017 ext 136)

To all citizens please accept our gratitude for the response you have demonstrated in regards to the Alvord Street Repair Project, the “College Streets” (i.e. Columbia, Cornell etc) Sidewalk Project and your response to voting early. The level of cooperation is inspiring!

Thank you for your guidance in all matters South Hadley, the next twenty weeks promise to be very busy. There are some positive signs of progress on a number of fronts, if there are any areas you would like me to cover in future reports, please let me know.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael J Sullivan  
Town Administrator, South Hadley