



April 13, 2017

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.

Senior Center Assessment; I was able to meet with the Senior Center Assessment Group, Tim Eagles from EDM and Ellen and Doug Gallows from Lifespan Design and of course our dedicated COA Director Leslie Hennessey. We were on site at Dayton Street, they toured the building and met many of the center regulars. I even spotted former Selectboard member Frank DeToma in what was referred to as an exercise class, one can imagine I may be unfamiliar with such a class given my present shape.

We also discussed some of the other locations which have been suggested. Ledges, Bridge/Main, Leaping Wells, Toth and while the hired experts suggested this would be a tight fit and if there may additional land to be assembled, their early suggestion was to concentrate on the present site and exhaust all avenues to make it work.

It was the collective opinion given that this was central location in town, on a public bus route, town owned the land, a road and utility infrastructure which is largely in place and the fact that every attendee on this April day made a point to tell visitors they love the location and encouraged them to concentrate on 45 Dayton.

There was a conversation about an expanded concept or a community life center, they were brutally honest in their remarks. Ellen Gallows pointed out the cost would likely double, there would be significant "sell job" to seniors and there would have to be a larger site. They pointed out that there are only seven generations in America today and this center would likely serve four of the seven generations. We also dipped our toe into ideas if a center is eventually built where the center would operate out of during construction and if there was need to lease space how would that impact the project. This and other questions will be answered in due time.

The message was conveyed that if South Hadley decides to build it will be looking for a functional, well-constructed building, which will serve the community for generations and be affordable within existing revenues. Something the community can be proud of, but not made poor by, I hope this was the message you wanted me to send.

Age Friendly Communities; COA Director Hennessey and I met Carol Constant from Loomis Communities at Tufts Health sponsored seminar on Age Friendly Communities. They partnered with AARP and brought in some excellent presenters. There were representatives from all over New England, there was a particularly interesting presentation from a Maine by the name of Patricia Oh who

coordinates 32 small communities some as small as 300 in population. Patricia (went to UMASS Amherst) made an interesting comment about how the most successful coalitions were guided by passionate advocates and the clumsier plans were directives of political entities. She really highlight a need for dedicated individuals to really make it happen in small communities and even smaller communities.

The other significant take away for me was how cities and towns who have sought a label for their “age friendly” were coming to a conclusion there was an advantage to dropping the “age” or “dementia” one example was “Atlanta for All”. It seems “age” has a stigmatizing effect on these initiatives. Certainly that opens up a whole additional dimension, it would seem like it would describe so many positive projects many of you have championed from MASH to the Symposium of Understanding to Dementia Friendly ...All South Hadley! This would seem to be a way to “umbrella brand” a number of positive movements in SoHa, not to control or restrain them just for branding purposes.

By-Law Review Committee; On Wednesday April 12 TH BLRC met at the Senior Center, all members were in attendance. They methodically went over each proposed warrant article, including the TA Recommendations in (now) Article # 12 proposed in the May 10 ATM Warrant. There were some amendments offered and accepted by the committee from the public in attendance and the committee, but none materially changed the intent of the recommended changes.

At this point I have heard little objection to the change for elections to September, I have heard from one member of each Prudential Board indicating they remain interested in some type of annual election coordination and on the changes to the BOH there was a concern raised about whether that would have to be separated out and need legislative action by Town Counsel (which has been confirmed as I proof this document). Attorney Ryan stated he would begin to research the issue, if need be we would just amend and strike it from the recommendation. I would prefer to avoid that measure so we can get TMM’s take on the idea, but we will do what we must do.

Claudia Zuch, Attorney Ryan and I have a scheduled call on Friday morning to discuss the recommendations and the warrant articles in general. I believe this call may clear up a few issues. It should be noted the BLRC approved all the changes as amended.

After this conversation it was decided to it was appropriate under MGL Chapter 41 section 1B to separate out the recommendation to separate the BOH appointment in a specific warrant article to allow compliance with MGL. This change would have to be voted on at a subsequent town election if passed by Town Meeting.

Appropriations Committee; Thursday I attended the committee meeting, they have a public hearing scheduled for April 19 in the Selectboard Meeting Room. Superintendent Nick Young presented first and went through the steps he has taken to reduce the school budget and outlined the predicament he is facing with future severely restrained budget increases. The Appropriations Committee was understanding and aware of the schools efforts and concerns, I also expressed my gratitude, as did the Superintendent on the cooperative efforts displayed throughout the process by all the parties.

We did discuss briefly the number of positions reduced over the last five years and how we are attempting to address staffing challenges throughout municipal offices and departments. The schools have about 53 less employees over the last three years and the town about 11. With salaries and

benefits that is nearly \$3 million annually in cost reductions. There is no question services and education would have benefited from returning those jobs, but we understand we need to live within the available revenue.

Hampshire Insurance IAC; Thank you for your support of the design plan recommended changes, it was mentioned by another town, before I had a chance to mention that the SHSB endorsed the concept and proposed changes to the health insurance plan. There was the usual trepidation from those representatives who do not seem to care about the increased cost to the taxpayers, many of whom are representing regional school districts, ultimately, the recommended changes passed.

There was a conversation about the need for each Selectboard or governing body (does not go to TM) on accepting Chapter 32B sections 21 and 22 by the end of this fiscal year. I will be suggesting it go on the agenda for May 2nd for the South Hadley Selectboard to discuss and accept if you feel it appropriate. This will allow us to start to negotiate with the unions about plan design change.

Elections; The Town election was held this week and created some important dialogue about where we are as a municipality. I am sure it gave those of you who were running and those who were waiting your turn to run some interesting perspective on what is on the voters' minds. There is few settings like local elections where you are able to reach out to the voters.

Welcome to Andrea Miles as the newest Selectboard member and congratulations to all persons who name appeared on the ballot, it is an incredible process of self-reflection, as there is no one more brutally honest population than the voting public.

Benefits Fair; Thank you Jackie Iskander, Gloria Congram and Jennifer Wolowicz for organizing and executing another successful benefits fair. This event held in the Town Hal Auditorium April 7 from 10 until 2. It allowed employees to meet with providers about what we offer to employees and a few different strategies to stay healthy so you do not need the benefits.

Employees had access to blood pressure screening, dietary advice (I was only there for a minute) and stress relief strategies (I was not there at all). It is all part of our plan to create a healthy work place.

MassDOT/River, Roll and Stroll; Chief Parentella, Superintendent Jim Reidy and I all were in attendance of a meeting at MassDOT D-2 in NoHo for the May 7 River, Roll and Stroll. SoHa River Roll and Stroll Chair Mariann Millard did an expert presentation and completely answered all questions posed by MassDOT officials in regards to the River Roll and Stroll Traffic Safety Management Plan.

Mariann and I have discussed thoroughly the responsibilities of the PD, DPW and TA in terms of our responsibilities on May 7. I have spoken with and received permission from Paul Dinn the owner of most of the corner of Bridge and Lamb Street property to stage our equipment and actually use his concrete barriers. We will begin setting up some of the signage and other "pre-event" tasks on Friday and Saturday and will be on scene early Sunday morning, this will be a pop-up to remember. Kudos to Marian Millard, Ira Brezinsky, Liz Austin, Halley Gmeiner and the whole team of volunteers who are making this pop-up pop.

Berkshire Hills Academy/Ledges Project; Andy Rogers, Laura Krutzler and I recently had a very exciting meeting with representatives from the Berkshire Hills Music Academy to see how we may partner to

provide work opportunities to persons with different abilities. This is an extremely positive project which we hope will become a model for other organizations to provide skill matching job opportunities to all citizens.

There were a few places at Ledges where we might partner right away in a cost effective or at least neutral manner. They include dishwashing, range collection and cart detailing. Director Michelle Theroux will be working through the details over the next couple of weeks and I am sure we will come to a common ground for this socially responsible program.

HCOG Bernie Kubiak; As a follow up to your recent meeting with Todd Ford Executive Director of HCOG I met with Bernie Kubiak in regards to HCOG project which will provide Human Resource assistance to towns. It did not seem like something South Hadley would need at this time. However I did offer if there was a small town where it made sense for us to assist we may be able to offer some capacity or advice. Advice would be free, "capacity" we would charge a fee, in other words if was going to be an on-going consult we would expect some recompense back to the Town of South Hadley.

There were a number of areas I pointed out where the municipality would appreciate some regional cooperation, such as ACO, specialized equipment sharing or police dispatch or details. I assured Bernie we would stay interested in any and all possibilities.

I will be working over the weekend on getting all the up to date material for the ATM/STM material up on the Town Meeting page with a link to the SB page, the budget book is being placed on the Budget Material page with a link to SB and Appropriations.

Just a reminder Town Hall will be open only half day on Friday April 21 for quarterly professional development. We would love to have you attend if possible!

Thank you for your patience and support!

Respectfully submitted,

Michael J. Sullivan

Town Of South Hadley, Administrator