



August 2, 2013

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.

Canal Park/ Texon Building; There continues to be much discussion with modest progress in regards to the Texon demolition. The Army Corp of Engineers is very much engaged in its review and the Holyoke Gas and Electric has been extremely cooperative in answering questions posed by the ACOE, in some case several times. My focus has been on removal of the building, as I see it as the greatest known threat to public safety and environmental stability in the Town of South Hadley at the present time.

There are numerous concepts and challenges that will need to be adjusted in the future, but the removal of the building is the first and most formidable step. There can be no increased access, there can be no access at all, until the building is razed. The issue of invasive plant species being removed, the threat of the building collapsing into the river causing environmental damage, cannot be truly addressed until the hazard is removed. Testa Demolition Incorporated is in place and ready to go within thirty days once the approvals are in place, but we need this external approval before anything happens.

Everyone would agree it is frustrating that the conversation is centered on all of the wonderful things we should be able to do, a conversation which we should and could have during and after the Texon building is brought to its demise.

Lithia Springs; Recently I had the opportunity to visit one of the abandon roads that went into Lithia Springs through an abandon park (or so it is said) known to some as Judd Park, which is land owned by the Town and often used by Boy Scouts and others for camping, with Bernie Nestor of the Mount Holyoke Advisory Committee. This short guided tour was helpful to understand possible options in alleviating the congestion caused by the growing popularity of this beautiful area.

As more area residents seek to get more in touch with nature the access issue looms larger, such as parking, appropriate times and other concerns will play out time and time again. Just last Selectboard meeting we discussed putting more land into protective covenants, a laudable practice to be sure. We do need to ask, what is the capacity of the municipality and the state to properly manage these open spaces? It is just not practical to say we should keep people out, we should not allow them to bring a car (most of these lands are not on public bus routes), they should not bring their dog, they must be out by dusk, as there is no capacity to enforce these or other existing regulations.

The South Hadley Police Department has been doing yeoman's work trying to address the concerns along Lithia Springs Road at the other end of area. I have been in contact with neighbors and it has been proposed for the area to extend the "No Parking Tow Zone" to the entire paved portion of Lithia Springs

Road. This will still allow approximately fifteen to sixteen vehicles to park on the unpaved portion, which should be considered as a substantial crowd given the public safety concerns of getting rescue or medical teams in there should the unthinkable happen. I explained to the residents that they would have to propose to administration and I in turn to the Selectboard. A warrant article for a future town meeting, I explained, would require a fairly united approach from all the property owners along Lithia Springs Road to make the request a success and there may be opposition which the proponents should be ready to offset.

Two of the Mount Holyoke Advisory Committee members have reached out to the DCR District Manager and the DCR Ranger responsible for the property to set up a time we can all go out and travel (notice I did not say hike) the property to see what other options there may be to help with this situation.

Re-organization of Town Hall: As you may know we continue to work on a number of moving parts on this “more complex than one would imagine” process. We are still hopeful that we can have a full plan in place by October, the key step is to finalize the memorandum of agreement with the two department managers effected by the change. They both have been wonderful to work with and are anxious to get started on their re-aligned duties.

It must be understood that there will be great expectations and total engagement in their new roles, their hours will be increased to forty and their work product will be subjected to greater scrutiny. One individual will ostensibly have less responsibilities the other a measurable amount more than prior to the change. Given some of the research and salary comparisons I have seen, added to the increased scrutiny and increased hours I will strongly support increases. As I demand more hours and accountability of the department managers under my control I will also support equitable compensation in regards to responsibility and performance.

The staff in these departments will be fit to size of need and the payroll function is likely to be set in very different way in another department. I believe as I re-evaluate costs there will be little or no impact on the cost of government. As I have stated before although there are no reductions of staffing contemplated presently, I will need to use attrition primarily and other methods if it becomes necessary to reduce staff. Jennifer Wolowicz, Assistant Town Administrator has been extremely helpful in this exercise. I continue to meet with individual staff members at all levels.

Department of Revenue Annual Visit; Dennis Mountain and Jim Podolak our liaisons with the DOR were in Town Hall to visit with financial staff and myself. They met with William Sutton Town Accountant and were rightfully impressed with his work, congratulations to Bill and his staff for their efforts.

The DOR team also meet with other financial staff and had nothing but praise for them as well. When the cash book and the General Ledger is within seven dollars of being perfectly balanced, they should be impressed. I can tell you that just does not happen very often, there always is some variance and usually far greater than seven dollars. Do not worry we are continuing our search for the missing seven dollars.

Town Hall Improvements: We have entered into a property management agreement with Dean Development to perform work at our municipal facilities, primarily Town Hall, Senior Center, Olde Fire House Museum and the Police Station. Dean Development has done work before for South Hadley, we sought quotes to ensure that the public is getting a value for their money and so far the results are self

evident. The Selectboard Meeting Room has been transformed, new entrance way ceilings have been installed at the Senior Center and other projects are about to begin. I want to make sure that everyone understands these are regular maintenance issues not “renovations’ in the true sense of the word.

The ATA has been fully engaged in this activity and is doing a wonderful job managing the needs. Besides coordinating the Dean Development work, she has had the tint installed in the auditorium windows, had water cooler filters replaced, addressed electrical failures, as well as plumbing failures, she has coordinated rug and shade installations on top of her already substantial workload. Oh yes, she is the Facility Dude master. Thank you to Jen!

South Hadley- Holyoke Rotary; Recently I was asked by South Hadley resident Bob Woodill to speak to this important civic organization at the Delaney House about my work in three communities I have served. This gave me an opportunity to promote South Hadley and gave a plug to the (at that time) upcoming FallsFest. Some of my remarks were aimed at how we are trying to reimage South Hadley Falls internally and externally.

These opportunities to speak to other groups about the assets and opportunities available in South Hadley are very important. You have known for a long time about the SoHa social and amenity based chattel, I am getting to know it better and we collectively need to tell the uninformed beyond the town line that there are opportunities to invest and enjoy in this great community. I will always do my best to represent this community well, I promise you.

FallsFest; Congratulations to all who participated and attended. This was a great catalyst for civic pride in SoHa and rightfully so, special tip of the hat goes to Carol Constant, Ira Brezinsky, Sue Broulette, Mary Mercier and “Larry the Cable Guy” DuBois (those extension cords in the trees did not get there by themselves) for their dedication.

This event is will hopefully become an annual event and the town will build on this to offer additional events. I have spoken with Selectboard Member Marilyn Ishler and the Lion’s Club reinstitution of the SoHa Chowderfest , there has been conversation about how we might build on the famous Columbus Day Weekend Tag Sale Extravaganza and hopefully there are other events which make it to the calendar to promote the Town. This is all good for the community in a number of ways one cannot even imagine, pride, recognition, investment, this list goes on and so do we.

Cable Advisory Committee; I had the wonderful opportunity to meet with the Chair of the Cable Advisory Eric Zomek to discuss the future possibilities of how that committee may better serve the needs of the community. Mr. Zomek has a vast store of knowledge when it comes to PEG Access and the relationship he has forged with Comcast is equally valuable.

Eric will be coming into the Selectboard Meeting on August 20 to have conversation about this issue. As we see there is nearly continuous change in media delivery, it is important to consider what “cable” will look like in the future and will it still provide a revenue stream to provide local programming. We also should look at whether we are getting all we can out of or local programming and where could we attract more attention. I look forward to the conversation as I am sure do as well.

Meeting with Water District Manager and District Prudential Board Members; As part of my learning South Hadley I was offered the opportunity to meet with Jeff Cyr and Greg Sheehan from District 1 to hear their perspective on a myriad of issues concerning the town. It was helpful interchange to hear the

District perspective and they provided some good ideas to pursue on the municipal side. It is clear that the Town of South Hadley needs to work with both Districts in a cooperative manner and to continue to evaluate whether the form of governance is effective and efficient enough to meet future needs. I look forward to exploring coalescing needs with costs for the citizens of South Hadley.

Qualified Energy Conservation Bonds; David Eisenthal from Unibank Bond Services, Beth Greenbaltt from Beacon Integrated Services and I had a conference call last week to discuss the bonding for the list of energy projects that are part of the borrowing. We have Beth will be preparing an application for the Town of South Hadley to apply for QECCB, which has the potential savings of over \$200,00 over the life of the bond. This is a competitive application which you will see in its completed form when it is available.

One of the ways we decided to make the application more competitive is to commit to the DOER that we will reinvest the savings into additional energy saving measures. All parties felt that given we are not a “Green Communities” recognized by the DOER we needed to find an edge over the communities that are seeking these funds who are “Green Communities”. It should be recognized that the recycling of the savings will only produce larger savings for the municipality in the future.

Local Liquor License Policy; I wanted to let you know that Laura Krutzler has started to do the base research for creating a policy on this important issue. The Chief of Police is engaged and feels this will be helpful to him as well. This will take a while and I cannot thank Laura enough for her time and interest in this initiative.

Thank you for your support and I continue to seek best practices for the Town of South Hadley to implement.

Michael J. Sullivan

Town Administrator