



September 1, 2017

Honorable Selectboard,

Please accept this abridged accounting of activities and initiatives which have been occupying my time and the time of other public employees during the past weeks. Thank you in advance for your attention and interest.

**Civil Service Hearing/Finding;** on August 9 there was a full hearing on a recent by-pass of a candidate for appointment to the South Hadley Police Department as a patrolman. Chief Parentela, Lieutenant Luscomb, ATA/Human Resource Director Jennifer Wolowicz and I each gave testimony before Civil Service Commission Chair Chris Bowman.

I decided not to use legal counsel in this case mostly because I am cheap, but more importantly I did not feel it would greatly impact the outcome. As I suspected in the end Commissioner Bowman asked if we would consider a negotiated settlement. I immediately agreed, the Attorney for the appellant hesitated and then agreed, as well.

We agreed that the appellant would be placed at the top of the next list by Civil Service. The Commissioner explained it does not require us to automatically choose the individual, only that we would give him a fair interview and a chance to serve the South Hadley community.

**Treasurer/Collector (T/C) Office Update;** we continue to make progress in the T/C Office, the vacation season is subsiding and we are moving towards the next step in the changes with personnel assignments. The staffing adjustment between the Building Department and the T/C Office will be fully implemented by September 11<sup>th</sup>. The Acting Assistant Treasurer/Collector Jacqueline Iskander has continued to make enormous progress.

While attending T/C School at UMass Jackie was heartened to hear that we were compliant with numerous procedures and that even though she has only been doing the work for three weeks there were a number of attendees who were actually newer.

There are few procedures which we will be considering changing to make more efficient and we will be looking to expand service offerings particularly in on-line payments and credit cards at the counter. However I would caution we will be deliberate with these additional services and not rush in a model which does not suit our needs.

We have already started to meet with vendors and will reach out to some of our present providers to see how their platforms have evolved to ensure we are using all the bells and whistles we have available to us. I appreciate your patience, as these service and improvements will not be instantaneous, but will unfold over the next six to seven months.

**Ledges Update;** the recent staffing changes are being addressed as best as possible. We are going to be working with a reduced staff, as best we can. The “summer” staff is slow migrating back to campuses. Hiring staff at this juncture may only add cost which we cannot recover and create additional UI claims.

If necessary we may have to limit the days the restaurant is open and I have already instructed the GM to start giving last call earlier. For the rest of August last call will be at 10PM and beginning in September it will be at 9 PM and then 8 PM in October. This will lower our exposure to risk and loss and lower our operational costs. The year did not turn out in many ways as we expected, but we will work to make the best of what is left in the season in the most economical fashion.

Andy Rogers should not be at all faulted for taking on a difficult challenge, he should be applauded. There has been a long history of Ledges issues and challenges and he took them on with zeal. I remain convinced there are some things municipal government is well suited to do, running a bar/restaurant and I may even extend that to a “golf course” may be beyond the appropriate scope of local government. I will do my best to develop a recommendation as to how we may proceed before the season end or sooner.

**River to Range (RTR) Plan;** Once again we have run into some obstacles on Phase I of this project, there has been two rare or endangered species of plants identified along the mouth of Bachelor Brook and radiating up the stream to Route 47. These two endangered plants essentially will make it extremely difficult if not impossible to construct the Phase III Bridge over the brook, it also makes spending the Phase II grant to design the bridge nonsensical.

The silver lining is we lower the required compensatory storage requirements so we can move Phase I forward. Allowing us to concentrate on just the accessible trail will move us more expeditiously from concept to construction. We will attempt to rework the grants already approved for this project which have been affected by the rare flora discovery to see how those funds may benefit South Hadley.

**Woodlawn Plaza Update/40R;** The Town Planner Richard Harris and I had the opportunity to meet with Rocky Falcone and Mike Crowley (project agent) for an update regarding their prospects. They are working with a number of potential tenants and seem to be closer to agreeing with Dollar General on a location. I understand that there are those who would have preferred “Trader Joes” or “Talbot’s”, but the retail realities of location and demographic are considered by site selectors and brokers for corporations and businesses.

As we can see the demolition is nearly complete on the old supermarket, the consistent comment has been “Wow! There is more room than I thought”. The public hearing was held for the 40 R and will be replayed on the public access channel.

**Bartholomew Annual Review;** Brian Jamoroz our Bartholomew Investments representative. We had a good year which exceeded our benchmarks and had a gain of \$486,214 with an ending balance of just over \$14.6 million standard trust funds.

The OPEB also with a principal gain of \$33,088 (2.08%) with an ending balance \$388,304, as you have heard before we use a more aggressive investment of legalist offerings for OPEB in comparison to moderate legalist investments for our general fund investments.

I have great confidence we are doing well and staying within the confines of regulations related to municipal investments. A full copy of the FY 17 Investment report is available in my office for anyone's review.

**Project Updates;**

- Ted Belsky Overlook, fence will be in mid-September, waiting for an evaluation of the wiring conditions, for lights and I awaiting news about the re-dedication ceremony.
- Elevator, it is presently going up and down upon request. The cab has been completely rebuilt, as well as much of the mechanicals.
- Small Conference Room, we are presently accepting quotes to install a split heat/ac system which will serve the new conference room in the Admin/Accounting suite. Hopefully it will be in by winter.
- OFHM Painting, The award has been made, the price was lower than expected, but we may have some unexpected replacement of windows or other carpentry work.
- Town Hall Roof, RFP will be out next week.

**Mount Holyoke College "Return to School" Meeting;** I had a very helpful and productive meeting with Kevin McCaffrey our liaison with MHC. We informed me of several of the changes and expectations of MHC in the next school year. We also discussed some projects of common interest and commitment such as the Valley Bike Share and River to Range.

We also discussed some of the issues other campuses are facing nationally and how the community including MHC could work to make South Hadley a place of tolerance. I informed him that the October Professional Development Day will be dedicated to training on diversity and understanding. I offered him to extend an invitation to MHC students, faculty or staff to attend and observe what we aspire to be as a municipal organization.

Thank you, I hope you enjoy the last rays of summer sun!

Respectfully submitted,

Michael J. Sullivan

Town Administrator, South Hadley