



October 5, 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.



Taken from the Ted Belsky Overlook one evening on my way home, looking up river.

Marion Dangerous Dog Appeal; On October 4 at two in the afternoon Attorney's Ryan and O'Toole, Health Director Sharon Hart, Sergeant Whelihan, SHPD Officer Faginski and I attended a hearing in Belchertown/Hampshire District Court to decide if the Selectboard acted in good faith without malice or prejudice in regards matter a recent dangerous dog hearing (April Marion).

The Magistrate did a thorough job of reviewing the tapes of the May 2016, July 2017 hearings and the eventual August 2017 SB Meeting where the decision was made. The proceedings were taken under advisement, as the Magistrate will deliberate. Once a decision is rendered either party to the suit will be able to appear. One interesting fact was revealed by the appellant's attorney, the dog is no longer in the State of Massachusetts. It was not revealed exactly where the dog now resides.

DLS Seminar; On September 10 I attended the annual Department of Revenue, Division of Local Service (DLS) summit/seminar at the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester. The Lieutenant Governor gave an

update on the Community Compact and spoke about progress being made throughout the Commonwealth and the Baker/Polito Administrations commitment to municipalities. It is a fact they have been very willing to continue increasing funding for cities and towns.

There were a number of seminars on best practices offered by DLS, I attend the "Budgeting and Capital Planning" seminar. I can confidentially report while SoHa is not perfect we are far ahead of many communities as to implementing prudent methods to deal with capital needs in relationship to the annual budget.

The form and substance suggested by the experts who were presenting are part of South Hadley's budgetary process. One of the ideas which was suggested was when appropriate a community consider putting in place a designated stabilization account. This would be used if the town was able to move money from unreserved free cash to a specific stabilization account for a determined project.

This could be used when a town is considering future building or renovations to a specific building. By way of example if a community was considering a new Senior Center or major renovation to an elementary school, but was not quite ready to take the plunge. This would allow a stop gap measure to essentially start saving up for the specific project. I could think of a number of projects which would fit that mold in town.

MMMA Sensitivity Training; Chief Parentela and I attended a training at Devens recently the subject matter could not be more timely. The title was "*Blue Lives Matter, Black Lives Matter, All Lives Matter*" the presenter was Chief Baker and Town Administrator Keegan of Foxborough.

Chief Baker had an impressive resume and well suited to speak the subject matter. He has served as Chief in a number of communities in Maine and Massachusetts, he is an attorney, has worked in nine different counties on the African continent and another dozen throughout the rest of the world for the United Nations of Human Rights.

He gave several examples of how our perception of issues is formed by what we think we know, based on media and FaceBook. I can tell when presented with facts and studies of police interaction with the public, there is undeniably a disconnect of popular belief and factual analysis. This is not to say there is not issues of inequality and bias here in South Hadley and throughout the Commonwealth, the United States and beyond. What I came away from the presentation is that there are undoubtedly issues of bias in America, but the lenses we see those issues needs some polishing.

HCHIT Design Plan Changes; There will be a HCHIT Insurance Advisory Committee meeting in Deerfield to discuss the Design Plan Changes proposed for the insurance plan. If the changes are accepted we will have to notify the unions of the proposed changes and call a meeting of the representatives of each union.

As you may have seen in a recent newspaper article about the Amherst self-funded trust. I believe these plan design changes are necessary to make the HCHIT stringer and more reflective of the health insurance industry realities. The co-pay changes and prescription deductibles will still leave this plan as one of the most generous in the Commonwealth.

IGM Meeting; Steve Gano and I recently met to discuss IGM's perspective on the Ledges operation. We both were in full agreement, as I have stated before, the conditions and the play of the Ledges is second

to none. Although I would have to rely on second hand information in respect to how the course plays, but there seems to be a consensus about the condition of the course, it is in excellent shape.

Mr. Gano was very willing to use any resources his International Golf Management may have at its disposal to make the success of the Ledges. Including forgoing next years scheduled increase in contractual fees (\$8,000) for FY 18, even though their margin is growing ever so thin. IGM's concern and performance is greatly appreciated and I assured him we will keep the offer in mind.

We did have an honest and professional dialogue about the need to make a decision about the course soon in respect to the December 1 renewal date. I fully understand the practical nature of the notice from an IGM vantage point, they have commitment to staff, investment in equipment and other plans which will be effected by the outcome. We have leagues and tournaments to consider, but again all reasonable and rational people understand this is about the financial impact to the taxpayers.

Granby Building Commissioner; Recently the Town of Granby found itself without a Building Commissioner. In a gesture of regional cooperation and neighborly politeness we have temporarily provide some basic permit and inspectional services. We also have been in discussions to explore the possibility of a shared service more long term. Unfortunately we have had to suspend the service to Granby a, as it has been taxing on the department.

I have reached out to Commissioner Sean Cronin from the Governor's Office who is largely responsible to make "regionalization" work for cities and towns. During our discussion I explained some of the roadblocks and obstacles state law or state agencies have put in place to make some of these concepts to take hold. He was very interested and attentive and has asked for me to compile some of the issues in a report. We will continue to try and find some solutions where regionalization will benefit the Town of South Hadley and our neighbors.

RDA Forum; The South Hadley Redevelopment Authority recently presented at the library an update and facilitate a discussion about the dynamic parts of the plan. It was well attended and it would appear there was a fair level of consensus on the plan.

Presently DHCD is reviewing the updated draft and once their work is completed the plan will be sent to the Planning Board for review. Then it would be on to Town Meeting for acceptance. As with the 40R District (also needs to be reviewed by DHCD as a draft) it was intended the plan would be subject matter at the next Special Town Meeting, therefore it is important for us to have some level of certainty these initiatives in their final forms before we set date for the STM. While these would not be the only articles they would be significant.

SEC Meeting; The Sustainable Energy Committee also met at the library on the same night as the RDA. This committee is really engaged and opening up conversations on a number of issues related to energy savings. SEC member John Howard has come in to the office with updating data within MassEnergy Insight. Between his hard work and Laura's we are near compiling all of the usage data points.

I will be back at their next meeting on October 16 with Beth Greenblatt from Beacon Integrated to discuss some the impressive steps SoHa has taken to become a more carbon aware community. The SEC is really excited about researching and considering ideas which will save money and help to save our planet.

River to Range Phase II; We recently have received our Phase II grant for \$50,000 from MDCR at an award ceremony in the Bondsville section of Palmer on September 19. We are however working out the details as we have had to significantly modify the application once we found out we would not be able to bridge the Bachelor Brook due to the rare and endangered plant life.

The \$15K match will have to go back before Town Meeting to be re-appropriated, as the use is significantly different than was presented to the body. Anne Capra and Richard Harris have been of great assistance as we find our way through the bureaucratic house of mirrors.

Toth Property; Bike Walk Committee invited Pete Westover (consultant) and I to attend their meeting on at the Library on September 20 to discuss progress on the Leaping Springs Nature Reserve (or whatever the Toth trail name may end up being). The committee seems to be coming to a consensus on what they would like to advocate be developed on the property.

Their plan, as I saw it would not have a direct effect on Newton Street residents, as there would be no access or parking proposed west of the parcel. The existing path left from the farm will be left to the devices of nature, as the culvert repair would be significant.

The trail envisioned would be located on the higher ground would be very sensitive to habitats and even more sensitive to the abutters. If the plan is accepted it would have over a 100 foot buffer from Parkview residents, would emphasize removal of several aggressive invasive species identified by Mr. Westover during his review. The BWC will be working on some opportunities for members and citizens alike to have the opportunity to walk the trail, see the draft concept and make comment.

It is understood there are concerns from neighbors, but if we listen and address the genuine concerns in a reasonable manner the knock-off concerns will be exposed. This is public land and everyone has a right to have reasonable and safe access to their investment. Both the BWC and I are committed to making this a recreational and communal value.

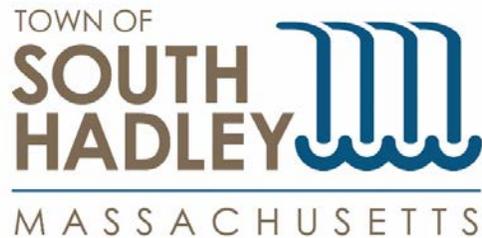
Recreational Plan, I would like to thank the dozen or so officials, business owners and interested citizens who meet. There was a helpful discussion about next steps and suggestions, including if the SB would consider allowing a listing of all municipal, for profit or non-profit recreational offerings in SoHa on a defined page of the town website. While I think we could craft some guidelines which would allow this, as always we should probably give some thought as to how it may be misused, as well as useful by the community.

Thank you for all that attended and I will try and work on this as best I can and attempt to call another meeting in the winter months. I thank MPIC for their patience on this project.

Treasurer/Collector Office Update; progress continues in this complex, but important retrenching the staff Lori Vautrin and Gail Chadwick have been diligent and patient with the changes, as we do not always have the answers right at hand. Claudia Frappier has made a nice transition to the Building Department and is learning their process and rules quite nicely.

Lynn Roberts and Bill Sutton are doing what they can to assist in this massive change. People outside of South Hadley shutter (especially the ones from the DOR) when I mention we have had to replace our Treasurer/Collector and the assistant simultaneously. Of course Jacqueline Iskander has been admirably dedicated to learning the job from some, training others, considering new ways to do things for her and the department and doing the job all at once. Remarkable! I am very skilled at being an anchor.

New Municipal Logo; We have begun circulating and using the updated logo, and have already heard some compliments and criticisms. This is the product of input from interested parties and as you can see quite different than where it started out.



Some people have asked about why the seal is not prominently featured in the rendering. It was discussed and it was stated that the “municipal seal” is clearly meant to be used on high level official documents, the seal also suffers some degradation when was used in different media and we were looking for a more contemporary logo which expresses South Hadley. The idea of featuring the relationship between the Town and the Connecticut River is undeniable and inextricable.

We will be gradually coordinating the use of the logo on envelopes, letters, business cards, billing, advertising and generally speaking overall branding of South Hadley. The “seal” will still have an important role in municipal life and used appropriately and under the permission of the Town Clerk.

We will be able to use this logo on wearables and other items which promote South Hadley eventually, we would appreciate any and all ideas on how we could get the image out to the public.

It will be part of our website refreshworking on it. The position vacated by Jackie Iskander is being re-tooled, as we are looking for a candidate who understands personnel issues, will be tasked with engaging staff and be able to assist with emerging media and web related updates.



DLS “What’s New In Municipal Law” Seminar: On October 4th SoHa was well represented at the Municipal Law Seminar, Assessor Kevin Taugher, Assistant to the Board of Assessors Melissa Couture, Assistant to the Assistant to the Board of Assessors, Town Accountant William Sutton and I attended the informational portion of the seminar.

As is always the case it was very informative and helpful, recent court rulings on taxation, new court case on the horizon, recently enacted legislation and proposed changes to Mass General Law on topics from retirement to labor to assessment to new tax deferral laws and more were discussed.

Unfortunately, I had to leave at noon (before lunch), but I look forward to meeting with those I left behind on the various items from the afternoon workshops.

Professional Development Day October 13th; Town Hall will be closed at noon to facilitate our quarterly Professional Development Day. The subject matter could not be more timely...diversity in the community. This is another part of the Symposium of Understanding efforts and we are working towards calling a meeting of the general public to discuss how understanding our differences makes us the community we would like to be. Any SB member who would like to attend, please let me know.

We are probably a couple of weeks out on the ClearGov financial transparency launch, I appreciate your patience. Thank you for your support and I look forward to discussing the agenda items with you on Tuesday.

Respectfully submitted

Michael J. Sullivan

Town Administrator, South Hadley