



August 18, 2014

Honorable Selectboard;

Please accept this as an abridged accounting of recent activities of the Town Administrator on your behalf, related to various projects and initiatives.

**Westover Community Partnership Outreach;** on August 7<sup>th</sup> I attended a session of the Westover Air Reserve Base Community Partnership. There was four hours of discussion about how we may leverage assets in the best interest of Westover and the surrounding communities.

The area which stood out as an opportunity to forge a stronger relationship was in Disaster Preparedness. The logistic and equipment assets possessed by Westover are very appealing to our preparedness planning. I will be serving on this sub-committee in an attempt to try and produce something which will benefit all parties.

Other collaborations under consideration are joint purchasing, grassland management, internships, school tours, shared recreation programs and veteran services. The base would also like to have some of their informational videos played on the South Hadley access channel, I will be asking the station manager to consider how we may accommodate this request.

**351 East Street;** I met with a representative of Con Edison recently about possibly developing this property as a solar array. There is a number of decisions and calculations to be ferreted out, but it does pose some interesting opportunities. Whether the inter connect can be achieved over the Granby border, whether the suns trajectory across the land is suitable for the desired production, whether SHELD is interested in partnering, the role the high tension wires plays in this concept and then of course costs, investors, public process, conservation issues, zoning and a myriad of other institutional issues.

The goal would be to maximize the revenue stream back to the Town of South Hadley from the sale or lease of the property with the smallest impact to the surrounding area. Maybe some of the return could be reinvested in the road to help the residents along East Street save wear and tear on their vehicles.

At this point it is an interesting idea, I will keep you informed as we move from idea to concept to strategy to plan to something real, yes it is a long road to good projects. Thanks for your patience.

**Blighted Property Initiatives:** Treasurer Baldini and I met recently with Attorney Peter Brown and Attorney Alexis Cristo in regards to some of our tax title properties and properties of low value. We recently finished a taking of 8 Lawrence Ave and will be adding the property to the list of properties available for sale.

We discussed some new strategies for shedding “land of low value”, these are commonly unbuildable lots with no or little value, occasionally attached to properties of value. In some instances they have common ownership where the owner resists paying taxes on the additional lot. There are two perspectives at opposite ends of the spectrum we are exploring. First if a person is not paying taxes, however small on the “land of low value” adjacent to their property can we attach the property of value in a taking or can we connect the lot to an adjacency to create a buildable lot? Ultimately our interest is in getting the property taxes paid, not owning land, but tax taking is our stick and we are sworn to use “any and all measures” to collect property taxes.

In reality South Hadley has a very low outstanding tax balance (approximately \$650,000 in tax title), mostly to the hard work of the Treasurer/ Collector and to the cooperative nature of the citizens of South Hadley. I was just told we received our final payment from Intellicoat (\$42,000) and another twelve thousand from another tax tile property, these all will be part of the FY 16 “free cash” , ...yes FY 16, money in the bank.

Other projects on our list of blighted properties include 154 Newton Street which we appreciate the demo and the cooperation of that owner on the other hand property owners at 36 Bridge, 103 College, 150 Main, 10 Canal Street and others are slowly starting to come around to their responsibilities of ownership through our joint efforts with the AG, Building Department, Health Department, Treasurer, Fire Districts and Administration. These are necessary steps to improve the look and feel of all neighborhoods in South Hadley as a goal to retain the communities standing as a great place to live and work.

**Everbridge Sign Ups:** We continue to have people signing up in the new Everbridge system and have received some nice comments as to how easy it is and how much they appreciate the ability to choose their form of delivery. We still hear from a small number of people who are not using computers, many of these citizens still have landlines, so they will get emergency messages.

It is critically important that we get people at least try to navigate the system before we jump in and help. The nature of a communication system, particularly one which has a foundation in “emergency messaging”, has a tighter bond to the need

**Conflict of Interest Symposium:** On Saturday September 27 from 9:30 David Giannetti from the Boston Office of the Attorney General’s Office will conduct a thorough review of practices related to conflict. This important seminar has been coordinated by Town Clerk Carlene Hamlin, I am thankful for her effort. The intended attendees will be commission, board and authority members, particularly chairpersons. Facilitators of said boards, appropriate staff and the public will be encouraged to attend, as well.

It will be held in the Town Hall Auditorium and there will be coffee and other light refreshments available. This is part of an on-going series of quarterly important educational symposiums to make everyone aware that “the way we have always done it” syndrome, may not be necessarily acceptable any longer. Overall it will be a great learning opportunity.

We will also touch briefly on some of the changes to voting for the November election, as part of a larger outreach to the community to take advantage of the changes. It will be important to monitor how these changes evolve the voting process and related staffing needs for the future. I do not

contemplate there will be reduction in staffing, but there may be a need to adjust the deployment of poll workers. Please circulate this date to all interested parties and I am hopeful the Selectboard may endorse this important symposium by personally reaching out to each chair and perhaps sending a letter to all boards and commissions (via email) to apprise them of the forum.

**Special Town Meeting:** It is that time of year we are looking to set the STM for the Fall. As you are aware there are a few items by-law changes, free cash appropriations and some land issues which will likely be ready for November. I would recommend this be a discussion item for the September 2 SB meeting. I would further recommend the STM be held on Wednesday November 12, I would hold the open public forum the week prior (Wednesday, November 5) as an informational session. This new addition seemed to be well received by Town Meeting members.

Please note I will be out of the office on Friday, Monday and next Tuesday. I thank you for all your continued support and look forward to more projects. Please note that the payment from Intellicoat mentioned earlier may be the last stumbling block for the Patriot project to get started. I have heard the architect has started the interior design of the facility ...another good sign.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael J. Sullivan