



June 11, 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.



**June Cleanup;** If you have felt there was an exceptional amount of pollen in the air, the Town Hall Roof drains would agree. This was the standing water when our property management service went to do the June cleaning (or unclogging) of the roof drains. There was about 6 ten gallon buckets of debris taken down. The good news is the roof remains leak free and no new signs of failure.

We also are in full swing for having elevators inspected, moving ahead on office updates and seasonal maintenance. The Collector, Clerk, Assistant Town Administrator, Health and Payroll Offices have all received some improvements from countertops to carpet to paint to electrical. The Assessor's Office is next up and we are looking to replace the lighting at each Town Hall entrance with energy efficient LEDs. We also have the downstairs Men's Room on the list of needed improvements (for the 51% who have never been in there, I can tell you it is not pretty).

The Pleasant Street door is also being reset as it continues to stick and we just had the data room air conditioner conditioned. Projects at the Senior Center and the Police are also in progress and more planned. These are largely maintenance projects which have been deferred for quite some time. Having Town Meeting and Selectboard encouraging the updates is vitally important.

**AHI AG's Office;** The Attorney General's Abandon Housing Initiative (AHI) swung into town June 10 for an evaluation of the difficult properties in South Hadley. Each property has continuous complaints filed about the condition of the property with the Building or Health Departments over a long period of time.

The Health Director has been key to coordinating this initiative. Along with us on the tour of downtrodden homes was Julie Datiras and Nick Gardner from the AG's Office, Tony Judge (RA), Frank DeToma (SB) and Jenny Scoby (interested citizen). We visited homes on Canal, Ludlow, Newton, College, Bridge and Main Street, all the properties were deemed a blight catalyst and would qualify for the AHI. The AG's Office will get started immediately and notify the owners.

**Everbridge;** I have received from BlackBoard Connect a release of the ill-defined agreement for Reverse 911 services. Our new service provider will provide an improved service to South Hadley beginning July 1, 2014. This does not mean it will be without flaws, but we will work with Everbridge and residents to make a smooth transition.

We will also start a campaign for residents to update their contact information on the platform once we are familiar with the new tool. There will be staff training provided, including training for the Districts. The Districts will have all the same access with the new and will not be asked to contribute any longer.

The Town's contribution will remain about the same, about \$7,000 annually. The more important point is we have significantly reduced the overall cost to the people we serve. I believe this is another sign of the Town and Districts trying to work together to reduce the overall cost of government. I appreciate the SB's continued support in this relationship building.

**Golf Advisory Board;** I met with Chairman George Francis of the Golf Advisory Board (GAB), he informed me that the GAB met and discussed the idea of going out to RFP or RFQ for the Ledges. He stated he would be penning a letter on the board's behalf to not go out for RFP or RFQ. He will include in the communiqué an explanation and rationale behind the decision.

He also informed me the letter request from Terry Sugrue for an adjustment due to his circumstance last year for this year's club fee was denied. The GAB has established a requirement for any such inquiries to have the party appear at a meeting so they can probe the reasons for the request, it is my understanding although Mr. Sugrue has been advised of this policy he has chosen not to appear, but had sent a letter.

The chairman advised me in the letter from the GAB Chair to Mr. Sugrue he will be apprised he could request the SB interceded on the matter. Mr. Francis plans on attending the SB meeting on Tuesday where if needed he could add clarification if needed.

**South Hadley Comprehensive Bike/Pedestrian Network;** As an update on the task assigned to me by the SB to begin developing a strategic network for bike and pedestrian paths to link the Falls and the Village as outlined in the South Hadley Master Plan, I have few items. Representative Scibak was able to attach a request for \$225,000 to an environmental bond bill to be used for supporting the efforts to create more of pathways throughout South Hadley. If these funds successfully navigate the turbulent waters of the Statehouse, they will help greatly in planning, placing and maintaining paths, including in and possibly around the Bynam Conservation Reserve.

In the event the funds are secured the ConsCom will certainly be included in the planning, as well as the SEC, Redevelopment Authority and others interested parties. We owe a debt of gratitude to Representative Scibak for his leadership and always looking out for his hometown. I would caution, even with his best effort the dollars may be turned into confetti for some other community's party, as is often the case. The important thing is you have someone who is always trying to help under the Golden Dome.

On another note, I met with Anne Capra from Conservation Works LLC who is helping with the Batchelor Brook Bridge project with PVPC. Planning Director Richard Harris was in on this meeting as well, I

appreciate having his “trail” knowledge at the table. The ConsCom Director Janice Stone was on a well-deserved vacation, but is well aware of the initiative.

This is an off-shoot of the Route 47 Scenic By-way project which is attempting to create a series of trails and pedestrian paths along and from Route 47. My intent with this meeting was to ensure everyone involved with this venture through PVPC that South Hadley is hoping to create a Ferry Street to Fairview link for bicycles, strollers, walkers, wheelchairs and joggers whether residents or visitors are going the whole length or just a portion.

I felt it was critically important the location of the bridge is not only be environmentally sensitive, but cost effective in assuring maximization of use by the public. Next week I will be meeting with Chris Curtis from PVPC and attending the Route 47 Scenic By-way meeting in Sunderland Thursday evening to attempt to let everyone know SoHa is interested in having a viable ways for alternative transportation, who knows I may even get my bike out.

**Encumbrances FY 14;** As the end of the fiscal year draws near we are contemplating both the end of year transfers which the SB will consider on your July 2. There are no expected significant shortfalls, but there will be a historically normal amount for Appropriations and the Selectboard.

As for encumbrances, the major one will be to commit the remaining \$16,000 in Professional Contract Service-Selectboard to cover the RA cost to create a Renewal Plan which is required for the Redevelopment Plan moving forward. The only other encumbrance we have identified beyond that would be to Town Hall improvements which are in progress, but not completed. This may not be the only ones, but they are the ones know at this time.

**Building Commissioner Applicants;** I have completed the final interviews for South Hadley Building Commissioner and I am awaiting some call backs on reference checks, I hope to have final decision by Friday afternoon or Monday at the latest. The good news is we received nine applications, with three very competent individuals forwarded to me by the screening committee. I can tell you anyone of the three would do a great job.

I have received a number of calls from people supporting each of the finalist. I am doing my best to approach this with a fair and objective view. I will select what I see is the best Building Commissioner given the challenges and responsibilities for the Town of South Hadley. I appreciate the SB’s support in that respect.

**Staff End of Year Adjustments;** Please note based on a successful evaluation the Town Administrator salary will increase, thank you for the evaluation. The Administrative Aide to the Selectboard hours will increase to forty as of July 1 and salary will reflect this increase. The Assistant Town Administrator salary will increase based on an educational incentive by eight hundred dollars annually. These increase were budgeted and approved for FY 15.

We are trying our best to schedule our part time help for coverage of the office as best we can, but there may be some times over the summer months where it may not be possible for select days or times. If you have any concerns please call my cell, when I am not in the office (which is often) ...or church (which is rare) ... or at a political speech (which is never) I try to keep the ringer on.

Town Hall will be open five days a week 8:30 until 4:30 Monday through Friday with the exception of the Fourth of July and the afternoon of July 18<sup>th</sup> our quarterly Professional development day. We will be touring the Falls for this day, visiting the Texon site, the new Library, the old Library and 27 Gaylord Street, so staff can learn more about the Town of South Hadley from a street level view.

If any of the Selectboard are going to join us please let me know in advance so I can get you an intermarry when it is finalized.

**Joint Meeting of ConsCom, BOH and SB at the Landfill;** The Wednesday evening meeting seemed like it went well, it was clear the landfill is closing. I have a high level of confidence in Town Engineer Dan Murphy's ability, with the support of DPW Director Jim Reidy to coordinate the closure process. It seems a daunting task and is obviously complex. With GeoSyntec, DEP and Atty. Richmond on our side I believe we will be as successful as possible.

The good news I heard at the meeting was the MSE berm was not to be seen by anyone as near a point of failure and other than some uneven settling which could and will be addressed is working as it should during the aging process. The results will not be pristine, but we all are trying to make the best of what it is! The cake was great, as well.

**BAN Sold \$5,250,00;** This short term borrowing went well and it will be utilized for part of the Plains School costs, the final Library costs and a piece of equipment which somehow eluded borrowing for three years. By borrowing for the equipment piece it corrects our cash balance, the Town Accountant was aware as well as our outside Auditors of this defect. Plus the truck is two years old at this point.

The good news is we came it with an offer of 1% from Jefferies with an all-inclusive cost of .74% (as we are not borrowing for a full year). This bond anticipation note will get rolled into our FY 15 General Obligation Bond, so we can keep within the bank qualified loan structure. This is another additional savings for the Town of South Hadley by staying true this vehicle.

The issues of concern for Moody's remains the Ledges and as is the case of all communities the size of our borrowing portfolio in respect to the equalized value of the Town of South Hadley. They did however remain confident enough in South Hadley's viability by allowing us to retain an Aaa2 rating for this borrowing. I have asked David Eisenthal to work with me to develop a strategy to bring to Capital Planning and the SB about future borrowing for capital. I cannot thank Treasurer Baldini and Town Accountant Bill Sutton enough for their leadership during this process.

Thank you for all your support, I will continue to do my best to work in the best interest of the Town of South Hadley and the Selectboard

Respectfully submitted,

Michael J Sullivan

Town Administrator, South Hadley