

Ira Brezinsky, Chair
Andrea Miles, Vice-Chair
Jeff Cyr, Clerk
Sarah Etelman
Bruce Forcier

Michael J. Sullivan
Town Administrator

Dec. 13, 2018

Honorable Selectboard,

Please accept this abridged version of the projects and initiatives I, and the outstanding municipal staff, have been working on over the last two weeks. It has certainly has been an incredibly busy period as the calendar year comes to a close. As always I greatly appreciate your continued support.

Website Update: There continues to be momentum building on the website thanks to the hard work of Kristin Maher and Jaime Doolittle. I got a quick glimpse of the color palette and the new look - it does elicit excitement. The new logo is featured prominently and the colors emanate from there, creating a clean look.

The features and content changes continue to be developed, including the "New Resident" page. The "team" is continuing to look at innovations on other municipal sites, as well as dissecting the process of access to information on our pages. It is not always easy to try and translate what we are saying into common straightforward language

Town Hall Projects: There has been a great deal of activity this past week around town hall. The sewer pipe replacement has begun but may stretch into next week as it was discovered there is a need to cut into the sidewalk and the road to complete the replacement project. The old clay pipe goes about 15 feet farther than originally suspected.

The walkway leading to the new assembly area portion will not be completed until spring as this is not a recommended concrete season. They also discovered more of the root system left behind by the tree.





Once this project is complete, ATA Wolowicz will have the work start on the conference room - where the former IT office was housed - to replace Conference Room One.

On the other end of the building, the entrance closest to the police department is experiencing a significant makeover as well.

The new colors at this entrance will serve as a template for the first floor hallway renovation projects. We have some of the remaining items in the hallway listed on MuniBid and look forward to having the kiosks and message boards installed. We will also have a directional tablet which will help clients find their way to offices.

O-Zone Conference: Town Planner Richard Harris and I recently attended the DHCD Opportunity Zone Conference in Lowell. It was attended by planners, tax accountants,

lawyers, developers, investors and government types who know very little, like me. The picture shows EOEA Secretary Jay Ash addressing the gathering.

As with all attendees of this conference there was plenty of questions left unanswered by the presenters and panelists - not because they did not try and certainly not because they did not want to answer those lingering questions. Simply put, there are still a lot of unknowns with the legislation as it is presently written. An interesting side note: DHCD staff was on a national teleconference during this conference getting more detailed answers.

Suffice to say there is a great deal of interest in O-Zones. The room was overflowing and there are numerous



communities asking why they were not included as an opportunity zone. South Hadley is one of the 79 Massachusetts communities out of 351 cities and towns accepted in the program for the next 10 years. It should be noted the target area accepted by the State and Feds in SoHa is the census tract which is largely the Falls.

Investors who have a taxable realized gain from an investment will be allowed to take those gains and invest them in a project in an O-Zone and have any tax payment deferred or under some other measures (after 10 years) dismissed altogether. These investments can be in housing, commercial industries, manufacturing, intellectual properties, retail or just about anything which will produce jobs or profit. Needless to say it is much more complicated than I can describe. But judging by the real money in the room, or at least the smell of it, there are people ready to invest.

I believe it will be important for anyone thinking of buying, investing or starting a project in South Hadley to make sure they know SoHa is an O-Zone and they should consult their accountants/lawyers to see the advantages. Learn more at www.mass.gov/opportunity-zone-program and check out the cut sheet on South Hadley and the 78 other communities.

Budget 2020: The budget process continues and it is highly unlikely we will be able to match the reduction we experienced last year. However, I will do my level best to offer a budget which keeps our core responsibilities (public education, safety, government services) at the forefront.

In a conversation last week with the Superintendent about the rapidly increasing special needs for the students attending South Hadley Public Schools, and the challenge of Charter Schools which often systemically exclude students who require increased services from their "mix," he revealed the need for a substantial increase in the school budget. I will do my best to meet the requirements, but admittedly, I will be the first to say our best may still fall short.

The Superintendent can and will likely make an argument about the need for as much as a \$1.4 million increase in funding for the schools. We both agree that amount would be crippling for town, especially as we try to make more capital investments in the school district. He has committed to go back and work with his staff and faculty to find ways to reduce the amount to something more sustainable and would not cause significant harm to other core services. I appreciate his willingness to scale that wall.

Although the most recent Consumer Price Index would suggest there is no inflation, central cost for government are on the rise. The effects of a new minimum wage, more required training/certifications, rising health insurance costs and the low unemployment rate are all making it more difficult to attract, compensate and retain qualified staff at

all levels, thereby increasing the cost of delivering services or alternatively cutting services.

The municipal budget has historically been about 85% costs related to personnel in South Hadley and nearly every other community. That does not change in good times or bad. I believe we need to continue to encourage more employees to seek tech and efficiency solutions to weather the storm. I understand the “do more with less” is a tired phrase, but still applicable to our strategy and needs.

It goes without saying that having an understanding citizenry is critical to making it all work, along with elected leaders who are committed. Luckily South Hadley has both components. Thank you to the Selectboard and Town Meeting for providing excellent leadership and a positive outlook for the town.

OSHA 7500: As I previously mentioned we were well represented at the recent training on Tuesday, Dec. 4 in East Longmeadow. As my last report was written in anticipation of the meeting, we now can say we were there ... all day. Jennifer Wolowicz, Jim Reidy, DPW Assistant Superintendent Viv Price and Parks Superintendent Bill Simard attended the full eight-hour course and have successfully become OSHA 7500 certified.

The course was a real eye-opener. It was easy to recognize defects and deficiencies in both process and physical plant throughout the municipal workplace. Just the requirements for using ground fault indicators on nearly every electrical power device to meet OSHA is daunting.

The issues of heavy equipment operations, trench safety, harnesses, what qualifies by OSHA standards for reflective clothing, where we must use eyewear protection, the requirements for reading and understanding those manuals which we get with every piece of equipment (I am guessing one manual may have been partially read), and a volumes of other actions we need to consider to protect our most valuable investment - our employees. This is a costly change in operations, but it is one we need to start the planning process and in some situation taking immediate action to employ.

South Hadley will be hosting a “hot works” training for 100 or more people from communities all over Massachusetts with MIIA in March, hopefully at MHC. “Hot works” is soldering, welding, saw cutting or any other procedure which requires or creates a spark during the process. These processes cause injuries and deaths across the and Massachusetts each year.

Representative Scibak Reception: Thank you to KYT for hosting and coordinating a nice evening for the retiring state representative. It was well attended. Selectboard Member Sarah Etelman did an excellent job at bringing the greetings of the board. John (Scibak) made some sincere and emotional remarks about his time representing the

district and how important the Town of South Hadley's support was for him during his term.

Representative-elect Dan Carey was in attendance and stayed, engaging all who approached him in conversation. I am confident he is aware of the shoes he will need to fill and I am equally confident he will succeed in doing so.

I was very impressed with the culinary program students from South Hadley High School at the event. They were extremely professional and worked tirelessly throughout the event. Thank you Linda Young and the other KYT members.

Best of Luck John Scibak!

The Holiday Stroll was at nearly the same time as the reception. I did make my way up the town common briefly and was delighted to see the South Hadley/Granby Chamber of Commerce receiving so much community support. I appreciate they included the Town of South Hadley in their expression of gratitude for supporters. Their appreciation is appreciated.

The line to see Santa was well formed with at least fifty parents and children in line to put a final "nice" word in with the jolly old soul. Chief Parentela was there lending a hand as always, and I heard the incoming chief was in attendance with her children, as well.

The cost of providing police for the event was more than \$700. I did send an invoice to the Chamber with a note acknowledging that the SB was supportive of the event, and would continue the practice of waiving the cost for this year. However, as we know, that may not be possible in the future if the budget continues to tighten.

Just a reminder, town hall will be closed Dec. 24, 25, 31 and Jan. 1. I would encourage citizens to use our online services or plan their visit accordingly. Offices are, in most cases, fully operational between 9 and 4 most other weekdays. And, as always, it never hurts to email or call ahead.

I wish everyone a prosperous New Year!

Respectfully submitted,

Michael J Sullivan
Town Administrator, South Hadley