

Ira Brezinsky, Chair
Andrea Miles, Vice-Chair
Jeff Cyr, Clerk
Sarah Etelman
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Michael J. Sullivan
Town Administrator

February 1, 2019

Honorable Selectboard;

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

Town Hall Improvements; Mostly due to the coordination of ATA Wolowicz various projects in Town Hall are making substantial progress. The main hallway on the first level now has new flooring and we have the second four suite split systems installed in the south western corner of Town Hall.

This will replace the A/C window units in the Health Department, Human Resources, Veteran's Services and the IT Office (formally room #1). Window units tend to have a short life and are critically inefficient. The next steps will be to complete the flooring in the north hallway and commence with the painting, installation of the self-service kiosk, the message boards, security cameras and the info tablet(s).

The former IT office space has already started being converted to an additional meeting space to replace Room #1. This area will be set up to do trainings, facilitate public meetings for up to 25- 30 attendees. The flooding issues have been abated (let's hope). I still have some concerns about roof drain connections, but we will work on decoupling those as we can afford and identify a reasonable solution.

As you are aware there is still much to do at Town Hall both on the exterior and interior if this building is intended to function for the next 100 years. We will know more when the ADA assessment (agreement has been signed) is completed and we can prioritize those needs into a larger plan. This includes suggestions made in the 2017 Town Building assessment.

Valley Bike Expansion; I attended a VBS meeting in Noho of Friday to discuss the expansion of the bike share through another federal CMAQ grant. This is an important step for the program which will make it the largest interlocal program in the country.

We are very hopeful agreements are finalized soon for the installation of a third station in the Dayton/Newton area as a final part of Phase I. While SoHa does not have additional stations, VBS/Beweegen is open to additional stations in the future. The Library, Big Y, East Street/Granby Road and others could be possibilities.

The ultimate goal is to develop a dependable and sustainable system which offers an option to all citizens to reduce their use of an automobile or other forms of fossil fuel driven transportation. While the recreational aspect is a great entry tool for users, the real goal is regular daily/weekly consumers of the

service to become confident the service will be there when the need it. As the VBS map is extended to other communities, it stands to reason all participating communities will benefit by an increased familiarity and additional members for VBS.

There was also significant discussion about seeking regional sponsorships from the business community. It was an interesting discussion, as other bike share programs across the United States have been able to garner large corporate sponsors (Cisco, CITI Bank, Target), VBS has fallen far short of anything close to such a relationship.

The answer to the local void was not readily evident, some suggested the VBS approach and performance has fallen short in that regard, some suggested it was a lagging business climate coupled with an aggressive imagination for innovative projects affecting the region. When considering other like systems who have received sponsors, it seems to be nationally known entities who have their home base in the bike share area. It probably is all of those and more, but we need to continue to seek that important funding to achieve long term success.

HCHIT Executive Committee/Insurance Advisory Committee; The HCHIT IAC voted Wednesday January 23rd overwhelmingly to support design plan changes, reflective of those which were presented to the SB at your last meeting. I have sent a letter to each union and the State Retirement Association requesting each appoints an individual to the Public Employees Committee (PEC) to commence the thirty day negotiations prior to implementation (July 1, 2018).

These minor changes to the design plan will produce a savings for both the employees and the municipality. The employees in South Hadley who receive health insurance benefits from HCHIT will realize a savings on premium payments and will also receive 25% of the anticipate municipal side savings from the changes for the first year. There will be no increase for IY20 to either party, so the employees will actually be paying less overall in IY 20 than IY19.

The courageous leadership the Selectboard demonstrated in accepting the provisions of Chapter 39B section 21 and 22 will likely go unnoticed by many, but is not lost on close observers. Particularly when those critical revenues are allocated too much needed services throughout the community. If you as a body had not demonstrated leadership in the face of the orchestrated protests there would be less funding for police, education, public works, libraries and other essential services. It is a story which few will hear, but all taxpayers and citizens of South Hadley will reap the benefits.

Water Quality Forum; Thank you to Selectboard Member Cyr and ATA Wolowicz for lending their knowledge and relationships of and with the MWRA to put together an educational forum to be held on Saturday April 27 in Town Hall Auditorium (beginning at 10 AM).

The forum will have two expert professionals from the MWRA to speak on safe drinking water, steps MWRA take to keep sources safe and the best practices regarding delivery system infrastructure. There will be a Q&A at the end which the Water District Superintendents will be invited to participate.

There is several legislative initiatives winding their way through the state government which most likely will be included in the conversation, as well. I appreciate the ATA and Selectboard Member Cyr assisting in organizing this educational forum, which likely be a part of a larger discussion.

Fatal Accident Claim; As you are aware we have received a letter of notice from an attorney in regards to a suit under consideration by the family of the victim of a recent accident. I am sure you would agree our collective heart goes out to the family of the victim and operator of the vehicle involved in this early morning accident of Route 202. There is never an upside to these situations.

We have taken steps to prepare, based on the letter, through Town Counsel and by way of our Property and Casualty Insurance provider to protect the Town of South Hadley against legal action suggested in the letter. While I cannot imagine the grief experienced by the parties involved, I do not believe the town acted in a negligent manner or is responsible for this tragedy, however it is not my opinion which will ultimately be determinate factor in this case.

Easthampton/South Hadley VSO: Upon the recommendation of The South Hadley Selectboard and Mayor LaChapelle of Easthampton Brian Willette has been added to the Easthampton/South Hadley Veteran's Service Board as the third member. Mr. Willette is a decorated veteran who is known and respected throughout the area for his work on veteran issues.

At the most recent meeting there was discussion about ways to create events jointly with other communities which celebrate the service veterans have and continue to provide for this nation. Commissioner Willette will discuss the idea with various groups and report back in the future.

There also was a discussion about the possibility of benefits being provided locally and whether active Coast Guard service women and men could qualify for those local benefits during government shutdowns. There are Coast Guard members at Westover recruiting for that branch of the service which may create a local need. Easthampton/South Hadley VSO Paul Siefert thought they likely would qualify under most circumstances and would continue to monitor the situation.

Future Bonding; Treasurer/Collector Donna Whiteley, Town Accountant William Sutton and I met with our Unibank Bond Advisor David Eisenthal. We discussed the balance of borrowing authorization (Equipment, Building Renovation, Sidewalks).

We also discussed the Senior Center borrowing and what strategies going forward might be the most advantageous for the Town of South Hadley to co-bond the projects. Mr. Eisenthal will be working on a timeline analysis which should be available for consideration by months end, he will also be working with Colliers on the Senior Center OPM cash flow and how that related to timely borrowing.

We also reviewed the issues and considerations surrounding the rising interest rates. David explained that while short term borrowing seems to be creeping up slowly, the long and mid length market remain fairly steady. This will be important as we may consider converting some of the short term rolling debt to longer terms.

There is no cause for alarm on any issues as of the meeting, but we will continue to discuss future trends. We also placed the Mosier School reno/rebuild into the conversation, as a "to be aware" item.

Annual Town Meeting; Town Clerk Hamlin and I met a couple of times this week to discuss and work out a time table for the May 8th Annual Town Meeting and likely Special Town Meeting. The last date

internally for boards, commissions or departments to submit to the Selectboard Office in final form to be considered for placement on the ATM/STM warrant by the Selectboard.

To have this happen fluidly I would hope written notice is given to the Town Administrator by April 2nd where there is a department or board considering an article so I can prepare a “slot” on the draft warrant and give advice if requested as to how the proposed article would get to legal form.

In respect to initiative petitions presented by citizens for the ATM it must be received by the Town Clerk and with the ten signatures required of voters no later than close of business March 8th, if the Selectboard calls the likely STM such a petition would have to be submitted to the Town Clerk with 100 signatures no later close of business on business April 10. The petitioners would be accepting the responsibility of getting the language into acceptable legal form. The Selectboard does have the right to place an article in the form of a question before the Town Meeting at its discretion, in many cases these are not binding, but more survey in nature.

It is recommended to Selectboard close the warrant at the scheduled April 16th meeting. This would allow Administration to get the warrant in final form and electronically mailed to Town Meeting Members. The warrants for both the ATM and the STM have been demonstrated to be most effective when mailed together. I strongly believe coordinating the two allows Town Meeting Members ample time to review and consider all the articles in a robust manner. I would plan to conduct the TA information session on April 30th and/or May 1st for citizens and Town Meeting Members.

There will be Appropriation Committee, By-Law Review Committee, Capital Planning Committee and perhaps other boards/committees which will hopefully be built out from this schedule. It is always helpful to get as much lead time on articles as possible. I encourage any entity which is considering submitting an article contact me or the Town Clerk, so we can plan and give process advice. Surprise strategies run foul to the transparency we all seek in government, I hope we can avoid such tactics as they only attempt to serve a few and inhibit well rounded discussion.

As always thank you for your support, guidance and leadership. I greatly and sincerely appreciate your efforts.

Respectfully submitted

Michael J. Sullivan
Town of South Hadley, Administrator

