



May 30, 2014

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.

**Massachusetts Managers Spring Meeting;** On May 29 I attended the two day conference of the Massachusetts Municipal Managers Association, (but only for one day) there were a number interesting topics brought forward. Including House Bill 4045 which will allow cities and towns the latitude to set the number of local liquor licenses in their community. This bill was suggested to have a clear path to the Governor's Office with wide support there as well.

Of course pension reform was also a hot topic as it never seems to go away, the idea of retiree's health insurance contributions being frozen at their time of separation is still very active and may pass without legislators hearing from locals about the adverse effect this will have on costs. On the positive side it looks like the state will allow retired teachers healthcare cost to be included in end of year Schedule 19s submitted to calculate net school spending. The first will be quite expensive, and the latter will have no effect as South Hadley is generously above your required spending for schools.

In the procurement arena, there seems to be support to move the threshold for triggering the request for proposal process from \$25 K to \$35K, I am sorry I missed the debate.

**Ryder's Funeral Home;** I know you have seen some news about Ryder's by now. It seems on all accounts a troubling situation, but not one shaped by the municipality. This business is regulated and licensed by the Commonwealth and as part of an inspection, request from Massachusetts Board of Licensure, Health Director Sharon Hart did participate in said inspection on Wednesday. We have been instructed to refer all questions to the Hampshire County DA's Office, which would reasonably suggest there is an investigation, but the Health Department has not been asked to participate in a specific "investigation".

There has been a number of news outlets who have sought comment, I have told them what we know and referred them to the Hampshire County DA as instructed. We also have fielded some calls about pre-paid funerals, we encourage people to contact the operators who were listed in the paper (Ahearn, Phanuef or Czeliuisniak) for guidance. It was stated in a newspaper article that the former director is "out of the picture", their words not mine. I have great empathy for all who have found themselves in this situation, but I cannot stress enough that the Town of South Hadley has little influence or control in this process or the private business dealings of the funeral home.

**South Hadley Public School Accreditation;** On Wednesday I participated in a panel interview with NESDEC representatives in respect to the schools being accredited. Town Accountant William Sutton, Assistant Town Accountant Lynn Roberts and I were interviewed.

Most questions were related to the transparency, openness and cooperation we receive from school staff and leadership during the budget process. We also discussed how we decided "how much was enough to operate the school system". They were amused that I suggested there never is enough.

**IPS Agreement;** By way of an update, Town Attorney Ryan, Superintendent Jim Reidy, myself and representatives from IPS met in my office to discuss the letter of intent. It was very amenable meeting and both parties are looking forward to find an environmentally safe and economically beneficial means to harness the methane at the South Hadley landfill.

We hope to have all the details hammered out over the next week. IPS will start to work on the engineering and design necessary. I have already informed ConsCom Director Janice Stone of the concept and intent, she did not express any initial concern, but in fairness to her without a plan it is unfair to say what might be of concern to her or the Conservation Commission.

**ViewPermit;** As the anticipated event of our permitting system coming on-line becomes closer to a reality we all have stated to undergo training. Both Laura and I have taken the initial training and surely learn more as it is up and running.

There will be test period of thirty days while the kinks and quirks are worked out. Jamie Doolittle and Missy Couture have been the backbone of this effort. I hope everyone who will benefit from this will rally behind their efforts.

**June BAN;** We will be on a phone interview with Moody's on Monday morning. It seems the conversation will key in on two issues, the Ledges Golf Course and OPEB. Bill Sutton, Deb Baldini and I have been providing the documents necessary to offer the short term borrowing as a band anticipation note. This borrowing will fund the last of the Library costs and some of the Plains School initial cost.

The strategy will be to roll this into some borrowing in January 2015 as part of bank qualified note. This will save us a substantial amount of money with .05 off of the coupon rate. If the Capital Planning Committee is ready, which I anticipate them to be, their request if approved by Town Meeting will be added to the borrowing in the fall, but we will still be far below the ten million dollar annual limit for bank qualified bonds.

**June 4 Special Town Meeting;** The Selectboard will be asked on June 3<sup>rd</sup> to cancel the STM. It seems that only two of the four STM proposed warrant articles will not be supported by the Planning Board. As I understand it a recent public hearing on the articles caused the PB to consider two articles for fine tuning. Given the fact the articles were not crucial, it seems reasonable to allow the zone changes to mature and perhaps be presented in November at a Fall STM. I suggested to the Planning Director to inquire to the PB Chair whether or not the STM should go forward. A consensus was reached concluding the best approach would be to recommend cancelling the STM, I would agree.

**DPW AFSCME;** Bargaining has commenced for the DPW. May 23 I met with a member of the Union and an AFSCME representative to discuss the ground rules. All bargaining is conducted in executive session.

We will be limiting our use of labor counsel significantly in these proceedings and only utilize the service when necessary as a cost savings measure.

**HCHIT:** The Executive Director Joe Shea will be at the Tuesday meeting of the SB, to discuss the trust and the third party analysis of our insurance costs. Art Bombagen our advisor and the author of the analysis will be on hand as well to answer questions. Julie Gentile our Benefits Coordinator will be in attendance, Julie also recently attended the HCHIT Executive Committee meeting in Northampton to hear some of the changes affecting health insurance.

Please let me know if you have a concerns or questions about matters contained in this report or those generally affecting South Hadley. Thank you for your support and guidance.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael J. Sullivan  
Town Administrator, South Hadley