



November 13, 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.

Special Town Meeting; Last night went smoothly, thanks to your assistance in getting relative information and explanation of subject matter out to Town Meeting Members. All the comments presented to me today by Meeting Members, have been very positive about the flow of the meeting and everyone expressed an appreciation that their colleagues arrived with questions answered and ready to do the “business of the town”.

It will be very exciting to begin the development of the Capital Planning list of projects and equipment to present in May. I feel this innovative way to correct the pattern of deferred or ignored maintenance, will inform the public of what will be done and offer a flexibility in planning for projects which may become a standard. To see the excitement which everyone seems to share, in regards to investing in the Town of South Hadley was rewarding in itself.

Congratulations to the Selectboard on advocating successfully for the Redevelopment Plan Funding and the Bike/Walk Study. The support of the Town Meeting was thunderous in regards to both. It shows what solid thinking will produce. I spoke with Chris Curtis from PVPC who will coordinate the study and he will be ready to go in January. He will be meeting with all interested parties and will work closely with those individuals and groups

The Planning Board and Planning Director Harris did an admirable job navigating the treacherous world of zoning. I applaud the members and the Director for their thoughtful approach to creating guidelines which will benefit generations of residents.

Western Mass Economic Development Plan; I was asked to participate in the ongoing Economic Development Plan sessions hosted by the Economic Development Council of Western Massachusetts and attended their meeting on November 13, 2014. This group headed by Allan Blair and Ann Burke and meet every other month to discuss development trends and opportunities in our region at their Springfield offices.

Chairman Hine and I have discussed my attendance and participation to explore the benefits for SoHa. We agreed that I would attend for three or four months on a trial basis.

Today there were about seven people in attendance mostly from the “cities”, but Palmer and Easthampton had representatives as well. Tim Brennan the Executive Director of the PVPC and Chris

Curtis presented a draft version of the Priority Development and Priority Protection areas in Western Massachusetts. South Hadley's desire to funnel investment into South Hadley Falls was very much in evidence on the maps. Part of the discussion was about finding a balance between protecting land and growing revenue. The built in conflict has been discussed before and will again, but it remains a challenge facing cities and towns.

There was a much more excited discussion about the high(er) speed train access being developed in the corridor and I was surprised to hear, that we are only a month away from trains running from Montreal to New Haven, with stops in between, will start December 29th on the rails going through Springfield, Holyoke and Northampton. The money for the platform in Holyoke has been approved and once that facility is in place, South Hadley Falls will be just a five minute walk from a train to New York or other points along the way.

This will not be just a small catalyst, but will be a seismic movement for the area. South Hadley Falls will be well poised to offer support housing to a new breed of professionals, well educated, mass mobile individuals with some significant spendable income. Just because you work in Springfield, Hartford or Northampton does not mean you want to spend your life there, come home to South Hadley.

Mohawk Paper; This possible addition to the South Hadley business community took a large step forward at the STM and still seems to have the necessary stem. I am working on trying to get a match of the CELD incentives, as to stay on the same plane.

The comments in the Republican article spoke to how welcome the Mohawk representatives who were in the audience felt and the conversations I had with them today were all positive. The ball is now in the landlord's court.

Council on Aging Director Joanne Trybus; The Assistant Town Administrator and the COA Director have been meeting on exploring new approaches to old problems. Last week I had an opportunity to sit in on a session and I was really impressed. The Director continues to find ways to deliver more services to more residents with less staff, less resources and a bigger smile. I cannot thank the ATA enough for the development project, but my hat is off to the Director.

Tackling maintenance, getting ready for snow removal, coordinating events, helping seniors access programs and delivery more meals all the time within some significant constraints has been a challenge for the COA, but the Director is up to the task. It is important that Director Trybus as is true of all our managers, knows that we will support them as best we can and assist in opening up a big can of new ideas!

FY 16 Budget process; We have begun the process and have adjusted some of the process from the onset. There will be a much more focused look at the department level of historic expenditure by department. As you may recall we will try to do some forecast modeling in this year's exercise. I am hoping we can gain some predictability as to our expenditures as well as our revenues for the next five years.

There is some troubling news brewing within the Statehouse, as you may have heard Governor Patrick may be proposing some 9C cuts. These mid-fiscal year cuts can be very painful, especially if the focus is schools. I am hoping the legislature will rebuke the Governor's stance of not using surplus funds to close the shortfall. At this point it is only Beacon Hill chatter, but I hope it does not catch fire. South Hadley

due to your prudence will be in an excellent position to weather this rain shower, as long as it does not develop into a storm next season.

Land Sales; We are about two weeks away from opening the bids on the Bardwell Street Library and 1 Canal Street. This time there will be at least one bid for each property, hopefully more. It is critical to move these properties, otherwise they remain a stone around our necks and a cost we can't afford.

I hope you all enjoy your Thanksgiving gatherings and I look forward to beginning the final month of the 2014 as you Town Administrator.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael J. Sullivan