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Michael J. Sullivan  
Town Administrator

## **Town Administrator's Report to the Selectboard December 31, 2020**

Honorable Selectboard,

Please consider and review the information presented in this report. As you may note this is the final report of the year 2020. It certainly is not a year I would like to repeat, but one that despite the challenges 2020 actually had some positives. COVID 19 was certainly not one of the “positives”. But there are always lessons learned.

Thank you for your attention, sacrifice, and leadership during these difficult times!

### **COVID 19 Update**

Cases of COVID 19 can be color coded in any shade or hue. The numbers will play a part in any analysis. We can attach adjectives in any manner to bring awareness, the municipality can put up signs and post guidelines and literally beg individuals to follow those advisories. But the fact of the matter is when more than 100 confirmed cases in 14 days, with now over 30 deaths attributed to the pandemic since March 1, there becomes a sense that people either cannot or will not cooperate in fighting the virus. Ultimately it is up to you to stop this forest fire.

We will not give up no matter how discouraging the spread is in South Hadley. We will continue to bring you the hard facts, the guidelines for staying safe and continue to ask you for your continued diligence in following the guidelines. We know we have made progress and there is a high level of cooperation in SoHa. We also know if a few more families adopted hardline policies for another six months we will save lives and many incidences of infection, pain and suffering.

While the vaccine is showing great promise, we all must be patient in respect to the effect of this massive undertaking worldwide, nationwide and in our own community. The Town of South Hadley has partnered with Amherst and other surrounding communities to have the vaccine administered to first responders. This will include, SHPD, FD1, FD2 and MHC responders and critical support personnel. It is crucial we keep these critical front liners protected.

We will hopefully hear soon in respect to other personnel who have a higher likelihood of exposure such as DPW, Inspectional Services, and others. There are many aspects of civic life which will come back to life as we can make it safe for citizens and staff alike. We appreciate your patience.

Below is a new graph supplied by the Commonwealth which depicts the inoculation activity across the state.

### COVID-19 Vaccine Doses Administered



Below are some of the latest data for South Hadley.

#### LBOH Count - Events Per Disease and Classification in Jurisdiction

Classification: confirmed,contact,probable,revoked,suspect

Event Dates from 03/01/2020 to 12/29/2020

Jurisdiction(s) selected: SOUTH HADLEY

Jurisdiction(s) used for report: SOUTH HADLEY

The report contains confidential information. The data are current as of 12/29/2020 and are subject to change.

Disease	Status	Num of Cases	12/22/2020	12/15/2020
	<b>CONFIRME</b>			
Novel Coronavirus (SARS, MERS, etc)	D	524	467	415
Novel Coronavirus (SARS, MERS, etc)	CONTACT	454	419	376
Novel Coronavirus (SARS, MERS, etc)	PROBABLE	25	23	21
Novel Coronavirus (SARS, MERS, etc)	SUSPECT	18	17	17

In the next graph you can see South Hadley is clinging to a yellow rating when other communities large and small are in the red. There is more information on the state webpage for COVID 19, but it seems consistent and overwhelming when you see so many large, small, rural, urban and every other type of city or town in between in the “red”.

It will be interesting as to why some were able, like South Hadley, to maintain a “yellow” or even “green” (see Sunderland) designation when the COVID final analysis is done.



Massachusetts Department of Public Health COVID-19 Dashboard – Thursday, December 24, 2020

**Count and Rate of Confirmed COVID-19 Cases and Tests Performed in MA by City/Town, January 1, 2020 – December 22, 2020**

City/Town	Total Case Count	Case Count (Last 14 Days)	Average Daily Incidence Rate per 100,000 (Last 14 days) <sup>1</sup>	Relative Change in Case Counts <sup>2</sup>	Total Tests	Total Tests (Last 14 days)	Total Positive Tests (Last 14 days)	Percent Positivity (Last 14 days)	Change in Percent Positivity <sup>3</sup>
Somerset	1000	223	86.0	Higher	18249	2193	256	11.67%	Higher
Somerville	2936	516	48.7	Higher	253105	29619	595	2.01%	Higher
South Hadley	469	94	37.1	Higher	23478	2426	113	4.66%	Higher
Southampton	141	39	46.3	Lower	5712	752	42	5.59%	Lower
Southborough	231	59	43.6	Higher	16027	1417	63	4.45%	Higher
Southbridge	831	199	84.8	Lower	15541	1887	245	12.98%	Lower
Southwick	251	36	26.2	Lower	7530	726	40	5.51%	Lower
Spencer	363	93	57.9	Higher	10784	1265	102	8.06%	Lower
Springfield	10159	1837	84.0	Lower	181987	20983	2310	11.01%	Higher
Sterling	350	54	49.1	Lower	10100	1007	58	5.76%	Lower
Stockbridge	27	<5	8.4	Lower	2139	360	2	0.56%	Lower
Stoneham	1140	269	86.3	Higher	31502	4761	313	6.57%	Higher
Stoughton	1353	244	63.0	Higher	28333	3425	282	8.23%	Higher
Stow	119	18	17.7	Lower	7229	719	24	3.34%	Higher
Sturbridge	235	63	42.6	Higher	8049	919	69	7.51%	Higher
Sudbury	376	48	19.3	No Change	20041	2344	53	2.26%	No Change
Sunderland	79	15	28.8	Lower	12934	847	18	2.13%	Lower

Data are current as of 11:59pm on 12/22/2020; For populations <50,000, <5 cases are reported as such or suppressed for confidentiality purposes. <sup>1</sup> For the calculations used to delineate Grey, Green, Yellow, and Red, please see table on page 24. <sup>2</sup>Number of new cases occurring over the current two-week period (12/6/2020 – 12/19/2020) compared to the previous two-week period (11/29/2020 – 12/12/2020). **Higher**=number of new cases in the current two-week period higher than the number of new cases during the last two-week period. **Lower**=number of new cases in the current two-week period lower than number of new cases during the last two-week period. **No change**=number of new cases in current two-week period is equal to the number of new cases during the last two-week period. <sup>3</sup>Change in percent positivity compared to the previous week's (12/17/2020) report. **No Change**= <0.10% difference in the percent positivity. DPH calculates rates per 100,000 population using denominators estimated by the University of Massachusetts Donahue Institute using a modified Hamilton-Perry model (Strate S, et al. Small Area Population Estimates for 2011 through 2020, report, Oct 2016.) As of 11/5/2020, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health is using the 2019 population estimates, the most current available data. **Please note:** Data for these tables are based on information available in the DPH surveillance database at a single point in time. Case counts for specific cities and towns change throughout the day as data cleaning occurs (removal of duplicate reports within the system) and new demographic information (assigning cases to their city or town of residence) is obtained.

**CDBG and Other Grants**

The Town of South Hadley recently received an Access Enhancement Grant for \$125,909 which will be used to create an accessible exercise path at the Woodlawn Park adjacent to the new Senior Center.

The improvements will increase the ability for people with ambulatory challenges, seniors, and others to create low impact workouts for themselves. As the design and capacity becomes more defined the COA and the Recreation Department will work to create instruction and programming.

We have received word (unofficially) the Town of South Hadley will be receiving more than a half million dollars in additional Community Development Block Grant funds to be dedicated primarily to the Housing Rehab Program which allow another 12 to 15 homes for qualified owner-occupied properties to make needed improvements. This application process is administered and overseen by the Pioneer Valley Planning Commissioner (Shirley Stephens) and there is more information on the town website.

We were also awarded a \$135K Executive Office of Environmental Affairs Land Acquisition Grant to purchase an important parcel in the Lithia Springs area. Hopefully this will be another piece of the puzzle in having a more appropriate access to the former reservoir which is a popular, if not overburdened, hiking destination.

It goes without saying the Town of South Hadley has been very successful in attracting grants, from private funding like the Stanton Grant which created the dog park on Mulligan Drive to the recent \$2.7

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million MassWorks Grant which will improve infrastructure from Fulton Street to Plains School. This success has been due largely to the nimble and cooperative efforts of the Conservation and Planning Department, including Planner Richard Harris, Associate Planner Anne Capra and Planning Specialist Colleen Canning. I cannot thank them enough for their work. Of course, there has been incredible cooperation from COA Director Leslie Hennessey, DPW Director Chris Bouchard, Recreation Director Andy Rogers, Town Accountant William Sutton, Asst. Town Accountant Lynn Hogan and their staff, making this a real team effort.

It is my belief there were other contributing factors, such as the leadership of the Selectboard laying out priorities in advance which allows us to move quickly on applications. I think it is fair to say, and we hear it often, that “there other projects which you should do first.” We do not disagree - there are priorities to which we would prefer to allocate the money locally, as well. However, we must stay within stringent guidelines set by the state or federal government. So, we flow where the money flows and make slight adjustments to local priorities to fit those restrictions.

The fact that South Hadley staff has adapted diligently and with great speed to work remotely in submitting grant applications should also not be overlooked. While all these grants are competitive, our ability to get work done remotely while other communities have struggled, has resulted in what some would see as less competition and in turn more funding for South Hadley.

We also benefit from incredibly dedicated and informed representation in Boston. A community does not get more than \$3 million in competitive state grants in less than two months without a delegation who knows and supports the community. Senator Comerford and Representative Carey are engaged and interested in South Hadley. We are in contact with their offices weekly, sometimes daily. Their efforts are critical to being awarded these highly sought-after grants. Please let them know how much their efforts, as well as their staff’s efforts, are appreciated by South Hadley if you get a chance.

### **FY 22 Budget**

The fiscal year 2022 budget is slowly taking shape. I have encouraged departments to take measures to try and flatten or return to FY 19 budget levels. To be honest those levels are really a “pipe dream,” as they say. This would require significant reductions in staff and or salaries and/or benefits. While I will not rule out taking some extreme measures, we do not want to impact services adversely.

There are several additional meetings between administration and various departments in the next two weeks to address the budget which will help to flush out some of the challenges. We also need to be cognizant of some of the lessons we have learned and systems we have put in place during the pandemic which have produced efficiencies which may lead to additional savings or increased services. There should not be an impulsive return to “the way we use to do it” without analysis. I am sure most would agree times have changed and we cannot just look back - we need to move forward.

### **Town Administrator Search**

Far be it from someone like me to comment on something they have little to do with, and rightfully so, but here goes. As many of you know I will be taking my leave of South Hadley on June 30, 2021. As much as I have grown to admire and love the Town of South Hadley, it is time for both to part ways. I can no longer perform at the level necessary for a dynamic community - it is moving at a pace that exceeds mine.

South Hadley is very lucky to have five dedicated and reasonable Selectboard members in place to lead the community. They have engaged a well-regarded consultant to oversee and assist them through the process, called out to have interested individuals serve on a vetting committee, and have instructed the consultant to reach out to managers. All these steps will help to attract candidates to the position.

If by chance a qualified candidate is thumbing through these reports online and comes across this one, let me tell you with all honesty .... apply! You could not find a more accepting, inviting and engaged town. It has wonderful, caring people who are always willing to step up, great schools, nice neighborhoods and good if not great services. This includes the districts, which I am still trying to understand. It is community which gets it done!

If you do apply and are successful in getting the position you will also have the opportunity of a lifetime to learn and work with a team of incredible professionals. It has been for me the greatest learning experience of my professional life! I am thankful every day I have the chance to work with people like I do throughout South Hadley's departments. You also will get to work with some incredibly talented citizens.... so again, apply!

As always, thank you for your support and leadership! Stays safe.  
Respectfully Submitted

Michael J. Sullivan  
South Hadley Town Administrator