

**SELECTBOARD MEETING
TUESDAY, FEB. 2, 2021
VIRTUAL AGENDA
7 P.M.**

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<p>Note: Not all topics listed here may be reached for discussion. In addition, the topics listed are those which the chair reasonably expects will be discussed as of the date of this notice. This meeting may be audio and/or visually recorded.</p>
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1. Call to Order
2. Approval of Minutes: Draft minutes of Jan. 19, 2021
3. Open Forum/Announcements
4. COVID 19 Update (S Hart)
5. Resignation
A. Reisa Alexander – ZBA
6. Request for Dangerous Dog Hearing (Hiza 42 School Street)
7. Discussion of Town Election Polling Hours to 10 AM to 6 PM
8. Town Administrator Search Committee appointments
9. Veteran Service Officer Proposal
10. FY 2022 Budget Update
11. Other Business
12. Town Administrator's Report
13. Adjourn

**SELECTBOARD MEETING
TUESDAY, JAN. 19, 2021
DRAFT MEETING MINUTES
VIRTUAL MEETING ROOM – 7 P.M.**

Present were Chair Jeff Cyr, Vice Chair Sarah Etelman, Member Chris Geraghty, Member Bruce Forcier, and Town Administrator Michael J. Sullivan. Member Andrea Miles was absent.

CALL TO ORDER

Cyr called the meeting to order at 7 p.m. Member Andrea Miles was not present.

MINUTES

Etelman motioned to approve the draft minutes of Jan. 5, 2021 and Jan. 6, 2021. Geraghty seconded. All in favor.

ROLL CALL VOTE

Etelman – Aye

Cyr – Aye

Forcier – Aye

Geraghty – Aye

OPEN FORUM

Etelman reminded the public that nomination papers for elected positions are available on the website for the annual town election.

COVID-19 UPDATE

Emergency Management Director Sharon Hart said in two weeks there are 165 new cases of COVID-19 in residents, including the 64 new confirmed cases this week compared from last week. She said there are also 21 new contact cases and one new probable case.

Loomis Village and Vero are vaccinating staff and residents. No surrounding community has started a vaccine program for the general public. Vaccine information can be found as Mass.Gov.

Cyr said work on the senior center project has shut down due for at least two weeks due to COVID.

RESIGNATION

Etelman motioned to accept the resignations of Brian Couture from the Recreation Commission and Nancy Knadler from the Appropriations Committee. Geraghty seconded.

ROLL CALL VOTE

Etelman – Aye

Cyr – Aye

Forcier – Aye

Geraghty – Aye

PUBLIC HEARING – H&H Retail Package Store Beer & Wine License Application

Cyr opened the public hearing at 7:23 p.m. Hamid Habib explained he is planning to open a package store at 460 Amherst Rd, the former Gagne's location. He applied for a Package Store Beer & Wine license. After renovations are complete, he is expecting to open March 1 with 5:30 a.m. to 10 p.m. as the hours of operation. Cyr closed the hearing at 7:32 p.m. Etelman motioned to approve the application. Geraghty seconded. All in favor.

ROLL CALL VOTE

Etelman – Aye

Cyr – Aye

Forcier – Aye

Geraghty – Aye

MPIC REVIEW

Master Plan Implementation Committee members Judy Gooch and Nate Therien provided an overview of the Selectboard's tasks in relation to the plan. Selectboard members agreed to review the information and discuss how to move implementation goals forward at a future meeting.

TA SEARCH UPDATE

Cyr said the board has received applications from residents interested in being the resident representative on the Town Administrator Screening Committee, as well as interested Mount Holyoke and business community representatives. At the board's Feb. 2 meeting, members will choose and appoint people to the Town Administrator Screening Committee.

Cyr said board members also received the draft town administrator position statement from Community Paradigm. Etelman would like to see the final draft before releasing it publicly.

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Members discussed the pool at the Michael E. Smith Middle School which has severely been in need of repair for many years. Cyr suggested polling residents on the viability of repairing the pool at a time when there are other needs and limited funds.

ADJOURN

Etelman motioned to adjourn. Geraghty seconded. All in favor.

ROLL CALL VOTE

Etelman – Aye

Cyr – Aye

Forcier – Aye

Geraghty – Aye

Miles – Aye (She became present at 7:50 p.m.)

The meeting adjourned at 8:09 p.m.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED
Kristin Maher
Executive Assistant to Administration

JESSICA COLLINS, Chair
TONY JUDGE, Vice-Chair
KAREN WALSH PIO, LICSW, LADC 1, Clerk
CHRISTINA REMIE, RN
JOHANNA RAVENHURST, MSPH

MCCLAIR W. MAILHOTT JR
ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICER

January 6, 2021

To: Board of Select Persons, Town Administrator Michael Sullivan, and Board of Health
Director Sharon Hart
116 Main St
South Hadley, MA 01075

From: McClair W. Mailhott Jr.
Animal Control Officer
116 Main St.
South Hadley, MA 01075

REQUEST FOR DANGEROUS DOG HEARING (LIVESTOCK)

On December 24, 2020 I received a call from Dispatch (SHPD) and was informed that a neighbors dog (husky) had just killed one of her chickens. The complainant is **DIANE MODZELEWSKI** of 54 School St. Dispatch informed me that the owner lives down the street. I informed dispatch that I was familiar with the owner and the complaint as I was at both resident's home back in September.

When I arrived at 54 School St I spoke with **LUCKIS SHOCHA** who us the boyfriend of Diane Modzelewski and owns the house. He informed me that the neighbor's dog had come running into his back yard and grabbed one of the chickens thrashing it around in it's mouth and killed it. Both he and Diane stated that the owner of the dog came running to their property when she heard them yelling at the dog. Mr. Shocha stated the neighbor apologized and stated the dog got out again. I was taken into the back yard and I saw the dead chicken. (See attached photo). Ms. Modzekewski stated this was not the first time the dog tried to kill her chickens and they were lucky the first chicken lived. I informed her that I knew and spoke with the owner back in September.

I went to 42 School St apartment B and knocked on the door. The owner of the dog **AISHA HIZA** answered the door. I introduced myself to her and explained this was the second time I was at her residence regarding her dog getting loose and killing the neighbors chickens. Ms. Hiza went on to say the dog got loose. I said that was no

excuse and from her on out the dog was to be muzzled, and on a three (3) foot leash with no exceptions. I also informed her that I was writing a letter to the select board requesting a dangerous dog hearing be set up a in the near future. That I was recommending that dog be put up for adoption or be euthanized. I explained that my experiences with dogs that kill chickens the dog never stops. That if she had any further questions she could contact the Board of Health.

Ms. Hiza asked me for a business card. I stated I did not have any and asked for a paper and I would write it down for her. I printed (Mac Mailhott) on the paper and gave it to her. Ms. Hiza stated she could not read my witting. I informed her that was the way my name is spelt and I began to spell it for her and if she did not understand my name she could contact the police department or contact the Board of Health. Ms. Hiza's tone in her voice began to escalate and said (I know who you are. You are a very bad person that wants to kill animals and I know that you were on the police department and that you were a very bad person and you are prejudice). It was at that time I walked to my truck sat in the seat and contacted dispatch and requested information was in the logs. As I looked to my left I noticed Ms. Hiza was taking pictures of me. I informed dispatch that she was continuing to take pictures and that I was leaving.

September 1, 2020

On September 1, 2020, I went to 54 School St and spoke with Ms. Modzekewski regarding the neighbors dog getting into her chicken coop. That the dog had gotten a hold of a chicken however, it did not kill it. Ms. Modzekewski wanted the dog to be kept on a leash and to stay out of her yard. I went to 42 School St apt B and spoke with Asha Hiza regarding her dog getting out and going into the neighbors yard and chasing the chickens. I explained that I received a complaint that her dog had gotten one of the chickens at 54 School St. I went on to say that the dog did not kill it. I explained that the dog needed to be on a leash when it goes out. Ms. Hiza and a male stated the dog snuck out and that they would keep a better eye on it.

I am requesting a dangerous hearing regarding the Husky that Ms. Asha Hiza owns due to the aggressiveness it has towards livestock (chickens). It has been my experiences while being ACO for the town of South Hadley that when a dog kills chickens it will continue to kill them. If the dog is loose the dog will not stop trying to get to the chickens whether or not they are roaming in their yard or in a chicken cope. It is not the dog's fault but an act of nature. When and animal gets the taste of blood it reacts as a wolf, coyote or fox would do naturally.

Respectfully Submitted,
McClair W. Mailhott Jr.
Animal Control Officer



Town Administrator Screening Committee

Resident Representative (Choose 1 Feb. 2)

Dr. Alanna Hoyer-Leitzel

Roger Corriveau

Lori Fischetti

Jeff Millard

Karl Hidden

Frank Detoma

Marilyn Ishler

Department Head Representative (Choose 1 Feb. 2)

Jennifer Gundersen

Carlene Hamlin

Richard Harris

Andy Rogers

Appropriations Committee

Tom Terry

Business Community

Michelle Theroux

Mount Holyoke Representative

Kevin McCaffrey

Selectboard Representative

TBD Feb. 2

School Committee Representative

Waiting for response

Veteran District

Inbox



Michael Slater <MSlater@easthamptonma.gov>

Tue, Jan 19,
6:57 PM (9
days ago)

to me

Mike,

Today the Veteran District Committee voted to bring Granby back into the Veteran District. So I would like to propose that to the Select Board at the next meeting if possible. I am also working on scheduling to appear in front of Easthampton City Council the sooner the decision is made we can figure out everyone's financial responsibility to the District budget for FY2022. Also I proposed adding a position to the Veteran District today and would like to talk in regards to the possibility of it I understand there are budget constraints this year due to Covid. If we are to continue as a District the position is sorely needed to provide the benefits we should be providing and also to bring in federal money through VA claims. Thus reducing the financial requirements of the Chapter 115 program to each represented community. Thank you for all you do Mike.

Very Respectfully,
Michael Slater
Veteran Service Agent
South Hadley-Easthampton-Granby
Office: 413-529-1415 Ext. 119
Cell: 413-400-0650

Essayons "Let Us Try"

Proposal Email to VSD Committee Members (Copy)

I hope you all had a great Holiday season. I would like to get your opinions on creating a new position inside the District. I have given this a lot of thought and am currently drafting a proposal to add a second position that I will be presenting to the District Committee. I am currently in the data gathering phase of this process. Figuring exact cost to create the position what they would cover and getting the District to working as a District and not as two part time jobs in the separate communities which is how it was handled with Paul. According to staffing guidance from the State the District as is should have a full time director and another full time staff member. I understand that these are financially trying times and have looked into how to off set the cost increase. So my plan would be to officially bring Granby back into the District but not increase my hours. Their share of the District operating expense would help off set the increase. If the you are totally against this please let me know so that I can readjust and develop a plan on how to move forward and keep this job manageable once we return to a fairly normal world. In the end the District needs to be at a point where it can provide all the services that should be covered by Veteran Services not just Chapter 115 any questions I can answer please let me know. Thank you for all you do.

By the 2017 population numbers the district cost per municipality would be the following percentages of total operating cost. These are subject to change due to population changes just wanted to give you a rough idea. If the district budget cost were at \$120,000 each municipality would be billed their share. Which is how billing is suppose to be handled for a District I am attaching the States guidance into the forming and running of a Veterans District.

Easthampton 39.95% \$47,940

South Hadley 44.28% \$53,136

Granby 15.76% \$18,912

I truly enjoy this Job and it has been an honor to work with all of you through this Pandemic.

Very Respectfully,

Michael Slater

Veteran Service Agent

South Hadley-Easthampton-Granby

Office: 413-529-1415 Ext. 119

Cell: 413-400-0650

Essayons "Let Us Try"

Attachments area

Memorandum of Agreement

Easthampton-South Hadley Veteran Service District

April 1, 2019

This memorandum is an outline of commitments, policies and agreements between the communities of Easthampton, South Hadley and Granby. This memorandum will serve the City of Easthampton and South Hadley until June 30, 2019. This agreement may be extended or amended by the executive(s) of the Easthampton or South Hadley municipalities (Mayor of Easthampton and the South Hadley Selectboard).

Each community will afford the Easthampton- South Hadley District Veteran Service Officer (VSO) appropriate access to the following;

- Secure file cabinets or storage.
- The municipality will provide appropriate space to meet with individual Veterans. (The space should be professional, accessible, private and reasonably secure.)
- Accommodate an occasional need to for a larger space to hold a group meeting for Veteran's and family members if necessary.
- The municipality will designate a primary contact and a secondary contact for routine issues (ie. trash removal, office cleaning, supplies)
- The host community will supply a telephone and computer for the VSO.
- The host community will provide an employee identification (if that is the practice for other employees) and a key for the office.

The VSO will;

- Will keep and post an office hour schedule and contact information (email, phone number(s)) relative to the time he/she will be available and how an individual may contact the VSO.
- The schedule and any changes to the schedule for each community should be sent to the primary and secondary contact as soon as the VSO is aware of the change.
- The VSO will cooperate and abide by rules and policies promulgated by the municipality he/she is within during time of service (ie. If you are in Easthampton then you go by the Easthampton rules). If the VSO is unclear in regards to any policy they should clarify with the primary contact via email as soon as possible.
- If at some time in the future the District crafts specific policies or rules of conduct or service they would supersede those of the municipality.
- The VSO will inform all primary and secondary contacts of approved vacation or personal time approved by the District soon after approval is granted.
- If the VSO is absence due to bereavement, illness or other such emergency an email will be sent immediately to personneldirector@easthampton.org.
- Any adjustment in schedule will be approved by the District for the VSO will be communicated via email by the VSO as soon as possible.
- And as further stated in Massachusetts General Law Chapter 115 section(s) 10, 11,12, 13 14, 15.

The Veterans Service District Board will provide the following;

- Policies for operations
- Instruction and oversight when necessary.
- Coordination of and approval of compensation, benefits including but not limited to health insurance, vacation or other time away.
- Arbiter in all matters brought before the body related to conduct, personnel related or relative to Veteran Service services in Easthampton, South Hadley and Granby for the period denoted in first paragraph.
- Set the schedule for each community for posted hours and approve any reimbursements or additional allowances.
- The Board will assess performance and set goals annually in a report back to each community's executive branch.
- The Board will be the final arbiter on any disputes which may arise in respect this agreement

The participating communities will accept joint responsibility and commit that they will work with Massachusetts Veteran Affairs and each member community to serve the needs of all veterans in each community. The communities accept the related costs of a shared VSO as follows, Easthampton 16 hours, South Hadley 16 hours. The hours will be divided equally among Easthampton and South Hadley, unless otherwise agreed.

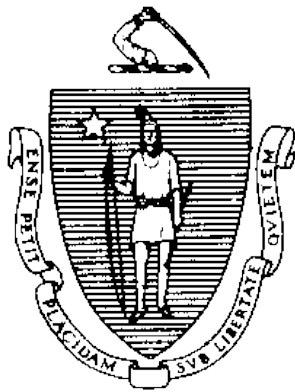
The Board will consist of an executive branch representative from Easthampton and South Hadley and will agree on a third member from the Veteran community.

Easthampton or South Hadley may unilaterally cancel this agreement by notifying the other in January prior to the start of the subsequent fiscal year.

Mayor of Easthampton

Town Administrator, South Hadley

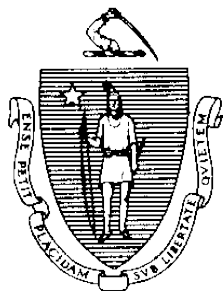
A Guide for Establishing Veterans' Services Districts Under Chapter 115



April 2011

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Department of Veterans’ Services
600 Washington Street, 7th Floor
Boston, MA 02111
Telephone: (617) 210-5480
www.mass.gov/veterans

Frequently Asked Questions

What does the Massachusetts Department of Veterans' Services do?

The Massachusetts Department of Veterans' Services (DVS) is the Commonwealth's lead agency for overseeing the general welfare of the Commonwealth's nearly 400,000 veterans and their families. DVS establishes policy, proposes legislation, and advocates for adequate funding for the Commonwealth's veterans' benefits program under chapter 115 of the Massachusetts General Laws, and other veterans' programs and services. Although DVS works closely with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), DVS should not be confused with the VA, which is an agency of the federal government.

DVS interfaces daily with Veterans' Services Officers (VSOs) throughout Massachusetts to provide guidance and training for the administration of veterans' benefits under chapter 115 of the general laws. VSOs are city and town employees of DVS's municipal counterparts, who provide chapter 115 veterans' benefits at the local level directly to distressed and needy veterans and their eligible family members. The DVS Secretary authorizes veterans' benefits paid by VSOs, and reimburses cities and towns for seventy-five percent (75%) of municipal outlays that the Secretary deems lawful and proper. Municipalities seeking to consolidate their chapter 115 operations to promote efficiencies can request permission from the Secretary of DVS to establish and operate a "veterans' services district." Formation of veterans' services districts comes under the general direction of the DVS Secretary, who has established uniform standards which municipalities must meet before a proposed veterans' services district will receive approval by the Secretary.

DVS also liaisons with the VA regarding federal veterans' benefits and works to secure federal funding that might be available to assist Massachusetts indigent veterans and their dependents. At the time of publishing, DVS oversees three federal grants for employment training and homelessness. DVS provides oversight for 16 outreach programs and 13 transient housing and homeless shelters operated by non-profit contractors. Through its Statewide Advocacy for Veterans Empowerment (SAVE) outreach program, DVS also provides peer-to-peer suicide intervention and prevention support through its SAVE Outreach Team for veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan.

In addition, DVS operates the Women Veterans' Network (Network), with the vision of being the central resource for women veterans in Massachusetts. A key strength of the Network is its collaboration with the VA, the U.S. Department of Labor Women's Bureau, the Massachusetts National Guard Federal Women's Program, the Defense Department Task Force on Military Sexual Trauma, the U.S. Office on Women's Health, Veteran Centers throughout the Commonwealth, and others.

Another part of DVS's mission is the operation of two Massachusetts Veterans Memorial Cemeteries in Agawam and Winchendon. Certain deceased veterans can be buried in these veterans cemeteries at no cost, and eligible deceased spouses can be buried for a nominal fee.

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Who is considered a veteran under the law?

The word “veteran” is a legal term defined under the Massachusetts General Laws (M.G.L.) chapter 4, section 7, clause 43, and is somewhat complex. The legal meaning of “veteran” also is augmented for specific circumstances under M.G.L. chapter 115, sections 1 and 6A. All the legal criteria for determining who is a veteran are not fully addressed here. Generally speaking, to be a “veteran” under Massachusetts law, a person is required to have either:

- 180 days of active duty service during peace time (active duty for training does not qualify) and his or her last discharge or release from active duty must be under conditions other than dishonorable (honorable or general discharge);
– OR –
- 90 days of active duty (active duty for training does not qualify), one day of which is during “wartime service,” and her or his last discharge or release from active duty must be under conditions other than dishonorable (honorable or general discharge). The dates of the various “wartime service” eras are specifically set forth under M.G.L. c. 4, § 7(43). One exception to the 90 days of active duty “wartime service” requirement is for *Vietnam I* era veterans, who are required to have served 180 days active duty, with at least one day of “wartime service.”

What are Chapter 115 veterans' benefits?

Several kinds of veterans' benefits are available under chapter 115 of the Massachusetts General Laws (M.G.L.), including Persian Gulf War veterans' bonuses, semi-annual annuities for certain disabled veterans and Gold Star parents and spouses, burial benefits, and various types of financial assistance for indigent veterans and their eligible dependents.

Chapter 115 financial assistance benefits are needs-based, means-tested income assistance for food, shelter, clothes, home heating fuel, medical care, and burial expenses for veterans and eligible family members, including Gold Star parents, widows, and dependent children whose income is under two hundred percent (200%) of the Federal Poverty Level.

Who pays for Chapter 115 veterans' benefits?

Persian Gulf War veterans' bonuses and semi-annual annuities for certain disabled veterans and Gold Star parents and spouses are paid directly to eligible applicants by the Secretary of the Massachusetts Department of Veterans' Services (DVS). Generally speaking, chapter 115 financial assistance benefits for food, shelter, clothes, home heating fuel, medical care, and burial expenses are paid directly to eligible applicants by municipalities through their municipal Veterans' Services Officers (VSOs), who then request authorization from the DVS Secretary for reimbursement. Seventy-five percent (75%) of these municipal outlays are reimbursed to the cities and towns by the Secretary.

What is a Veterans Services Officer or VSO?

The Massachusetts Department of Veterans' Services (DVS) and many of the veterans' services departments operated by the cities and towns of the Commonwealth use the term, "Veterans' Services Officer" or "VSO," for short. These terms are meant to describe a "veterans' agent" appointed pursuant to section 3 of chapter 115 of the Massachusetts General Laws, and chapter 471 of the Massachusetts Acts of 1972, if applicable. A veterans' agent is a municipal employee appointed annually by the mayor of each city or the selectmen of each town to disburse chapter 115 veterans' benefits to eligible residents of their local community. A veterans' agent must be a "veteran" under Massachusetts law.

What are the duties and responsibilities of the Veterans Services Officer or VSO?

A veterans' agent (sometimes referred to as a "Veterans' Services Officer" or "VSO," for short) is a city or town employee duly appointed each April by her or his municipal employer. A director of a veterans' services district is actually a veterans' agent who discharges his or her duties and obligations of behalf of each municipality within a district. Like a veterans' agent, the director of a veterans' services district may be referred to as a "Veterans' Services Officer" or "VSO."

VSOs are charged with the affirmative obligation to determine local applicants' eligibility and need for income assistance under the Commonwealth's chapter 115 veterans' benefits program for necessities such as food, shelter, clothes, home heating fuel, medical care, and burial expenses. VSOs also are responsible for obtaining authorization from the Secretary of the Massachusetts Department of Veterans' Services (DVS) after issuing payments of chapter 115 veterans' benefits to eligible applicants.

A VSO's affirmative obligation along these lines also carries with it the requirement of gathering and submitting all substantiating documents and information to DVS so that the local community can be reimbursed by the DVS Secretary. Cities and towns generally are reimbursed for seventy-five percent (75%) of their municipal outlays for chapter 115 veterans' benefits that the Secretary deems lawful and proper. Usually, the VSO is the municipal employee who is responsible for tendering chapter 115 veterans' benefit payments directly to their local community's eligible recipients. A more complete recitation of the affirmative obligations of veterans' agents or VSOs is set forth, by and large, under sections 3.01, 3.07, 8.01, 12.01, and 12.04 of title 108 of the Code of Massachusetts Regulations (CMR), and throughout chapter 115 of the Massachusetts General Laws (M.G.L.).

What is a Veterans' Services District?

Municipalities seeking to consolidate their chapter 115 operations to promote efficiencies can request permission from the Secretary of the Massachusetts Department of Veterans' Services (DVS) to establish and operate a "veterans' services district." As part of the district application process, municipalities must show their ability to adhere to all legal requirements and meet the DVS Secretary's uniform standards. *A Guide for Establishing Veterans' Services Districts under Chapter 115* explains how the Commonwealth's 351 municipalities may, if they so choose, duly establish and effectively operate veterans' services districts by consolidating the veterans' services operations of a reasonable number of towns, or a single city paired with a reasonable number of towns, to conserve municipal administrative costs.

Where can I go for more information?

Anyone seeking more information about veterans' benefits or veterans' services districts should first telephone their own local municipal veterans' services department located in their own city or town hall and speak with their local Veterans' Services Officer (VSO). The names and telephone numbers of local VSOs can be obtained from City or Town Clerks. If you have trouble finding the name and telephone number of your local VSO, then you may call the Massachusetts Department of Veterans' Services' (DVS) main telephone number at (617) 210-5480, and ask the DVS receptionist. Additional information is available from DVS's Chief Authorizer, who is available to answer "general questions" about veterans' benefits and veterans' services districts during regular business hours. No legal advice about veterans' benefits is provided by DVS.

Overview

Effective July 1, 2009, Chapter 60 of the Massachusetts Acts of 2009 established the Massachusetts Regionalization Advisory Commission (Commission). The Commission was vested with the authority to review all aspects of regionalization, including possible opportunities, benefits, and challenges to regionalizing governmental services within the Commonwealth. The Commission considered the costs and effects of regionalizing all such services including, but not limited to, veterans' services. Included among the Commission's 19 members were the Secretary of the Massachusetts Department of Veterans' Services (DVS) and his designees.

Concurrent with the efforts of the Commission, the Secretary of DVS formed a working committee which examined empirical data about existing veterans' services districts, as well as the legal requirements for duly establishing and operating such districts. The results of these studies have prompted the Secretary to establish uniform standards which municipalities must meet in order to receive the approval of the Secretary to establish and operate veterans' services districts.

Naturally, the driving concern for municipalities seeking approval from the Secretary to form veterans' services districts is the desire to consolidate local veterans' services to conserve costs and achieve administrative efficiencies. However, because the Secretary is charged under law with the general direction and oversight of veterans' services districts, the overarching concern is that cities and towns seeking to form a district must demonstrate that the veterans' benefits and services to be provided to veterans and dependents residing in the prospective district shall not be diminished.

With this key consideration in mind, the Secretary's working committee carefully contemplated the issue of adequate personnel staffing levels relative to the aggregate population of proposed veterans' services districts. To foster and assure robust delivery of information, advice, and assistance to veterans and their dependents residing in a proposed district, the Secretary has established minimum personnel staffing requirements and guidelines to be considered in determining the appropriate ratio of veterans' services personnel and support staff to the aggregate population of the prospective district.

A Guide for Establishing Veterans' Services Districts under Chapter 115 explains how the Commonwealth's 351 municipalities may apply to the Secretary for approval to establish and operate veterans' services districts under Massachusetts law.

Application for Approval of a Veterans' Services District from the Secretary

A Guide for Establishing Veterans' Services Districts under Chapter 115 is a directive promulgated pursuant to the authority vested in the Secretary of the Massachusetts Department of Veterans' Services (DVS) under sections 2 and 14 of chapter 115 of the Massachusetts General Laws (M.G.L.) for the guidance of all persons concerned with the Commonwealth's chapter 115 veterans' benefits program, including formation and operation of veterans' services districts.

By law, formation of veterans' services districts comes under the general direction of the DVS Secretary, who has established uniform standards which municipalities must meet before a proposed veterans' services district will receive approval by the Secretary. Section 12.2 of title 108 of the Code of Massachusetts Regulations (CMR) provides: "[t]he Secretary, relying upon the statutory authority of M.G.L. c. 115, § 14, requires any municipalities contemplating the formation or expansion of a district to submit a request for approval prior to forming or expanding a district."

Accordingly, a reasonable number of towns, or a single city paired with a reasonable number of towns, seeking to consolidate their chapter 115 veterans' services operations to promote efficiencies and conserve municipal administrative costs shall request permission from the Secretary of DVS to establish and operate a "veterans' services district." At the time of publishing, no particular form for making application to the Secretary for approval to establish and operate a "veterans' services district" is mandated. However, applications shall address fully the prospective district's ability to implement and adhere to the legal requirements of M.G.L. c. 115, chapter 471 of the Massachusetts Acts of 1972 (Mass. Acts), title 108 of the CMR, and the Secretary's uniform standards under this directive.

The Secretary's uniform standards for duly forming and effectively operating veterans' services districts appear throughout this directive, and include without limitation such considerations as the role and duties of the director of a veterans' services district, minimum personnel staffing requirements and guidelines for veterans' services districts, mandatory reapplication for veterans' services districts, and reasonable geographical proximity of municipalities within the district.

To provide a rational basis upon which the Secretary will consider a request for approval to form a veterans' services district, 108 CMR 12.02(2)(a) through 12.02(2)(f) mandates that certain information be furnished as part of the application process as follows:

- the names of each municipality seeking to form a veterans' services district;
- the population of each prospective constituent municipality;
- the position title of each person to be employed;
- the central office location;
- each satellite office location (if any); and
- the hours of operation for the central office and every satellite office (if any).

All veterans' services districts (*de jure* and *de facto*) purporting to exist prior to April 1, 2011, shall make re-application to the Secretary of DVS for approval of district status not later than 30 days prior to the end of each constituent municipality's fiscal year. Each such veterans' services district shall make re-application to the Secretary of DVS for approval of district status every two years thereafter. Each such applicant must demonstrate to the Secretary the district's ability to adhere to all legal requirements, meet the Secretary's uniform standards, and demonstrate that veterans' benefits and services to be provided to veterans and dependents residing in the prospective district shall not be diminished.

All other municipalities seeking approval of the DVS Secretary to establish and operate a veterans' services district may make initial application to the Secretary for approval of district status at any time. Each such veterans' services district shall make re-application to the Secretary for approval of district status not later than one year from the date of the Secretary's initial approval. Each such veterans' services district shall make re-application to the Secretary for approval of district status every two years thereafter. Each such applicant must demonstrate to the Secretary the district's ability to adhere to all legal requirements, meet the Secretary's uniform standards, and demonstrate that the veterans' benefits and services to be provided to veterans and dependents residing in the prospective district shall not be diminished.

Should the Secretary, in his sole discretion, determine at any time that a veterans' services district is not in compliance with any of the legal requirements of M.G.L. c. 115, chapter 471 of the 1972 Mass. Acts c. 471, title 108 of the CMR, and/or the Secretary's uniform standards under this directive, then the Secretary may deem such veterans' services districts dissolved. The Secretary may permit the dissolved district to reapply for approval of district status.

The Secretary's uniform standards for duly forming and effectively operating veterans' services districts, appear throughout this directive, including without limitation such considerations as the role and duties of the director of a veterans' services district, minimum personnel staffing requirements and guidelines for veterans' services districts, mandatory reapplication for veterans' services district, and reasonable geographical proximity of municipalities within the district. Information about the Central Hampshire Veterans' Services District, including its Inter-Municipal Agreement, is furnished as an example, but should not necessarily be construed as a model veterans' services district.

Role and Duties of the Director of a Veterans' Services District

The director of a veterans' services district is actually a veterans' agent who discharges his or her duties and obligations on behalf of each municipality within a district. Like a veterans' agent, the director of a veterans' services district may be referred to as a "Veterans' Services Officer" or "VSO."

VSOs are charged with the affirmative obligation to determine local applicants' eligibility and need for income assistance under the Commonwealth's Chapter 115 veterans' benefits program for necessities such as food, shelter, clothes, home heating fuel, medical care, and burial expenses. VSOs also are responsible for obtaining authorization from the Secretary of the Massachusetts Department of Veterans' Services (DVS) after issuing payments of Chapter 115 veterans' benefits to eligible applicants.

A VSO's affirmative obligation along these lines also carries with it the requirement of gathering and submitting all substantiating documents and information to DVS so that the local community can be reimbursed by the DVS Secretary. Cities and towns generally are reimbursed for seventy-five percent (75%) of their municipal outlays for Chapter 115 veterans' benefits that the Secretary deems lawful and proper. Usually, the VSO is the municipal employee who is responsible for tendering Chapter 115 veterans' benefit payments directly to their local community's eligible recipients. A more complete recitation of the affirmative obligations of veterans' agents or VSOs is set forth, by and large, under sections 3.01, 3.07, 8.01, 12.01, and 12.04 of title 108 of the Code of Massachusetts Regulations (CMR), and throughout Chapter 115 of the Massachusetts General Laws (M.G.L.).

In addition to the requirements contained in M.G.L. c. 4, § 7(43), M.G.L. c. 115, and title 108 of the CMR, the Secretary has determined (based his authority under M.G.L. c. 115, §§ 2 and 14) that municipalities' applications to establish and operate veterans' services districts shall contain full position descriptions for each prospective director of the veterans' services district and other veterans' agents, as needed, reflecting each such Veterans' Services Officer's knowledge, skills, and abilities as follows:

- The function and purpose of a VSO is to deliver essential services to the veterans and their eligible dependents residing in the municipalities that comprise the veterans' services district.
- The VSO shall take all applications for M.G.L. c. 115 veterans' benefits and shall make initial determinations of eligibility; forward requests for authorization for reimbursement to the Secretary of DVS; pay benefits and prepare and submit monthly returns of veterans' benefits paid by each constituent community within the veterans' services district.

- In each constituent municipality within the veterans' services district, the VSO shall maintain a depository of military discharges and service records of veterans residing in each such municipality within the district, makes copies, and forwards copies, as appropriate. Except as provided by law, VSOs are obligated under M.G.L. c. 40, § 51 to safeguard and protect from unauthorized disclosure the names of any persons residing in each of the constituent municipalities of the district who receive veterans' benefits under M.G.L. c. 115.
- The VSO shall be accountable for the proper interment of the remains of any veteran or adult dependent of a veteran in accordance with current regulations. The VSO shall prepare and submit documentation of veterans' and eligible dependents' burial expenses for partial reimbursement of funeral and burial or interment expenses from the Secretary of DVS.
- Except in constituent communities where the VSO is serving as the veterans' burial agent, the VSO should work with each constituent municipality's veterans' graves officer to ensure that each town and city within the veterans' services district is in compliance with the applicable general laws, regulations, and policies regarding proper interment and care of veterans' graves. The VSO should coordinate with each constituent community's graves officer responsible for the maintenance of veterans' graves, including the placement of a United States flag on each veteran's grave on Memorial Day each year.
- The VSO should provide outreach services by providing referrals and assistance to veterans and their dependents regarding available benefits and services, including G.I. Bill benefits under the various G.I. Bill iterations; educational assistance; home purchases; tax exemptions; pensions; reemployment rights; civil service; burials and hospitalizations; and adjudication of claims for federal veterans' benefits against the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). The VSO should establish outreach programs that incorporate efforts to work with federal, state, and local governmental bodies and agencies, as well as private entities, as needed, including accessing federal veterans' benefits from the VA and employment assistance through Massachusetts Career Centers, and the U.S. Department of Labor's workforce training programs.
- The VSO should conduct public information campaigns to ensure that the eligible client population is aware of current laws. The VSO should keep current with changes in the laws which affect veterans' benefits and services by attending professional development programs and by communicating with DVS.
- The VSO should coordinate and supervise the observance of Memorial Day and Veterans' Day in the constituent communities within the veterans' services district in conjunction with each constituent community's veterans' council.

10 ● A Guide for Establishing Veterans' Services Districts under Chapter 115

- The VSO should arrange for the lowering of all flags within the veterans' services district on occasions of public mourning and upon orders from district officials, constituent communities, the Governor, and the President of the United States. The VSO should work with the municipalities comprising the veterans' services district and the U.S. Department of Defense, in cooperation with the families of lost and fallen veterans, to honor veterans lost in the line of duty and fallen veterans.

MINIMUM PERSONNEL STAFFING REQUIREMENTS AND GUIDELINES FOR VETERANS' SERVICES DISTRICTS								
Aggregate Population of Municipalities Comprising Veterans' Services District	Full-Time Director of Veterans' Services District	Part-Time Director of Veterans' Services District	Full-Time Deputy Director or Assistant Director of Veterans' Services District	Part-Time Deputy Director or Assistant Director of Veterans' Services District	Full-Time Veterans' Agents	Part-Time Veterans' Agents	Full-Time Clerical Staff	Part-Time Clerical Staff
700,001 and Over	1	0	Optional	Optional	Ad Hoc	Ad Hoc	Ad Hoc	Ad Hoc
550,001 to 700,000	1	0	Optional	Optional	3	2	4	Optional
480,001 to 550,000	1	0	Optional	Optional	3	2	3	1
410,001 to 480,000	1	0	Optional	Optional	3	2	3	Optional
340,001 to 410,000	1	0	Optional	Optional	2	2	3	Optional
270,001 to 340,000	1	0	Optional	Optional	2	1	3	1
210,001 to 270,000	1	0	Optional	Optional	2	1	3	Optional
150,001 to 210,000	1	0	Optional	Optional	2	Optional	3	Optional
120,001 to 150,000	1	0	Optional	Optional	1	1	2	1
100,001 to 120,000	1	0	Optional	Optional	1	1	2	Optional
90,501 to 100,000	1	0	Optional	Optional	1	Optional	2	1
70,001 to 90,500	1	0	Optional	Optional	1	Optional	2	Optional
61,001 to 70,000	1	0	Optional	Optional	1	Optional	1	1
55,001 to 61,000	1	0	Optional	Optional	1	Optional	1	Optional
35,001 to 55,000	1	0	Optional	Optional	Optional	1	1	Optional
20,001 to 35,000	1	0	Optional	Optional	Optional	Optional	1	Optional
15,501 to 20,000	1	0	Optional	Optional	Optional	Optional	Optional	1
12,000 to 15,500	1	0	Optional	Optional	Optional	Optional	Optional	Optional
1 to 11,999	Optional	1	Optional	Optional	Optional	Optional	Optional	Optional

Withdrawing from a Veterans' Services District

A City's Withdrawal from a Veterans' Services District:

Any city that is a constituent member of a duly established veterans' services district may, by vote of its city council, withdraw from the district at the end of the city's fiscal year if such withdrawal is voted not less than sixty days prior to the end of the city's fiscal year and notice of such vote is filed with the other municipalities comprising the district.

A Town's Withdrawal from a Veterans' Services District:

Any town that is a constituent member of a duly established veterans' services district may, by vote of its selectmen, withdraw from the district at the end of the town's fiscal year if such withdrawal is voted not less than sixty days prior to the end of the town's fiscal year and notice of such vote is filed with the other municipalities comprising the district.

Mandatory Reapplication for Veterans' Services District:

Whenever a city or town exercises its option as provided by law to withdraw from a veterans' services district, the Secretary of the Massachusetts Department of Veterans' Services (DVS) deems the same a dissolution of the veterans' services district from which the city or town has withdrawn. If more than one former constituent municipality of the dissolved veterans' services district remains and desires to reconstitute the dissolved district, then such remaining former constituent municipalities must reapply for approval from the Secretary to reestablish and operate a "new" veterans' services district. Reapplications for district status must demonstrate the proposed reconstituted district's ability to implement and adhere to all requirements of law and the Secretary's uniform standards. Reapplications for district status need not include all remaining constituent municipalities of the dissolved veterans' services district, and may include "new" municipalities seeking to join in the reconstitution of the district.

An Example: Central Hampshire Veterans' Services District

Information about the Central Hampshire Veterans' Services District, including its Inter-Municipal Agreement, is furnished as an example, but should not necessarily be construed as a model veterans' services district.

District Composition:

At the time of publishing, the Central Hampshire Veterans' Services District is comprised of one city and seven towns with a total district population of 73,013, reported as follows:

<u>Municipality</u>	<u>Population</u>
(1) City of Northampton	28,370
(2) Town of Amherst	36,246
(3) Town of Chesterfield	1,270
(4) Town of Cummington	972
(5) Town of Goshen	957
(6) Town of Pelham	1,399
(7) Town of Williamsburg	2,522
(8) Town of Worthington	<u>1,277</u>
District Total	73,013

Ref: M.G.L. c. 115, §§ 2, 10, and 14; 1972 Mass. Acts c. 471, §§ 1-3 *et seq.*

Reasonable Geographical Proximity of Municipalities within the District:

Six of the eight municipalities within the Central Hampshire Veterans' Services District are adjoining, that is, they touch and share common boundaries. Although the other two towns in the district adjoin one another, they do not adjoin any of the other six municipalities. However, in consideration of the significant geographic feature between the City of Northampton and the Town of Amherst (*i.e.*, the Connecticut River), and whereas both municipalities are adjacent to the Town of Hadley, the Secretary of the Massachusetts Department of Veterans' Services (DVS), in his sole discretion, has concluded that the reasonable geographical proximity standard favors the circumstances peculiar to the Central Hampshire Veterans' Services District.

Ref: M.G.L. c. 115, §§ 2, 10, and 14; 1972 Mass. Acts c. 471, §§ 1-3, *et seq.*; 108 CMR 12.00.

Personnel Staffing for the District:

At the time of publishing, the Central Hampshire Veterans' Services District employs three veterans' services officers, and an adequate number of clerical support staff. Specifically, the district employs one full-time director of the veterans' services district, two veterans' agents (one full-time, one part-time), and one full-time clerical support worker. The district's staffing reflects the spirit and substance of the Secretary's minimum personnel staffing requirements and guidelines for veterans' services districts.

Ref: M.G.L. c. 4, § 7(43); M.G.L. c. 115, §§ 1, 3, 10, 11, and 14; 1972 Mass. Acts c. 471, §§ 1-3, *et seq.*; 108 CMR 2.02; 108 CMR 12.00.

Business Hours and Locations within the District:

At the time of publishing, the Central Hampshire Veterans' Services District's main office is located in the Northampton city hall, separate and apart from other city offices, and maintains regular business hours from 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., five days per week (Monday through Friday). The main office is staffed by the district's one full-time clerical support member. The district maintains an office at the Amherst town hall, separate and apart from other town offices, and maintains regular business hours from 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., three days per week (Monday, Wednesday, and Friday). One day per week (Monday), generally for two hours, the district maintains a presence separate and apart from the other town operations at the Williamsburg town hall. Office hours for all other constituent towns of the district are held biweekly, generally for two hours, in the town halls of each town separate and apart from the other operations of each town. The district's three Veterans' Services Officers (VSOs) periodically rotate their schedules in and amongst the eight constituent municipalities of the district to foster and assure robust delivery of information, advice, and assistance to veterans and their dependents residing in these communities.

Ref: M.G.L. c. 115, §§ 10, 11, and 14; 1972 Mass. Acts c. 471, §§ 1-3, *et seq.*; 108 CMR 12.00.

Inter-Municipal Agreement of the Central Hampshire Veterans' Services District:

(Reproduced with permission of the Director, Central Hampshire Veterans' Services District)

VETERANS' SERVICES INTER-MUNICIPAL AGREEMENT

Between the City of Northampton and the Towns of Amherst, Chesterfield, Cummington, Pelham, Williamsburg, Goshen and Worthington for Fiscal Year 2012

Pursuant to c. 40, sec. 4A, this Agreement, approved by the Northampton City Council and the Selectboards of the participating Towns, is hereby entered into and is effective from this first day of July, 2010, by and between the City of Northampton and the Towns of Amherst, Chesterfield, Cummington, Pelham, Williamsburg, Goshen and Worthington. This agreement contractually enables the Director of Northampton's Veterans Services Office (hereafter "the Northampton Office"), and such other Veterans Service Officers as shall be

on staff of such office, to perform the duties of such office for all of the towns which are party to this agreement. The term of this contract shall be for Fiscal Year 2012: July 1, 2011 through June 30, 2012.

1. Such duties will be performed in the Northampton office of the City's Veterans' Services Officer during regularly scheduled business hours or in the member towns during weekly office hours there.
2. It is understood and agreed that the distribution of benefits payable to Veterans in the member towns under the provisions of Chapter 115 of the Massachusetts General Laws shall be paid by the Treasurer of the member Town in which that Veteran resides.
3. It is understood and agreed that the seventy-five percent (75%) reimbursement of Veterans' benefits from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts will be credited to the member Town in which that Veteran resides.
4. The Veterans' Service Officer of Northampton shall serve as the Director of the Northampton Office and will supervise all Staff in their duties as related to the Office in the various Towns.
5. A Member Board shall be created on acceptance of this agreement with one representative from each member community. Each community shall have one vote in matters that come before the Board. The Board shall meet no less than twice a year.
6. The Northampton Office shall work with local Veterans Councils from the member communities to assist the Councils in coordinating all ceremonies and parades in all member communities.
7. The Northampton Office shall comply with the DVS Directive, dated June 8, 2009, to move to a paperless Web-VSMIS system in August of 2009. In anticipation of this transition to paperless benefits, member communities shall make available to the Veterans' Services Officer such technology as may be required to comply with the paperless directive, or will make appropriate arrangements with the Director as needed.
8. For the Fiscal Year 2012, each member community will be responsible for its own procurement of flags. Beginning in FY 2011, each member town will contribute 25% of the cost of procuring flags for their community to the Northampton Office and the Northampton Office shall procure and distribute all flags in FY 2012.
9. Assessments to the District shall be made payable to the City of Northampton, and mailed to the Central Hampshire Veterans' Services District Office, 240 Main Street, Northampton, MA 01060 no later than July 20, 2012. For Fiscal Year 2012,

assessments are made based on population. The Assessments for Fiscal Year 2011 shall be as follows:

- a. Amherst.....\$70,808.00
- b. Chesterfield.....\$ 4,198.00
- c. Cummington....\$ 3233.00
- d. Pelham.....\$ 4,620.00
- e. Williamsburg....\$ 8,031
- f. Worthington....\$ 4,182.00
- g. Northampton...\$87,557.00
- h. Goshen.....\$ 3,158.00

All remaining costs associated with the operation of the Central Hampshire Veterans Services Office shall be paid by the City of Northampton.

If additional towns opt to join the Inter-Municipal Veterans' Services Agreement in FY 2012, it is understood that the annual assessments will change.

This agreement may be renewed on an annual basis by mutual written agreement of all the parties.

City of Northampton:

Mayor Mary Clare Higgins

date

Town of Amherst:

John Musante, Town Manager of Amherst

date

Town of Chesterfield:

David Kielson, Select Board Chair

date

Town of Cummington:

Russel L. Sears III, Select Board Chair

date

Town of Pelham:

Edward Martin, Select Board Chair

date

Town of Williamsburg:

Denise Bannister, Select Board Chair

date

Town of Worthington:

Evan Johnson, Select Board Chair

date

Town of Goshen:

E. J. Brennan, Select Board Chair

date

Appendix

The following provisions are not the official versions of the Massachusetts General Laws (M.G.L.), the Massachusetts Acts and Resolves (Mass. Acts), or the Code of Massachusetts Regulations (CMR). Reasonable efforts have been undertaken to assure the validity of the information provided at the time of publishing; however, do not depend on this information without first consulting official editions of the M.G.L., Mass. Acts, and CMR.

Veteran

M.G.L. c. 4, § 7. Definitions of statutory terms; statutory construction.

In construing statutes the following words shall have the meanings herein given, unless a contrary intention clearly appears:

* * *

Forty-third, “Veteran” shall mean (1) any person, (a) whose last discharge or release from his wartime service as defined herein, was under honorable conditions and who (b) served in the army, navy, marine corps, coast guard, or air force of the United States, or on full time national guard duty under Titles 10 or 32 of the United States Code or under sections 38, 40 and 41 of chapter 33 for not less than 90 days active service, at least 1 day of which was for wartime service; provided, however, than any person who so served in wartime and was awarded a service-connected disability or a Purple Heart, or who died in such service under conditions other than dishonorable, shall be deemed to be a veteran notwithstanding his failure to complete 90 days of active service; (2) a member of the American Merchant Marine who served in armed conflict between December 7, 1941 and December 31, 1946, and who has received honorable discharges from the United States Coast Guard, Army, or Navy; (3) any person (a) whose last discharge from active service was under honorable conditions, and who (b) served in the army, navy, marine corps, coast guard, or air force of the United States for not less than 180 days active service; provided, however, that any person who so served and was awarded a service-connected disability or who died in such service under conditions other than dishonorable, shall be deemed to be a veteran notwithstanding his failure to complete 180 days of active service.

“Wartime service” shall mean service performed by a “Spanish War veteran”, a “World War I veteran”, a “World War II veteran”, a “Korean veteran”, a “Vietnam veteran”, a “Lebanese peace keeping force veteran”, a “Grenada rescue mission veteran”, a “Panamanian intervention force veteran”, a “Persian Gulf veteran”, or a member of the “WAAC” as defined in this clause during any of the periods of time described herein or for which such medals described below are awarded.

“Spanish War veteran” shall mean any veteran who performed such wartime service between February fifteenth, eighteen hundred and ninety-eight and July fourth, nineteen hundred and two.

“World War I veteran” shall mean any veteran who (a) performed such wartime service between April sixth, nineteen hundred and seventeen and November eleventh, nineteen

hundred and eighteen, or (b) has been awarded the World War I Victory Medal, or (c) performed such service between March twenty-fifth, nineteen hundred and seventeen and August fifth, nineteen hundred and seventeen, as a Massachusetts National Guardsman.

“World War II veteran” shall mean any veteran who performed such wartime service between September 16, 1940 and July 25, 1947, and was awarded a World War II Victory Medal, except that for the purposes of chapter 31 it shall mean all active service between the dates of September 16, 1940 and June 25, 1950.

“Korean veteran” shall mean any veteran who performed such wartime service between June twenty-fifth, nineteen hundred and fifty and January thirty-first, nineteen hundred and fifty-five, both dates inclusive, and any person who has received the Korea Defense Service Medal as established in the Bob Stump National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2003.

“Korean emergency” shall mean the period between June twenty-fifth, nineteen hundred and fifty and January thirty-first, nineteen hundred and fifty-five, both dates inclusive.

“Vietnam veteran” shall mean (1) any person who performed such wartime service during the period commencing August fifth, nineteen hundred and sixty-four and ending on May seventh, nineteen hundred and seventy-five, both dates inclusive, or (2) any person who served at least one hundred and eighty days of active service in the armed forces of the United States during the period between February first, nineteen hundred and fifty-five and August fourth, nineteen hundred and sixty-four; provided, however, that for the purposes of the application of the provisions of chapter thirty-one, it shall also include all active service between the dates May seventh, nineteen hundred and seventy-five and June fourth, nineteen hundred and seventy-six; and provided, further, that any such person who served in said armed forces during said period and was awarded a service-connected disability or a Purple Heart, or who died in said service under conditions other than dishonorable, shall be deemed to be a veteran notwithstanding his failure to complete one hundred and eighty days of active service.

“Lebanese peace keeping force veteran” shall mean any person who performed such wartime service and received a campaign medal for such service during the period commencing August twenty-fifth, nineteen hundred and eighty-two and ending when the President of the United States shall have withdrawn armed forces from the country of Lebanon.

“Grenada rescue mission veteran” shall mean any person who performed such wartime service and received a campaign medal for such service during the period commencing October twenty-fifth, nineteen hundred and eighty-three to December fifteenth, nineteen hundred and eighty-three, inclusive.

“Panamanian intervention force veteran” shall mean any person who performed such wartime service and received a campaign medal for such service during the period commencing December twentieth, nineteen hundred and eighty-nine and ending January thirty-first, nineteen hundred and ninety.

“Persian Gulf veteran” shall mean any person who performed such wartime service during the period commencing August second, nineteen hundred and ninety and ending on a date to be determined by presidential proclamation or executive order and concurrent resolution of the Congress of the United States.

“WAAC” shall mean any woman who was discharged and so served in any corps or unit of the United States established for the purpose of enabling women to serve with, or as auxiliary to, the armed forces of the United States and such woman shall be deemed to be a veteran.

None of the following shall be deemed to be a “veteran”:

(a) Any person who at the time of entering into the armed forces of the United States had declared his intention to become a subject or citizen of the United States and withdrew his intention under the provisions of the act of Congress approved July ninth, nineteen hundred and eighteen.

(b) Any person who was discharged from the said armed forces on his own application or solicitation by reason of his being an enemy alien.

(c) Any person who has been proved guilty of wilful desertion.

(d) Any person whose only service in the armed forces of the United States consists of his service as a member of the coast guard auxiliary or as a temporary member of the coast guard reserve, or both.

(e) Any person whose last discharge or release from the armed forces is dishonorable.

“Armed forces” shall include army, navy, marine corps, air force and coast guard.

“Active service in the armed forces”, as used in this clause shall not include active duty for training in the army national guard or air national guard or active duty for training as a reservist in the armed forces of the United States.

M.G.L. c. 115, § 1. Definitions.

The following words, as used in this chapter, unless the context otherwise requires, shall have the following meaning:--

* * *

“Veteran”, any person who (a) is a veteran as defined in clause Forty-third of section seven of chapter four; or (b) meets all the requirements of said clause Forty-third except that instead of performing wartime service as so defined he has served on active duty in the Mexican border service, between June thirteenth, nineteen hundred and sixteen, and February third, nineteen hundred and seventeen; or (c) is entitled to the Civil War, Indian Campaign, Spanish Campaign, or Spanish War Service Medal; or (d) meets all the requirements of said clause Forty-third except that instead of performing ninety days active service, at least one day of which was for wartime service, he has performed active service in the armed forces of the United States at any time between April sixth, nineteen hundred and seventeen and

November eleventh, nineteen hundred and eighteen, inclusive; or (e) meets all the requirements of said clause Forty-third, except that instead of performing wartime service as so defined he is entitled to any of the following campaign badges: First Nicaraguan, Haitian, Dominican, Yangtze River, Second Yangtze River, Second Nicaraguan, Vera Cruz, Mexican Service; provided, that in any case the service of such person was credited to Massachusetts, or such person has resided in the commonwealth for 1 day.

M.G.L. c. 115, § 6A. Veteran; definition.

As used in this section and in sections 6B and 6C, the word “veteran” shall mean a person who has performed service as defined in clause Forty-third of section 7 of chapter 4 and whose last discharge or release from the armed forces of the United States was under other than dishonorable conditions and who is a resident of the commonwealth.

108 CMR 2.02: Definitions.

Unless the context otherwise requires, terms used in 108 CMR shall have the following meanings:

* * *

Veteran means any person who satisfies the definition of Veteran in M.G.L. c. 4, § 7, clause forty-third, and M.G.L. c. 115, §§ 1 and 6A.

Massachusetts Regionalization Advisory Commission

2009 Mass. Acts c. 60, §§ 1-2, et seq.

Sect 1. Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, there shall be a 19 member Massachusetts regionalization advisory commission consisting of the following members: the secretary of the executive office for administration and finance, or his designee, who shall serve as chair of the commission; the secretary of the executive office of health and human services or his designee; the secretary of the executive office of energy and environmental affairs or his designee; the secretary of the executive office of public safety or his designee; the secretary of the executive office of transportation and public works or his designee; the secretary of the executive office of elder affairs or his designee; the secretary of the executive office of veterans’ affairs or his designee; the secretary of the executive office of labor and workforce development or his designee; the secretary of the executive office of education or his designee; the secretary of the executive office of housing and economic development or his designee; the president of the senate or his designee; the speaker of the house of representatives or his designee; the minority leader of the senate or his designee; the minority leader of the house of representatives or his designee; a representative from the metropolitan area planning council; a representative from the Massachusetts Municipal Association; and 3 members to be appointed by the governor all of whom shall have knowledge and experience in 1 or more of the following areas: municipal government and services, municipal agreements, shared services or regionalization. Each member shall serve without compensation.

The commission shall review all aspects of regionalization including possible opportunities, benefits and challenges to regionalizing services within the commonwealth. The commission shall consider the costs and effects of regionalizing all services including, but not limited to:

education, public safety, public health, public works, housing, veterans' services, workforce development, municipal finance and structure, elder services and transportation.

The commission shall submit its finding and recommendations for regionalizing services, together with drafts of legislation necessary to carry those recommendations into effect by filing the same with the clerks of the house of representatives and senate, the house and senate committees on ways and means and the joint committee on municipalities and regional government not later than April 30, 2010.

Sect. 2. This act shall take effect as of July 1, 2009.

Veterans' Services District

1972 Mass. Acts c. 471, §§ 1-3, et seq.

Sect. 1. Notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary, any city or town having a part-time veterans' agent or part-time director of veterans' services shall, at the end of the term of such agent or director, whether by resignation, retirement or otherwise, either join a Veterans' Services district in the manner provided by section ten of chapter one hundred fifteen of the General Laws, or appoint a full-time veterans' agent or director of veterans' services.

Sect. 2. The provisions of section one of this act shall not apply to any city or town so long as the incumbent of the office of part-time veterans' agent or part-time director of veterans' services in such city or town, on the effective date of this act, continues to hold such office by reappointment.

Sect. 3. The provisions of section one shall not apply to any town having a population of less than twelve thousand persons.

M.G.L. c. 115, § 10. Creation; directors; districts; treasurer of district.

The mayors of cities and the selectmen of towns, other than cities and towns which become part of a district as authorized by the second paragraph of this section, shall cause to be established and maintained in their respective cities and towns a department for the purpose of furnishing such information, advice and assistance to veterans and their dependents as may be necessary to enable them to procure the benefits to which they are or may be entitled relative to employment, vocational or other educational opportunities, hospitalization, medical care, pensions, and other veterans' benefits. Each department so established and maintained shall be known as the department of veterans' services, and the officer in charge thereof shall be known as the director of veterans' services. Such director and any assistant or deputy director appointed under this section or section eleven shall be a veteran and shall be appointed in a city by the mayor, with the approval of the city council, and in a town by the selectmen.

Two or more adjoining towns, or two or more adjoining municipalities only one of which is a city, may, in a city by vote of the city council thereof, and in a town by vote of the selectmen thereof, form a district for the purposes set forth in the first paragraph of this section,

including the appointment and compensation of a director of veterans' services, for the enforcement therein of such purposes and of such other provisions of law as it may be his duty to enforce. Any constituent city or town by vote may withdraw from the district at the end of any fiscal year of such city or town if such withdrawal is voted in the manner aforesaid not less than sixty days prior to the end of such fiscal year and notice of such vote is filed with the other municipalities comprising the district.

The director of veterans' services of each district established under authority of the preceding paragraph shall, under the direction of the district board referred to in section eleven, perform the duties of his office in each of the municipalities comprising his district.

The treasurer of one of the municipalities comprising such district, designated by the district board thereof, shall be treasurer of the district and shall give to the district a bond, with a surety company authorized to transact business in the commonwealth as surety, for the faithful performance of his duties as treasurer of the district in such sum and upon such conditions as said district board may require. The district treasurer shall disburse the money received under the provisions of section eleven upon warrants approved by the district board.

M.G.L. c. 115, § 11. District boards; powers; apportionment of expenses; payment of costs and expenses by district members.

In every district established under authority of section ten there shall be a board composed of the mayor or his designee of such city, if any, as may be included in the district and the chairman of the board of selectmen or its designee of each of the towns, if any, included in said district and the town manager or his designee in a municipality with a town council form of government, if any, included in said district. Said board shall appoint, fix the compensation of, and may remove the director of veterans services of said district. Said board may appoint, fix the salary of, and remove, a deputy or assistant to such director, if in the opinion of said board such an officer is necessary.

Said board may determine the expenses of said director and deputy or assistant and of the department under the charge of said director, and may apportion said expenses among the several municipalities comprising such district on the basis of the taxable valuation of said municipalities as last established by the general court as a basis of apportionment for state and county taxes, or on the basis of the population of each municipality in such district based on the most recent federal census, or by any other means determined by a unanimous vote of said board to be fair and equitable to each community. Said board shall promptly thereafter notify the treasurers of said municipalities of such apportionment. Every city or town treasurer so notified shall, annually in December, certify the amount of such apportionment to the board of assessors of his municipality, who shall include such amount in the tax levy of the following year.

Upon order of the district board the city or town treasurer of each of the constituent members of the district shall from time to time pay to the district treasurer a sum or sums not exceeding, in the aggregate, the amount certified by the board as its respective share of the costs and expenses of the district. In case a city or town becomes a member of a district at a time when it is too late to permit an assessment as provided by sections ten to fourteen,

inclusive, such city or town may appropriate and pay to the district treasurer an amount representing its proportionate share of the expense of the district for the period ending December thirty-first in the year in which such city or town becomes a member of the district.

M.G.L. c. 115, § 14. Control and direction of commissioner; separate and independent location.

Departments established and maintained under sections ten to fourteen, inclusive, shall be under the general direction of the commissioner, and they shall be physically located independently of, and separate and apart from, any other public or private agency, board, bureau, social agency or society, except a department or agency disbursing aid or relief or veterans' benefits under this chapter.

108 CMR 12.00: Districts and Duties of Veterans' Agents.

Section

12.1 : Providing Required Services to the Veterans and Dependents

12.2 : Prior Approval of Secretary Necessary to Form or Expand a District

12.03: Requirements of St. 1972, c. 471 for Full-time Veterans' Agents

12.04: Duties of Veterans' Agents

12.1 : Providing Required Services to the Veterans and Dependents

(1) The directors of veterans' services of every district shall perform the duties of their office in each of the municipalities comprising such district.

(2) The Secretary requires every district, whether existing or newly formed, to maintain a central office within the district to insure that veterans and their dependents will be able to contact and receive such proper advice and assistance by a district's director of veterans' services.

(3) Districts are encouraged to maintain satellite offices in the municipal buildings in other municipalities within said district where veterans and their dependents can meet in confidence with the district director.

(4) In every central office maintained within the district, the hours of operation shall be the hours of operation of the main municipal building of that municipality. In every office or municipal building, the name of the District Director, hours of operation, locations of every office within said district, and telephone numbers shall be posted conspicuously and readily accessible for all to read.

12.2 : Prior Approval of Secretary Necessary to Form or Expand a District

(1) The Secretary, relying upon the statutory authority of M.G.L. c. 115, § 14, requires any municipalities contemplating the formation or expansion of a district to submit a request for approval prior to forming or expanding a district.

(2) To provide a rational basis upon which the Secretary will consider any request for approval to form a district, the following information must be provided:

- (a) the names of each municipality seeking to form a district,
- (b) the population of each municipality,
- (c) the position title of each person to be employed
- (d) the central office location,
- (e) any satellite office location, and
- (f) hours of operation for the central office and every satellite office.

12.3 : Requirements of St. 1972, c. 471 for Full-time Veterans' Agents

Notwithstanding any provision of the law to the contrary, any city or town having a population over 12,000 and having a part-time veterans' agent or part-time director or veterans' services shall, at the end of term of such agent or director, whether by resignation, retirement or otherwise, either join a veterans' services district in manner provided by M.G.L. c. 115 § 10, or appoint a full-time veterans' agent or director of veterans' services. These provisions shall not apply to any city or town so long as the incumbent of the office of part-time veterans' agent or part-time director of veterans' services holds such office by reappointment.

12.4 : Duties of Veterans' Agents

- (1) With the approval of the Secretary, a municipality may assign non-veterans' business to full-time veterans' agents for the municipality, provided he or she is available to perform veterans' business during normal hours of town or city hall business. The full-time veterans' agent shall not hold any other full-time position in the municipality.
- (2) In addition to administering public assistance benefits under M.G.L. c. 115, the veterans' agent shall also assist veterans in obtaining VA compensation and pension.
- (3) The veterans' agent shall furnish information, advice and assistance to veterans and their dependent to enable them to procure the benefits to which they are or may be entitled relative to employment, vocational or other educational opportunities, hospitalization, medical care, and other veterans' benefits.
- (4) The veterans' agent shall acquire and have on hand copies of current booklets and other printed matter pertaining to statutory rights of veterans provided under state and federal laws. They shall also work in close coordination with existing federal agencies established for the aid of veterans, and they shall enlist the support of hospitals within their respective communities or districts for carrying out their mission.

Veterans' Agent

M.G.L. c. 115, § 1. Definitions.

The following words, as used in this chapter, unless the context otherwise requires, shall have the following meaning:--

* * *

“Veterans' agent” or “Part-time veterans' agent”, a veteran, as defined in clause Forty-third of section seven of chapter four, appointed under section three to disburse veterans' benefits in any city or town, or, if no such appointment has been made, the mayor of the city or the selectmen of the town disbursing such benefits; in Boston, the veterans' benefits and services commissioner.

M.G.L. c. 115, § 3. Appointment of veterans' agents; powers and duties.

The mayor of each city except Boston shall, and the selectmen of each town may, annually in April, appoint a veterans' agent to act for him or them in the disbursement of veterans' benefits by such city or town; provided, however, that in each town having a part time veterans' agent the town clerk shall receive applications and assist applicants for, veterans' benefits, and shall turn over said applications to the veterans' agent. Two or more contiguous towns may, by vote of the selectmen, appoint one person to serve as veterans' agent for such towns and may apportion the payment of compensation among such towns.

Every veterans' agent shall, from time after the original allowance of any claim for veterans' benefits, make such investigations of the necessities and qualifications of the claimant as to prevent the payment of any such benefits contrary to any provision of this chapter.

Every such agent shall, within three days after his receipt of an application from or in behalf of a civil war veteran, his wife or widow, for special care, under the provisions of section two, notify the commissioner thereof upon blank forms approved by him; upon his refusal or unreasonable neglect to give such notice, such agent shall be punished by a fine of twenty-five dollars.

Upon the request of any veteran, the veterans' agent for the city or town in which he resides shall record his discharge or release papers, without charge, in books kept by him for that purpose. Said agent shall keep an index of papers so recorded, and copies thereof, if attested by him, shall be admissible in evidence to the same extent and with the same effect as the originals.

108 CMR 2.02: Definitions.

Unless the context otherwise requires, terms used in 108 CMR shall have the following meanings:

* * *

Veterans' Agent means a Veterans' Services Officer appointed pursuant to M.G.L. c. 115, § 3 and St. 1972, c. 471, if applicable.

108 CMR 3.00: Eligibility for Veterans' Benefits.

Section

3.01: Determination of Eligibility

* * *

3.07: Supporting Documents for Benefits Application

3.01: Determination of Eligibility

(1) Residence. The veterans' agent shall make the initial determination of the residence of an applicant for veterans' benefits. The Secretary shall decide all controversies among towns, or between an applicant and a veterans' agent, regarding the applicant's residence. Veterans' agents may take applications on behalf of their counterparts in adjoining cities and towns, but shall not be responsible for providing benefits, which are the responsibility of the city or town where the applicant resides.

(2) Homeless Applicant. An applicant lacking a present abode shall be required to provide an affidavit stating his identity, his last place of residence, and his intention to establish an abode within the city or town in which he applies.

(3) Veterans' Agent's Determination and Recommendation. The veterans' agent shall determine an applicant's eligibility and need for benefits on the basis of information obtained from the applicant and through the agent's own investigation. The veterans' agent then shall make a determination on the type and level of benefits, if any, which shall be granted to the applicant unless the determination requires prior approval. The veterans' agent shall not deny an application for benefits on the ground that it does not present a situation conforming to a pattern for which there are predetermined standards of assistance. The determination of a veterans' agent that an applicant is or is not eligible for or does or does not need veterans' benefits shall be supported by adequate evidence. The determination and recommendation of the veterans' agent shall be made available in writing to the applicant and shall include facts supporting the determination and recommendation and reference to the applicable statutes or regulations.

(a) The veterans' agent shall not deny an application or withhold benefits payments solely because of delays in the administrative or investigatory process.

(b) Whenever the veterans' agent determines that an application shall be approved, he or she shall promptly send written notification to the applicant on a Notice of Determination form prescribed by the Secretary advising the applicant of the amount of benefits to be provided and the effective date, and the applicants' right of appeal if dissatisfied with the amount or the effective date of benefits.

3.07: Supporting Documents for Benefits Application

(1) The applicant shall submit to the veterans' agent, who shall submit to DVS, supporting documents to verify the military service, dependent status, marital status, income, school enrollment verification, and other categories as listed in 108 CMR 3.07: *Table 1*. The veterans' agent shall send legible copies of these documents, and any other documents requested by the authorizer to DVS.

(2) The veteran's agent shall submit to DVS written verification of the full-time status of a student in each February and October that a child over the age of 18 is attending high school, college, or other institution of higher learning. For children under the age of 18 written verification of student status shall be submitted with the January update.

(3) Requests for reimbursement of any services rendered to or on behalf of a recipient must be accompanied by the following:

(a) Receipt on bill provider's letterhead.

(b) Names, addresses of providers and license numbers where applicable.

108 CMR 8.00: Investigations, Appeals, Terminations, and Refunds.

Section

8.01: Investigations

* * *

8.01: Investigations

(1) Agent's Responsibility.

(a) In order to ensure the proper level of benefits are paid to the recipient, the veterans' agent has the legal responsibility to conduct periodic investigations into the applicant's eligibility and need for such benefits. The purpose of the investigation is to assess changes in the applicant's need for financial assistance, his or her own ability to meet those needs and his or her eligibility for veterans' benefits. Hearsay information on the applicant's reputation or the unsupported opinions of the veterans' agent shall not be a sufficient basis for the disqualification of an applicant.

(b) The veterans' agent shall not rely on information gathered by any other party in preparing recommendations on the continuation of benefits to the applicant. If the veterans' agent does rely on such information and it is subsequently determined that benefits have been paid contrary to statute or regulation, DVS shall not provide reimbursement for such payments.

(c) The veterans' agent shall respond to all inquiries from DVS concerning the needs of the applicant, his or her work history or ability to work, his or her financial status, and any other information concerning the applicant's compliance with 108 CMR 8.00. Failure to respond in a timely manner may result in disallowance of benefits. The Secretary may approve benefits contingent upon the veterans' agent responding to the Secretary's request for information. Any failure to respond within either a designated period or with the next regular submission of requests for authorization shall be deemed untimely. The recipient shall fully cooperate with the veterans' agent pursuant to the Secretary's request for information.

(2) Sources of Information.

(a) The Department of Public Health, Registry of Vital Records and Statistics, maintains a central repository of records concerning births, deaths and marriages within the Commonwealth. The veterans' agent may collect such information from that office, rather than contacting individual cities and towns.

(b) The War Records Section of the Adjutant General's Office maintains complete records on the military service of veterans whose place of residence was Massachusetts at the time of their discharge. When an applicant does not have the necessary discharge or release document in his or her possession at the time of the application, the veterans' agent shall obtain the basic background details and then request a certificate of military service from the War Records Section. Other sources of military records are the VA Regional Offices and the Military Personnel Records Center in St. Louis, Missouri.

(c) Records of divorce, separation, adoption and similar proceedings may be obtained from the Probate Court which had jurisdiction over the matter.

(d) Information on an applicant's compliance with support orders may be obtained from the probation officer in the appropriate Probate and Family Court.

(e) The veterans' agent, with the full cooperation of the applicant, shall obtain information on the wages or reasons for unemployment of an applicant from the applicant's employer. The veterans' agent also may obtain such information on wages earned by an applicant's spouse or children, provided that the spouse and children are members of the applicant's household. If obtaining a wage earner's report would jeopardize an individual's employment, the veterans' agent should obtain a copy of the employee's pay stubs from the applicant.

(f) In accordance with M.G.L. c. 115, § 2, the veterans' agent has the authority to obtain information upon written request, regarding deposits or loans to the credit of an applicant from the Treasurer designee of a financial institution:

1. savings bank

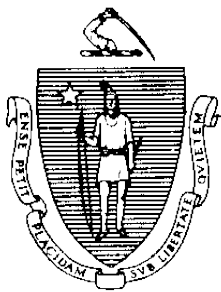
2. savings and loan association (supervised by the Commonwealth's Commissioner of Banks)

3. federal savings and loan association

(g) The applicant or spouse shall provide the veterans' agent with a waiver or authorization allowing release of the information referred to in 108 CMR 8.01(2)(a) through (f).

M.G.L. c. 40, § 51. Publication of information concerning persons receiving aid from governmental agencies forbidden; exceptions; penalties.

No town or officer thereof shall publish or disclose in any manner to others than officers of any city, town or other governmental agency or the duly authorized agents of such officers the names of any persons residing in such town who received benefits under chapter one hundred and fifteen, except that a duly incorporated charitable corporation shall be informed, upon its request, as to whether or not any designated person has received such benefits. No department, board or commission, or agent thereof, of a town providing aid, guidance or advice solely to persons who are in active military or naval service during the time of war, or who were formerly in such service, or to the dependents of any such persons, shall furnish any records or information to any social service index, so called, or exchange information with any other agency, except as hereinbefore provided. Whoever violates any provision of this section shall be punished by a fine of not less than twenty-five nor more than five hundred dollars.



© April 2011 Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Veterans' Services
A Guide for Establishing Veterans' Services Districts under Chapter 115

District Composition:

At the time of publishing, the South Hadley-Easthampton Veterans’ Services District is comprised of one city and two towns with a total district population of 40,140, reported as follows:

Municipality	Population (2018)
City of Easthampton	15,987
Town of South Hadley	17,806
Town of Granby	6,347
Total District Population	40,140

Ref: M.G.L. c. 115, §§ 2, 10, and 14; 1972 Mass. Acts c. 471, §§ 1-3 *et seq.*

Reasonable Geographical Proximity of Municipalities within the District:

Two of the three municipalities within the South Hadley-Easthampton Veterans’ Services District are adjoining, that is, they touch and share common boundaries. In consideration of the significant geographic feature between the City of Easthampton and the Town of South Hadley (*i.e.*, the Connecticut River), and whereas both municipalities are adjacent to the City of Holyoke, the Secretary of the Massachusetts Department of Veterans’ Services (DVS), in her sole discretion, has concluded that the reasonable geographical proximity standard favors the circumstances peculiar to the South Hadley-Easthampton Veterans’ Services District.

Ref: M.G.L. c. 115, §§ 2, 10, and 14; 1972 Mass. Acts c. 471, §§ 1-3, *et seq.*; 108 CMR 12.00.

Personnel Staffing for the District:

At the time of publishing, the South Hadley-Easthampton Veterans' Services District employs one veterans' services officer, and an adequate number of clerical support staff. Specifically, the district employs one full-time director of the South Hadley-Easthampton Veterans' Services District and one full-time clerical support worker. The district's staffing does not reflect the spirit and substance of the Secretary's minimum personnel staffing requirements and guidelines for veterans' services districts. But do to current financial constraints we ask for approval at this time and staffing issues will continue to be addressed in the future.

Ref: M.G.L. c. 4, § 7(43); M.G.L. c. 115, §§ 1, 3, 10, 11, and 14; 1972 Mass. Acts c. 471, §§ 1-3, *et seq.*; 108 CMR 2.02; 108 CMR 12.00.

Business Hours and Locations within the District:

At the time of publishing, the South Hadley-Easthampton Veterans' Services District's main office is in the South Hadley town hall, separate and apart from other city offices, and maintains regular business hours from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., four days per week (Monday through Thursday). The main office is staffed by the district's one full-time clerical support member.

The district maintains an office at the Easthampton City hall, separate and apart from other town offices, and maintains regular business hours from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., one day per week (Thursday). The district maintains an office at the Easthampton City hall, separate and apart from other town offices, and maintains regular business hours from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., one day per week (Tuesday). Scheduled Appointment support will be offered in all municipalities Monday thru Thursday from 9:00am until 4:00pm.

Ref: M.G.L. c. 115, §§ 10, 11, and 14; 1972 Mass. Acts c. 471, §§ 1-3, *et seq.*; 108 CMR 12.00.

VETERANS' SERVICES INTER-MUNICIPAL AGREEMENT

Between the City of Easthampton and Towns of South Hadley and Granby for Fiscal Year 2022

Pursuant to c. 40, sec. 4A, this Agreement, approved by the Easthampton City Council and the Select Boards of the participating Towns, is hereby entered into and is effective from this 1st day of July 2021, by and between the City of Easthampton and the Towns of South Hadley and Granby. This agreement contractually enables the Director of South Hadley-Easthampton Veterans Services Office, and such other staff as shall be to perform the duties of such office for all municipalities which are party to this agreement. The term of this contract shall be for Fiscal Year 2022: July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022.

1. Such duties will be performed in the South Hadley office of Veteran Services during regularly scheduled business hours or in the member towns during weekly office hours there.
2. It is understood and agreed that the distribution of benefits payable to Veterans in the member towns under the provisions of Chapter 115 of the Massachusetts General Laws shall be paid by the Treasurer of the member Town in which that Veteran resides.
3. It is understood and agreed that the seventy-five percent (75%) reimbursement of Veterans' benefits from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts will be credited to the member Town in which that Veteran resides.
4. The Veterans' Service Officer shall serve as the Director of the South Hadley-Easthampton Veterans' District and will supervise all Staff in their duties as related to the Office in the various Towns.
5. A Member Board shall be created on acceptance of this agreement with one representative from each member community. Each community shall have one vote in matters that come before the Board. The Board shall meet no less than twice a year.
6. The South Hadley-Easthampton Veterans' District shall work with local Veterans Councils from the member communities to assist the Councils in coordinating all ceremonies and parades in all member communities.
7. Assessments to the District shall be made payable to the South Hadley-Easthampton Veterans' Services District and mailed to the South Hadley-Easthampton Veterans' Services District Office, 116 Main Street, South Hadley, MA 01060 no later than July 20, 2021. For Fiscal Year 2022,

assessments are made based on population. The Assessments for Fiscal Year 2022 shall be as follows:

- a. Easthampton.....\$
- b. South Hadley.....\$
- c. Granby.....\$

If additional towns opt to join the Inter-Municipal Veterans' Services Agreement during FY 2022, it is understood that the annual assessments will change.

This agreement may be renewed on an annual basis by mutual written agreement of all the parties.

City of Easthampton:

Mayor

date

Town of South Hadley:

Select Board Chair

date

Town of Granby:

Select Board Chair

date

Jeff Cyr, Chair
 Sarah Etelman, Vice-Chair
 Christopher Geraghty, Clerk
 Andrea Miles
 Bruce Forcier

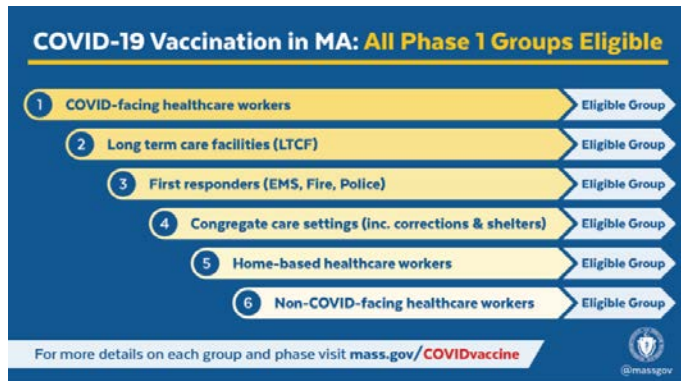
Michael J. Sullivan
 Town Administrator

**Report to the South Hadley Selectboard January 28, 2021
 from Town Administrator Michael Sullivan**

COVID 19 Update;

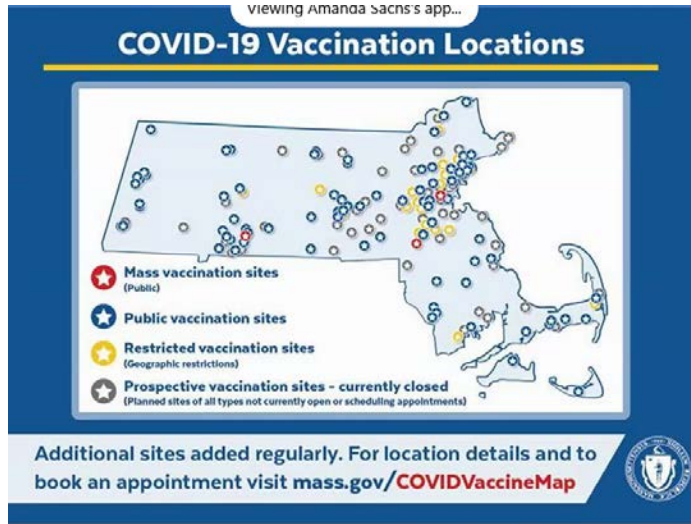
There have been more questions about vaccines and there is, as you may suspect, plenty of misinformation and plenty of unknowns. We strongly encourage everyone to go to the link below to get information. You may have to check back several times as the directives keep changing....I get it it....it is frustrating for us as well. However, everyone is doing the best they can to piece together strategies with the few puzzle pieces they actually have in their possession.

I was on a call with DPH Secretary Mary Lou Sudders Monday evening and it was clear they certainly were doing their best at creating a complete picture of the future, but I think they would readily admit they were missing puzzle pieces. For instance, a mass vaccination center was opening at the Eastfield Mall, but they were not sure how many vaccinations, if any, they would be available to administer.



Phase 1 was completely open for eligible categories (see box to left), yet half of those eligible had not received a first shot, nor was there a supply assigned to this group. There is mounting pressure from the public by the shortage of vaccines, and I can assure you locally we will do everything possible to obtain vaccines for TOSH residents.

The Town of South Hadley, as part of the Hampshire County Health Preparedness Coalition, will be initially offering vaccines (when available) through that partnership. There will be a mass vaccination center in Amherst and Northampton. For more details and/or to make an appointment go to www.amherstcovid19.org in Amherst or <http://www.northamptonma.gov/vaccineclinics> in Northampton. Or you can call the South Hadley COA 413 538 5042 for more information. When and if dose supply becomes more plentiful, the Health Department is prepared to have local clinics to distribute vaccines. However, do not wait. Use the resources available as described to get a shot in the arm as soon as possible.



Here is a map of vaccine sites throughout the Commonwealth. The ones depicted in yellow are presently not for the public but are for frontline workers.

If you go to the link offered at the beginning of this report you will find it to be interactive. If you click on one of the dots on the screen it will give you the location and other contact information for that site.

You will find some familiar names like CVS, Walgreens, Big Y, WalMart and Stop & Shops with pharmacies that will be offering vaccines, but again, they can only administer what they receive.

The following link will give you more details on the vaccine’s availability and mapping.

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-vaccine-locations-for-individuals-in-phase-1#find-a-location-to-get-vaccinated-if-eligible->

If you have health insurance you will be asked for the information. Your insurance will be billed for the administration of the vaccine. The cost of the vaccine will be paid for by the federal government. There is no “co-pay” for the vaccine. This is true if you (when available) get the shot in your primary care physicians office. We are told vaccines will eventually be available to local doctors to give to their patients, as well!

This week’s tabulation (see top on next page) of cases in South Hadley. As you can see, with 39

cases in the last seven days as opposed to 64 confirmed cases the week prior, there are indications we are seeing a slight easing of the spread. Every credible expert attributes this to people abiding by the guidelines - Wear a Mask, Social Distance, Wash your Hands, Avoid Gatherings of 10 or more - likely playing a larger part in the post-holiday calendar to the leveling of the viral increases.

If you have been watching the news recently you are probably aware of the more virulent strains which experts are suggesting could increase the spread, and in respect to the Brazilian or South African strains could be more deadly. This all should strongly encourage each of us to re-double our efforts to do our part to fight this war!

LBOH Count - Events Per Disease and Classification in Jurisdiction					
Classification: confirmed,contact,probable,suspect					
Event Dates 03/01/2020 to 01/27/2021					
Jurisdiction selected: SOUTH HADLEY					
Disease	Status	Cases	1/19/21	1/12/21	1/5/2021
Novel Coronavirus	CONFIRMED	744	705	641	582
Novel Coronavirus	CONTACT	560	535	514	496
Novel Coronavirus	PROBABLE	38	37	36	34
Novel Coronavirus	SUSPECT	18	17	18	18

As you can see to the right, after several weeks in the “red” South Hadley has moved to the “yellow.” I would suggest it is not as sunny as you would suspect. First if you notice we are at 4.28% positivity rate. That is the number of positive cases over the number of tests given to South Hadley residents. With Mount Holyoke giving everyone two test a week (good thing) it does skew the numbers and if you look at rates in the summer when SoHa was hovering around 1.3% consistently it is less impressive and suggests we need to remain diligent. All that said, I will take a day in the sun during a winter of discontent anytime!



Massachusetts Department of Public Health COVID-19 Dashboard – Thursday, January 21, 2021
Count and Rate of Confirmed COVID-19 Cases and Tests Performed in MA by City/Town, January 1, 2020 – January 19, 2021

City/Town	Total Case Count	Case Count (Last 14 Days)	Average Daily Incidence Rate per 100,000 (Last 14 days) ¹	Relative Change in Case Counts ²	Total Tests	Total Tests (Last 14 days)	Total Positive Tests (Last 14 days)	Percent Positivity (Last 14 days)	Change in Percent Positivity ³
Somerset	1491	243	93.7	Lower	22713	2435	276	11.33%	Lower
Somerville	3973	602	56.8	Lower	285478	19371	686	3.54%	Lower
South Hadley	706	115	45.4	Lower	29161	3104	133	4.28%	Lower
Southampton	254	52	61.7	Lower	7248	884	66	7.47%	Lower
Southborough	327	44	32.5	Lower	19531	2129	47	2.21%	Lower
Southbridge	1292	267	113.7	Higher	19847	2365	307	12.98%	Lower
Southwick	365	56	40.8	Lower	9191	893	65	7.28%	Lower
Spencer	575	108	67.3	Lower	13235	1304	115	8.82%	Lower
Springfield	14157	2146	98.1	Lower	225339	24141	2583	10.70%	Lower
Sterling	509	65	59.4	Lower	12316	1167	67	5.74%	Lower
Stockbridge	56	18	75.4	Lower	2875	480	18	3.75%	Lower
Stoneham	1716	245	78.6	Lower	40972	4612	279	6.05%	Lower
Stoughton	2065	421	108.6	Higher	36441	4835	461	9.53%	Lower
Stow	173	29	28.6	Lower	8708	861	31	3.60%	Lower
Sturbridge	436	102	68.9	Lower	10072	1101	102	9.26%	Lower
Sudbury	545	106	42.5	Higher	25898	3332	117	3.51%	Higher
Sunderland	121	29	55.7	No Change	14318	827	30	3.63%	Lower

Data are current as of 11:59pm on 01/19/2021. For populations <50,000, <5 cases are reported as such or suppressed for confidentiality purposes. ¹ For the calculations used to delineate Grey, Green, Yellow, and Red, please see table on page 24. ² Number of new cases occurring over the current two-week period (1/03/2021 – 01/16/2021) compared to the previous two-week period (12/27/2020 – 01/09/2021). 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. ³Change in percent positivity compared to the previous week's (1/14/2021) 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.

IT Cohort

We have recently formed a technology team to address communications, information and opportunities related to the growing need of cyber acumen. The team is comprised of James Doolittle, our IT Coordinator, Kristin Maher, Executive Assistant to Administration, Dan Pease, Cable Studio Coordinator and Sarah Gmeiner, Assistant Town Clerk (soon to be Senior Center Coordinator). Everyone brings varied and valuable experiences and responsibilities to the group.

The goal is to have an internal, regular centralized discussion around capacity, needs, use, training, innovation, and execution in and around technical challenges or opportunities. We are very aware we need to use the strength of various platforms to better serve the public.

The cohort will meet monthly or more often if necessary to ensure we are cross pollinating ideas from not only these four, but also from the public and their peers. Requests for new platforms, expansion of software or new ways we may use existing tech tools is critical to the future of the community.

This project will explore expanded use of all our tech tools. Including but not limited to Ch. 15, our website, our Twitter and Facebook accounts, CivicReady and other traditional forms of communication. It is part of our continued desire to provide as much information to as many South Hadley residents as reasonably possible.

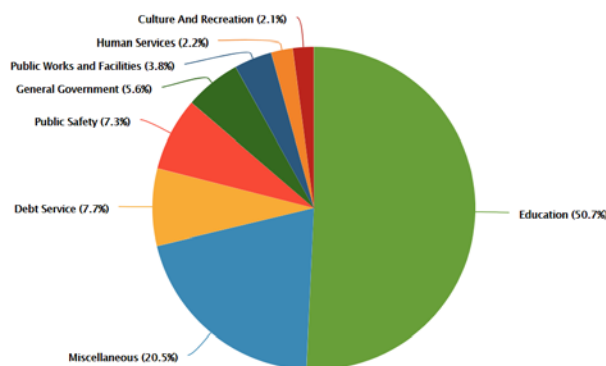
FY 22 Budget Update

The 2022 budget is starting to take shape. I still feel South Hadley is in a very solid position, and with a continued conservative approach to budgeting you will be able to keep it that way. A very smart person once told me “Don’t spend what you don’t have.” It is advice I have always considered in terms of municipal budgeting. Wish I was as attentive in my personal life.

Another important guideline of municipal financing is not to spend non-reoccurring funds on reoccurring expenses. This should include use of Unreserved Free Cash (URFC) in almost every situation. The sensibility is: once it runs out, where do you go the following year when the gap is even larger?

The town also must consider its many capital needs, which in many cases are an appropriate use of URFC. These are items which have a longer life, and you are not specifically seeking replacement of every year. There are many capital needs facing South Hadley which need to be addressed - communication systems for the PD and DPW, a front-end loader, sidewalks, roads and even a police cruiser (you should not replace the same cruiser every year and South Hadley does not consider such a strategy).

There are some changes we are making which should produce savings without affecting service to the community. We have recently made some changes including asking Viv Price, who served as the Assistant Superintendent at the DPW, to transition over to Facilities Coordinator in the administrative suite. He brings incredible work ethic and skill sets to the position, including a technical background and training in workplace safety. We also are moving Assistant Town Clerk Sarah Gmeiner to the Senior Center Coordinator position. She brings talent from previous employment at the Ludlow Senior Center, the knowledge she has gained in the Town Clerk’s Office, impressive tech skills and a very cooperative approach. These changes will allow us to retain very talented, highly skilled individuals and expand service in the areas we need to address. There also are budget savings and expansion avoidance with needed new positions.



If taxpayers would like to know more about how their tax dollars are spent, I would encourage them to take a look at the ClearGov feature on the town’s website. Go to the website, click “I Want To,” then “Access,” then “ClearGov.” The feature also allows you to benchmark against other communities.

There will be a substantial increase in borrowing costs, about \$500K, but it should be noted that increase will be offset by the previous planning which added money in the FY21 budget “Senior

Center Stabilization” account. Essentially that appropriation makes the net effect on Interest and Principal accounts combined of about \$90K.

It is always worth noting that South Hadley strictly adheres to the restrictions of Proposition 2 ½ which limits the growth of taxes by 2.5% annually. If any area of government cannot stay within those parameters, they would need to go to the voters for an operational override. I do not see a need for any such vote and all departments should stay within the funding available - another rule!

Senior Center Project

As recently mentioned at a Selectboard meeting, the project had to be closed down for two weeks as there was a significant outbreak of COVID 19 among the trades on the job. This and other factors will likely impact the scheduled completion.

The public should be confident the Senior Center Building Committee and the OPM (Colliers) is doing everything in its powers to keep this project on schedule. It is a Herculean task to say the least. The public’s patience is important as we all are striving to have a final product that is within budget, as well as a quality product.

The public should know that due to the hard work of many this project is still on track financially, and as previously mentioned, will have very little impact on the budget for FY 22. Thank you!

Commission on Disabilities

The COD has been diligent in prioritizing the ADA needs outlined in the Transition Plan done last year by the Center for Work and Living. The first area of their prioritization is to continue and increase removal for barriers on sidewalks and roads to allow people with mobility challenges to navigate more freely.

The prioritization list has been distributed to various departments and responsible parties to address and or give a progress report on how they are working to eradicate the obstacles to accessibility.

The COD will also be publishing on the town website very soon a survey so they can hear from a broader audience about what they see as barriers throughout the community. It will be circulated through the website. Anyone interested in getting a copy can call or email me, and as soon as it is available I will get it out to you. Please encourage persons with different abilities to participate in the survey as it will greatly help the COD in their work. We should all be thankful they have taken this on as a tremendous task.

Respectfully Submitted,

Michael J. Sullivan
Town Administrator, South Hadley