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Jeff Cyr, Vice-Chair
Carol Constant, Clerk
Nicole Casolari
Renee Sweeney

Lisa Wong
Town Administrator

Town Administrator's Monthly Report
October 2024

Administration, Finance and Operations

- **Administration:** The Town has received notice that legal fees will increase from \$180 per hour to \$190 per hour starting July 1, 2025. This would only apply to any services outside of the flat monthly fee. The flat monthly fee and hourly rate have not changed since at least 2020. The Town Administrator attended the Mass. Municipal Association's Legislative Breakfast in Ludlow to hear updates about state budget and policy impacts on municipalities. There was a discussion about the FY25 state budget (small increases in unrestricted government aid and school Chapter 70 funding), new regulations that will impact hiring practices (requiring pay ranges in job postings and wage scales for positions by October 2025), transportation bond bill (additional funding beyond Chapter 90 but not as much as last year), economic development bond bill (still being debated as this requires a roll call vote which is not an option during the current informal session and will need a special session), a bill to consolidate permitting for clean energy projects, Municipal Empowerment Act (in progress), advocacy for a 2 year delay on the Heavy Duty Truck emissions from 2025 to 2027 to match the federal rules and allow for the market to catch up with more products, move to more stringent drinking water rules to reduce PFAS, ballot 4 implications (would require municipalities to allow psychedelics and NOT have an opt out option like marijuana), and upcoming session issues (FY26 budget, Municipal Modernization Effort, funding Transportation and traffic safety, reauthorization of environmental bill including MVP, and developing legislative priorities for the 2025-2026 session).
- **Accounting:** The Town is beginning the Fiscal Year 2026 budget process already. The department is in communication with the state in order to have free cash certified this fall.
- **Assessor:** The revaluation that occurs every five years is well underway. Chapter 40, Section 56, of the Massachusetts General Laws, requires all cities and towns to conduct a revaluation every five years. The Town's last revaluation was in FY2020. A recent change in state law moved the revaluation cycle to every five years from every three years. The DOR applies a rigorous certification process when a community revalues its property, requiring that assessments meet strict statistical tests to ensure that they accurately reflect the market and are applied consistently. In the years between revaluations, the town, pursuant to state law, must adjust property assessments consistent with real estate market trends.

- **Collector/Treasurer:** The sewer bill was mailed out.
- **IT:** IT is continuing to assist departments in online permitting set up and administration, including the rental registry. IT is upgrading several laptops. IT is evaluating operations for savings - such as reviewing subscriptions and eliminating ones that are not needed, and found savings at the library by consolidating copper lines.
- **Cable:** Department Heads have been working on Municipal Minutes - a quick public service announcement to have departments utilize this asset as a way to increase outreach. The Human Rights Commission is also working on a video. Stay tuned to see the videos online and on TV!

Building and Zoning

- **10 Edition State Building Code:** This has finally been approved. Currently slated to become effective January 1st.
- **0 East Main St:** Status hearing held on 9/30. Probate attorney has only responded that he is awaiting the judge's decision and hearing minutes not available as of 10/3 to review. One family member has indicated she is ready to proceed with properly securing the site if granted permission by the judge.

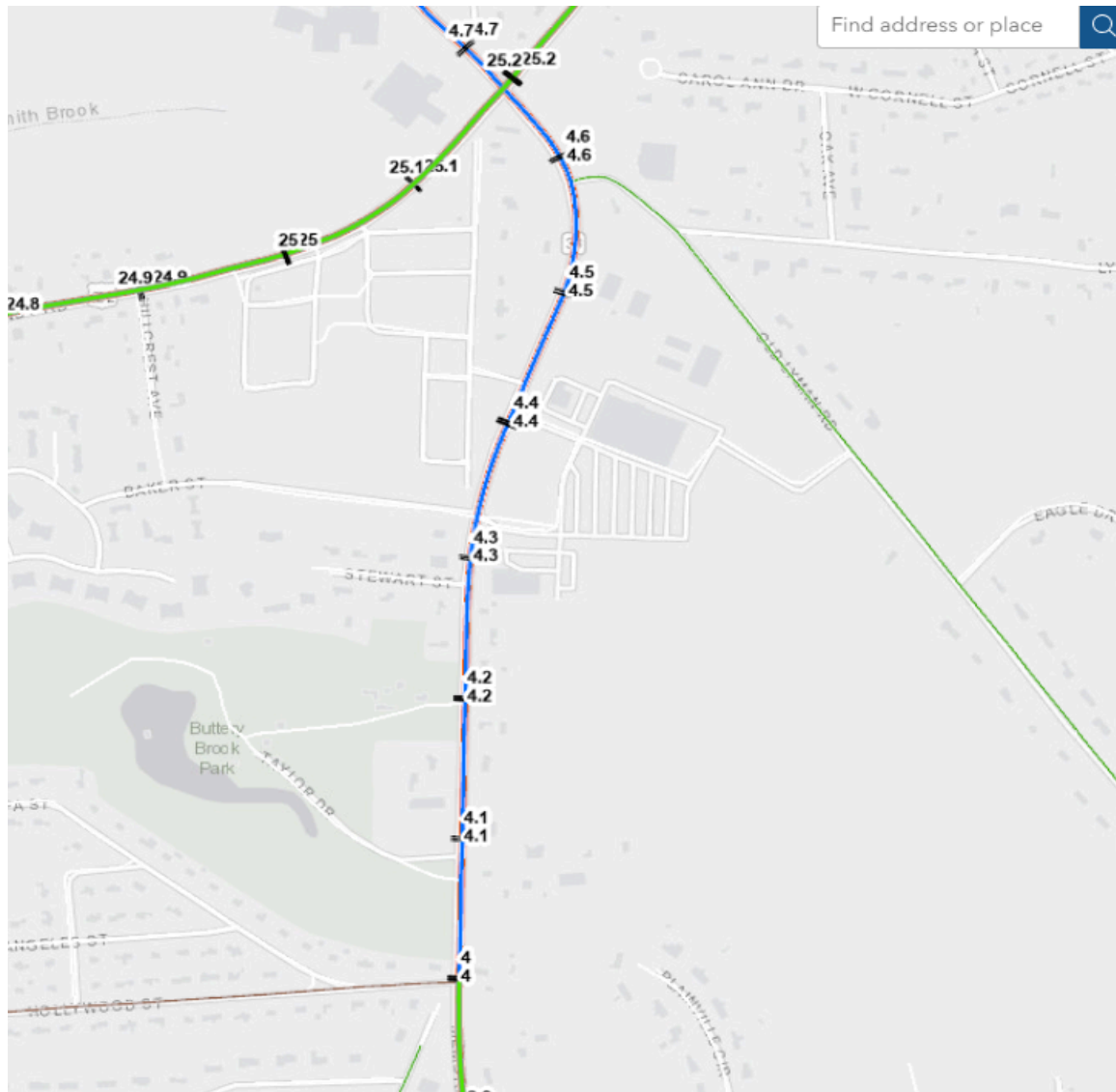
Clerk

- **Election - mail in ballots:** Over 4,500 ballots have been mailed to registered voters who applied to vote by mail for the November 5, 2024 State/Presidential Election. If you are interested in voting by mail for the State Election, you have until 5pm on Tuesday, October 29, 2024 to apply. www.sec.state.ma.us/divisions/elections/voting-information/vote-by-mail.htm
- **Election - Early voting:** In-person early voting will begin on Saturday, October 19, 2024, and run until Friday, November 1, 2024 (excluding Sundays). All in-person early voting will be in the Town Clerk's office at Town Hall (116 Main St., South Hadley, MA). A full schedule is posted at www.southhadley.org/elections.
- **2024 Annual Town Meeting approvals:** *The Attorney General's Office requested a second 30 day extension to review article #27. Their office reviews bylaw and zoning changes from Town Meeting to ensure compliance with state laws and regulations. The town posts their decision on our website: www.southhadley.org/1356/2023-to-2024*
- **2024 Special Town Meeting:** Town Meeting will be held November 13 at 6pm. Location to be determined.

DPW

- **Fall Leaf Collection:** There will be 2 rounds of collection between Nov 4 - 30 on their normal collection day.
- **Center/Warner/Grave:** The Town is finalizing contract documents.

- **Joffre/Viviani drainage outfall for Queensville Dam/Mountain Ave. Conservation project:** In-house work by DPW staff. Outfall completed. Conservation is securing funding to continue the project.
- **Pearl Street:** Kick off meeting for culvert replacement to go over administrative logistics. Discussing what can be done in this Fall and should be done by next June.
- **CWMP in progress:** BETA presented at the 9/24 Selectboard meeting and their powerpoint is online. They are finishing up the pump station evaluation. will assess the collections system next. The evaluation should be complete in about a year (late 2025)
- **Judd Brook Lining:** Fall inspections done. Final invoicing in review. Flow monitoring by Wrighte Pierce will begin to compare infiltration differences from pre-project to post-project. Significant reductions have been observed at the plant.
- **Ch. 90 Road Paving:** Paving in progress. All streets should be completed in early October.
- **New Ludlow Road Culvert:** Replacement planned for October. Approvals from Conservation and DigSafe complete.
- **Tree Inventory:** Inventory for primary roads and some secondary roads complete in October and information will be uploaded to GeoDot site. Tree grant recently received should allow the town to complete secondary roads by next summer.
- **Buttery Brook Park:** DPW is working on preliminary tree removal for the larger project. The bathroom building exterior renovation will commence and be done by December 1. Capital approved an additional 10k for the siding from an existing bond.
- **Equipment:** Capital approved 15k for a dump truck body rebuild from an existing bond. Capital is recommending that Town Meeting consider 640k for a vactor truck from the Wastewater Enterprise fund at the November Town meeting.
- **Trash/Recycling Carts:** A letter was sent to condo associations to make decisions about cart sizes by November 15. Condos have requested smaller sizes - 65/35 versus 95/65. The Selectboard will continue to discuss the trash/recycling program at their N
- **Traffic Study:** BETA will be examining Mosier/Morgan/Park to recommend any public safety traffic improvements.
- **New Ludlow Road:** DPW sent out letters to several commercial businesses to remind them to use New Ludlow Road to Rt 33 for commercial vehicle traffic during the day except for deliveries.
- **Main Street TIP project:** The Town is still waiting for MassDOT to complete their 25% design process and hold a hearing.
- **State Road Funding:** MassDOT sent a letter to the town about their Municipal Pavement Program to help with the pavement condition of municipally owned state numbered routes. MassDOT has chosen South Hadley State Route 33 from Mile Marker 4 to Mile Marker 4.6 as part of this year's program (see map below). Exact limits are subject to further discussion and a field visit. The project will take place in Fiscal Year 2026 and save the town significant funds.



Facilities

- **ADA Grant:** The application and project design for emergency egress and accessible pathway to fields has been submitted and we should receive a response by the end of October.
- **Capital Planning Committee-**The CPC will meet on the first Tuesday of the month. We will have a special meeting on Oct. 15th to review items for the Town Meeting warrant.
- **Town Hall:** The new HR office is complete and they will be moving in Oct. 4th.
- **High School Fire Alarm Panel:** We are soliciting quotes for the replacement of the obsolete fire alarm system.
- **Green Community-**The application has been submitted and reviewed. We are still waiting for the official designation.

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Health

- **West Nile Virus:** Cases continued to be reported across the state. The Department of Public Health urges residents to apply insect repellent when outdoors, be aware of peak mosquito hours, and wear clothing that can help reduce mosquito bites.
- **Central Pioneer Valley Health District:** The district continues to meet on regional initiatives. South Hadley is the lead community and their agendas are posted on the town website.
- **Annual “Drive-thru” Vaccine Clinic:** To be held Wednesday, October 16th from 2:00 - 6:00 pm at Beers & Story, 646 Newton St., South Hadley. (VX’s available: Influenza, RSV, Shingrix, Tdap, Pneumonia and COVID may be limited.)
- **COVID TESTS:** Health Department requested COVID test kits from MDPH and has received 1,000. They have been distributed to the COA and Library for South Hadley residents.
- **SAPHE 2.0 Bill:** The Town is joining a letter from municipal leaders to the legislature to support Statewide Accelerated Public Health for Every Community (bill H.4101) See Fact sheet for details <https://mapublichealth.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/September-2023-SAPHE-2.0-Fact-Sheet.pdf>

Human Services

- **Recreation:** New playground equipment at BATTERY BROOK should be installed later this month and continue to work on funding for the renovation project. Registrations now open for winter sports, NYC Bus Trip on Saturday, December 14 and the MESMS Ski Program.
- **Veterans:** The Veterans breakfast is set for Friday, November 8 at the Senior Center. Veterans can register. Looking at moving the flagpole at SHHS Turf Field to be more visible and pair w/ the new MIA/POW chair.
- **Council on Aging:** The COA has filled all but two open positions for two Companion Drivers.
 - The Go Green Initiative has been met with a positive response. The mailing list has dropped from nearly 2400 copies being mailed each month to approximately 100 people who have opted in to still receive a paper copy in the mail. A significant portion of our mailing list individuals have requested to receive the newsletter via email, but many have also indicated they will pick it up at our locations around the Town of South Hadley. If you have any suggestions for locations we should add pick up spots, please let us know.
 - The COA now has registration dates for when registration can begin each month to provide a more fluid sign up process to take place. Registration begins the last full week of the month with South Hadley residents starting on a Monday and non-residents on a Wednesday. Registration dates can be found on the front page of the newsletter each month.
 - As of October 1, Delaney’s Market is now the contract provider for the community meals served daily at the COA. Individuals over 60 have a suggested donation of \$3. Individuals who are joining as a guest of a senior must pay the \$6 cost for their meal.

Human Resources

- **Hiring:** The town is seeking qualified candidates for positions in the Council on Aging, Building Department and the Police Department. <https://southhadley.org/jobs.aspx>
- **Senior Tax Credit Workers:** Interested eligible applicants can apply now through November 15, 2024, for assignments beginning after January 1, 2025. Check out our website for full details and to apply, and where a list of anticipated assignments will soon be posted: <https://www.southhadley.org/1396/Senior-Tax-Work-Off-Program>
- **ICMA Conference:** Lisa and Chuck represented South Hadley at the ICMA (International City/County Management Association) Conference in Pittsburgh, PA earlier in September. This annual event brings together municipal managers from around the world to exchange ideas, strategies, and resources for effectively managing local governments in today's complex environment. Lisa was a featured panelist, sharing insights on the experiences and strategies of women and BIPOC leaders in local government. Other sessions they attended covered key topics such as the role of AI in local government, generational shifts in communities and workplaces, community engagement, and leadership development.
- **Office Move:** The HR Department will be moving offices to the lower level of Town Hall, expected as of 10/9/24. All current contact information, including phone, email and mailing address will remain the same.

Library

- **Public Art:** A glass & steel sculpture, "Solar Reflective Movement" by Brendan Stecchini, is displayed on the Gaylord Memorial Library lawn through the fall.
- **Statistics:** Circulation of 12,759 items last month was a 19% increase over the same period last year. We also issued 141 new library cards, an increase of 28% from last year.
- **SHPL Celebrating the Past Decade:** Can you believe the "new" library is ten years old? Join us on Saturday, October 19 from 11:30-12:30 for a combination of reflection and celebration. We're marking the first decade of the new South Hadley Public Library building with a look back over the past 10 years: where we were, where we've been, and where we're going. Light refreshments will be provided by the Friends of the Library.

Planning and Conservation

- **Routes 202/33 Corridor:** The next community meetings will be Wednesday, October 16 from 6-8pm on zoom <https://bit.ly/4fPZM9P> , and November 14th from 6-8pm at the Library. <https://www.southhadley.org/1400/Route-202-33-Corridor-Re-Zoning#:~:text=Project%20Background,%20Route%2033/202%20Corridor%20Study%20-%20Final%20Report,%20January>

- **MVP Action Grant:** The Town is receiving 50% of the \$1,283,063 award for the construction of the Pearl Street at Elmer Brook Culvert Replacement. Bidding will be completed this winter. Construction will commence in spring FY25.
- **DCR Community Forest Challenge Grant:** \$20,000 award to complete a Shade Tree Management Plan. Waiting for tree inventory data to be finalized and then an RFP will be released.
- **Dry Brook Aquifer Study:** Waiting for the final report from UMASS.
- **MVP 2.0 Seed Project - Affordable Housing Trust:** The Town has awarded a contract to JM Goldson to assist the town with the development of the trust documents.
- **Flexible Development Bylaw Amendments:** The Planning Board will send to Fall Town Meeting amendments to the bylaw aimed at encouraging denser housing developments that protect open space and encourage the creation of affordable housing units and small dwellings (800 sq.ft. or less). This bylaw amendment package also includes a new Common Open Space Bylaw and a Common Drive in support of promoting dense housing developments with small affordable homes and access to open space.
- **Subdivision Regulations Amendments:** The Planning Board is proposing amendments to the Subdivision Regulations to support walkable neighborhoods, Green Stormwater Management, and better administration and enforcement procedures for compliance with permit requirements.
- **Falls Business Improvement Grants:** Final projects slated to be completed this Fall.

Public Safety

- **Police Staffing Study:** Public Forum date is October 23 at 6pm at the Senior Center, and will be attended by Chief Gundersen, Lt. Gagne and Lt. Baran.
- **Accreditation:** The Police Department and Accreditation Manager Sgt. Barry O'Connor is preparing for re-accreditation with the Massachusetts Police Accreditation Commission, Inc. Accreditation is awarded on a 3 year cycle. The mock accreditation is mid November, 2024 with the re-accreditation scheduled for January 15, 16 and 17, 2025.
- **Driver Training:** From Oct 1-3, 2024 all South Hadley Police Officers were trained by MIIA Insurance in the PUBLIC SAFETY DRIVING SIMULATOR. The program provided 90 minutes of classroom instruction and approx. 30 minutes of "behind the wheel" driving for each participant. The goal of providing all staff with this important training is to improve safety of the public and officers while driving to emergency situations.
- **Election Safety:** The Police hosted a stakeholders meeting for Election/Poll Location Safety on 10/01/24 to ensure a safe and effective voting process. Attendees included Chief Gundersen, Lt. Gagne, Lt. Baran, Sharon Hart/Emergency Management Director, Sarah Gmeiner/Town Clerk, Scott Moore/Facilities Director, John Broderick/Public Works Director, Chief Stark/SHFD1, Chief Moore/SHFD2, Chuck Romboletti/Assistant Town Administrator/HR Director.

- **Drug Take Back:** In partnership with the Health Department and TRIAD, Drug Take Back Day is Saturday, October 26, 2024, from 10am-2pm at the South Hadley Police Department. This event will be held "drive thru" style in the back of the South Hadley Police Department. If you are unable to make this drop off, there is a med box available 24/7 in the lobby of the police station.
- **SAND for Seniors:** In partnership with SHFD1, SHFD2 and TRIAD, Sand for Seniors is being delivered in early October.
- **Police Department Open House:** As part of celebrating 150 years of the South Hadley Police Department, community members are invited to a Police Department Open House, Tuesday October 22, 2024 5:00pm to 7:00pm. Members of the Department will provide tours of the station, be available to answer your questions and provide a brief overview of police operations. Suitable for adults and children, and each tour will take approx. 30 minutes.

Schools

- **MSBA:** The Selectboard and School Committee approved the Study Enrollment Certification and anticipates that the MSBA will vote at their October 30 board meeting on whether the project will officially enter the Feasibility stage, or Phase II.
- **PTAs:** Several parent teacher groups are holding fundraising events - Help support the schools!
<https://my.mcmfundraising.com/2024-fall-mosier-school/mosier-pta>

State and Regional

- **PVPC:** PVPC is hosting their October monthly Commission meeting at the Boathouse in South Hadley. PVPC presented a new report "The Missing Pieces: Securing the Western Massachusetts future economy by investing in equity and opportunity".
- **PVTA:** PVTA is updating their Title VI Program including updates to our Public Participation Plan and Language Access Plan. As part of this process, these documents are online for public comment through November 6, 2024: <https://pvta.com/feedbackWanted.php>
- **MMA:** The October edition of The Beacon newsletter is now online - www.mma.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/MMA-Beacon-October-2024.pdf

Boards & Commissions

- **Cultural:** The applications are available through the Mass Cultural Council website opening on September 1 and closing on October 16.
- **Historic:** The public hearing for the "Old Firehouse Museum Local Historic District" was held in Sept. The next step is to prepare a final report to send to Town Meeting for a vote.
- **Senator Markey:** Senator Ed Markey's office held a discussion about energy and environment at their recent office hours.

Community

- **Mt. Holyoke College:** Selectboard member Renee Sweeney and Town Administrator Lisa Wong held a productive meeting with Mt. Holyoke College to learn more about their campus planning efforts. MHC is completing a \$177 million geothermal project and looking at a plan to support their historic buildings and build housing and academic capacity. MHC has also made improvements to some private roadways that they own and are looking at further improvements to meet standards that could result in town acceptance.

Selectboard

- **Dangerous Dog Hearing:** The Clerk Magistrate hearing was held on September 30 at Eastern Hampshire District Court to determine whether the appeal will proceed to a judge.
- **Community Compact Grants:** The grant has been submitted for the Best Practice Areas of *Age and Dementia Friendly - Needs Assessment and Action Plan* and *Economic Development - Land use Regulations*
- **Work Plan** - The Selectboard is debuting a working document with projects and priorities.
- **Opioid:** The town is also in touch with Care Massachusetts, who was selected by the state to help municipalities work together to provide technical assistance. The Town is exploring avenues such as whether we need a needs assessment, can support treatment facilities that serve our residents, and want to coordinate on a project via the Public Health Excellence collaboration.