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Town Administrator's Monthly Report
March 2025

Administration, Finance and Operations

● **Administration:**

- **Budget:** The website financial section has been updated with powerpoints and documents as part of the budget process. The Line Item Budget for Selectboard vote is published and the Budget Book will be developed after.
- **State/Federal Funding:** The TA is analyzing the known and potential cuts and changes to state and federal policies and funding that will have an impact on the municipality, as well as the town's residents and businesses.
- **Education:** The School Committee will vote on their budget on March 20. The TA is working with area administrators and school leadership to jointly advocate for education needs and organize statements for the March 24 Ways and Means Committee hearing.
- **Collective Bargaining:** The TA is in negotiations with the Police and DPW unions
- **MMA:** The TA has been selected to be on the Women Leading Government Committee (reappointment) and the Legal Assistance Fund (new appointment)
- **Community Compact Grant:** The town is waiting to hear back on the IT grant for the districts and may receive partial funding. The town is finishing up its current IT grant jointly with Hampden that was used for software development.
- **Flood insurance meeting with FEMA:** The last meeting in 2016 to review requirements to make FEMA flood Insurance accessible to all residents (don't need to be within flood plain). New maps coming out that will be digitalized and GIS (previous maps from the 70s). There will be a public appeal period and a year or 2 before maps are even used.
- **Federal Transportation:** The latest meeting about the Transportation Improvement Plan reviewed scenarios to deal with cost overruns in various projects. The scenarios would delay the South Hadley project from FY2026 to FY2027.
- **SHOWCASE:** The Town is working on the kickoff event for Showcase at the Senior Center on March 21. <https://southhadleyarts.org/>
- **COA Women event:** The TA will join others for A Night Celebrating Women at the Senior Center on March 27 from 2-6:30pm.

- **Accounting:**
 - The accounting department continues to work on and update the various budget documents for the new fiscal year budget along with revenue and expense projections.
 - Calculated the indirect costs for School; Town; and SHELD as well as the enterprise funds and Cable Studio for the next fiscal year.
 - Updated the financial information for the towns annual disclosure document which is a required document which basically reflects the town's fiscal health for our bond holders.
- **Assessor:**
 - Real estate abatement inspections are underway.
 - Excise bills were issued on Monday, March 3, and the ensuing abatements have begun!
 - Associate Assessor co-taught 25 students; MAAO Course 200: Assessment Administration & Procedures, who are working towards receiving their designation. Testing is currently underway.
 - March 1 was the Personal Property filing deadline for businesses to report their assets for Fiscal 2026. There are found hundred eighty-three (483) accounts currently.
 - Continue review of fiscal 2026 property data changes including permits, sales and inspection related data.
- **Cable**
 - Cable staff have been instrumental in supporting many community meetings including the March 1 community meeting and the budget hearings.
- **IT:**
 - Work continues on digitization. Will be working with Assessors to address historical records that are not digitized.
 - Building Certificate of Inspection form and Close Out letter design updates.
 - Submit final report for Hampden joint IT grant for digitization.
 - Configured laptop computers to support Board of Health
 - Drafting continues to transition Planning Permits online.

Building and Zoning

- **10th edition:** Concurrency period expires 6/30. Attending numerous trainings offered by the state to ensure all changes are recognized. Will generate a short pamphlet to provide to homeowners and contractors to help them understand the changes as well. Information will be posted on the building page as well.
- **Certificates on Inspection (3 families and above):** Inspections have begun on numerous properties throughout town. We have nearly doubled the number of compliant buildings in town

already with numerous more close to compliance. Mailings to be completed by the end of March in a staggered manner.

- **Problem Properties/Zoning Violations:** Full list has been compiled. Will work with assessors to ensure all accrued fines for violators that refuse to comply (6 months or longer with no response/action) will be added to upcoming tax bills.

Clerk

- **Annual Census:** The census has been sent to every residence in South Hadley.
- **Town Election:** The Town election is Tuesday, April 8, 2025 at the High School from 7am to 8pm. The two districts are also having their annual election at the same location and same time. Sample ballots: www.southhadley.org/1088/Sample-Ballot
Register to vote and apply to vote by mail: www.voteinma.com
- **Board and Committee Handbook:** Staff is working on the draft of an updated handbook (last one updated in 2001) and reaching out to committees for input. The Selectboard will review the proposed updates later this year.
- **Town Meeting:** Staff is working on the draft town meeting warrant. Citizen petitions were due Monday, March 17, 2025 by 5pm. The Selectboard will vote on the warrant in mid-April.
- **Website:** The Town Clerk is working on updates and improvements to the contracts section of the website, which houses documents related to employment, vendors, construction, services and more. The comprehensive reorganization of materials will greatly enhance transparency.

Department of Public Works

Center/Warner/Grave: Professional services agreement with PVPC approved. RFQ for engineer services for construction management in progress. Bid opening: February 28, 2025 (no bids received). Re-post RFQ: opening date March 28, 2025.

- **Joffre/Viviani drainage outfall for Queensville Dam/Mountain Ave. Conservation project:** DPW in-house work on Queensville Pond outfall behind 7/11 building scheduled for mid March (weather related issues).
- **Pearl Street:** Bid award: to Davenport Trucking, Inc. notice to Proceed, contract and associated bond paperwork completed.
- **Buttery Brook Park:** BATTERY BROOK PARK Grant Project: underground utility plans developed for electrical and communications with SHELD; waiting on ground to thaw to begin work.
- **Trash/Recycling Carts:** Resident mailer information completed for distribution with The Recycling Partnership. June 2025 assembly and distribution by contractor, Rehrig. Contract completed.
- **Main Street TIP Project:** 2025 TEC updated and submitted; 75% submittal due from Tighe and Bond to MassDOT; public hearing date TBA. February 2027 advertising date.

- **Morgan Street Bridge:** Grant application denied by MassDOT. Alternative funding sources in progress.
- **DPW:** Stanton Avenue drainage install; easement in progress with MHC.
- **Spring road paving and pavement preservation:** preliminary work and submissions to MassDOT in progress.
- **WWTP:** capital improvements, plant maintenance repairs and plans for permanent bypass project, as well as CWMP in progress.

Emergency Management

- **Community Assistance Contact meeting:** National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP)
- **Emergency Management Requirements for a Large Scale Event:** Meeting with Police, FD#1, FD#2 and TA for discussion and input to the policy.
- **Mastering Influence: Leading Upwards and Downwards in the Chain of Command:** completed.
- **Department of Conservation & Recreation's:** Flood map program for Emergency Management Directors.
- **FEMA - (BRIC) Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities grant application meeting:** Meeting to discuss the grant application for a Generator for FD#2, contingent on the Hazard Mitigation Planning Grant.
- **Disaster Finance:** seminar.
- **Letters sent to our State Representative and Senator** seeking support and co-sponsorship of H.4181/S.2506, which aims to create a state disaster relief fund for emergency management.
- **Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency: Emergency Management Director's meeting -** Civil Air Patrol Capabilities Briefing, Wildfire Risk Assessment and Mitigation for Communities, Massachusetts Professional Emergency Management Program (MPEM) presentation and Homeland Security Council updates.

Facilities

- **High School:** The accessible pathway project has been awarded and will be completed over the summer, possibly sooner.
- **Library:** Electronics disposal complete. Moisture and temperature sensors installed.
- **WWTP:** Roof replacements for two buildings at the treatment plant are still in progress due to weather delays. Installation of the new heating system for the thickening room is in complete.
- **COA:** Emergency lighting inverter replacement and automated lighting system repairs are complete.
- **MS:** Moisture and temperature sensors installed.

- **Plains Elementary:** BDA system has failed and are working on replacement options. Moisture and temperature sensors installed.
- **Mosier:** Multiple roof leaks over the kitchen and library are in process of repair.
- **Capital Planning:** The capital requests for FY26 have been finalized and submitted for Capital Planning Committee review. The CPC meets twice in March to expedite the review process.
- **PD:** Fan and motor replacements for HVAC system are complete.
- **South Hadley:** The town has been selected to participate in the MassCEC On-Street Charging Solution Program as part of the Feasibility Study offering. This is to determine options and locations for on-street EV charging stations.

Human Services

- **Recreation:**
 - Agreement has been with Jeff Fleishman from Golf Business Advisors to evaluate the golf operations in relation to the proshop, Sunset Grille, driving range and the related facilities this spring. A survey will be sent out for work from Gardner+Gerrish for the golf Master Plan the week of March 3.
 - The Buttery Brook Park project was awarded to Omasta Landscaping, Inc. from Hadley and they will begin work in the upcoming weeks.
 - Spring and summer activity registrations are currently open and include spring sports, summer programs, James Taylor at Tanglewood on July 4, and log cabin and pavilion rentals at Buttery Brook Park.
- **Veterans:**
 - VA Accreditation Training online portion complete awaiting additional guidance require Tyler Veterans Benefit Software currently working with Tyler on getting software.
 - Memorial Day was suggested instead of breakfast doing a dinner instead this is currently in planning stage. Most likely date will be Thursday 22May2025
 - Veteran evening social hours was held on Thursday Feb 20th had 3 individuals show up but one veteran was a new person that was able to help.
 - Veterans Coffee Hour was held on Wednesday March 12th approximately 25 Veterans in attendance a few new faces. Guest speakers in attendance were from Veterans Home in Holyoke discussed new facility, application process, requirements and services provided.
- **Council on Aging:**
 - Program being rescheduled: Unfortunately, Kijua Sanders-McMurtry, PH.D. from Mt. Holyoke College had to reschedule her presentation. Once the date is finalized, this information will be shared for those wishing to attend.

- During the February MCOA Outreach Meeting, Julie Pearce provided a network wide training on Vicarious Trauma. Contact Julie If you'd like more information on this topic or possible training opportunities.
- Free coffee at the COA for the month of March, graciously sponsored by the Friends of the South Hadley Seniors in coordination with their membership drive.
- As a reminder, Municipal Room Rentals are available Monday, Tuesday, Wednesdays and Fridays during the hours the COA is closed. If you need to request a room for after 4 pm, please use the request form located on the Town's website: <https://www.southhadley.org/1302/Municipal-Room-Reservation> All instructions and needed information can be found within the form.
- Free AARP tax appointments have all been filled. If anyone asks about this program, they can be directed to try other Council on Agings who may have appointments left. The appointments will run from the start of February through April.
- Fuel assistance application season is open now and runs through the end of April.

Human Resources

- The HR Department's Municipal Minute was recently posted to the SHCTV website. Check out the PSA featuring tips for job seekers and how to find out about Town careers: [Municipal Minute: Job Tips & Hiring Opportunities](#)
- **New Employees:** Please welcome Hannah Durham, who started on March 1 as the new Public Health Program & Administrative Coordinator in the Health Department. For a list of open positions and how to apply, visit <https://southhadley.org/jobs>
- **Open Enrollment Health Fair:** The Town will hold an [in-person health fair](#) for employees on **April 8, 2025 from 12:00 to 3:00pm** at the Middle School, that will host insurance and benefits vendors, as well as some community wellness resources. The upcoming Health Insurance **Open Enrollment period is April 17th through May 9th** for plan changes effective July 1, 2025. New rate charts and other information is posted on the [HR page on the Town website](#), and more information will be posted as available.

Library

- **Preservation Grant:** The library has received a provisional grant of \$7500 from the MA Board of Library Commissioners to conduct a preservation assessment of the local history materials at the Gaylord Memorial Library.
- **Nibbling Native Plants:** Free public program: *Nibbling Native Plants in your Backyard* will take place on Wednesday, March 19 at 6:00. The presenter will give a virtual tour of native edible wild plants suitable for adding to your own landscape or for nibbling on as you encounter them.

- **Baby Lapsit Storytime & Play:** Babies (newborn through 12 months or pre-walkers) and their caregivers are welcome at this new program, which will meet twice each month (next is Friday, March 21 at 10:00) . We will sing songs, read a story, and do some rhymes and fingerplay together, followed by time to socialize. This is an opportunity for babies to see and play with other babies, and for caregivers to meet, chat, and swap tips.

Planning and Conservation

- **Routes 202/33 Corridor:** The committee is submitting zoning recommendations and design standards/guidelines to the Planning Board for discussion at their 3/10/25 meeting.
- **Business A-1 Design Guidelines:** The Business A-1 zoning district was amended at Town Meeting in May 2024. Per the amendment, there is a temporary moratorium on permitting new projects until June 1, 2025 for the adoption of design guidelines. The design guidelines are under development in coordination with the design guidelines for Routes 202/33. The Planning Board is currently on schedule to meet the 6/1/25 deadline.
- **ADUs:** The new ADU law (part of the Affordable Homes Act St. 2024, c. 150, § 8) went into effect on 2/2/25 and at this time, our local bylaw is not fully in compliance with the new Regulations as promulgated under 760 CMR 71.00. The Planning Board will hold a public hearing on amendments to 255-50 Accessory Dwelling Units on 3/24/25.
- **Affordable Housing Trust:** The committee held a strategic planning session on February 27, and will begin working on the draft strategic plan. A bylaw to create the Trust will be sent to Town Meeting in May..
- **Sign Zoning Bylaw Amendment:** The Sign Bylaw is currently out of conformance with 1st Amendment rights, as well as has some other issues. Planning Consultant Richard Harris has prepared a detailed review and recommendations.
[Sign-Bylaw-Review-and-Recommended-Amendments](#)
- **Agricultural Uses in Zoning Bylaw Amendments:** Agricultural uses within the zoning and general bylaws, as well as Board of Health regulations, are in conflict. Planning Consultant Richard Harris has prepared a detailed review and recommendations.
<https://southhadley.org/DocumentCenter/View/13675/Agricultural-Uses-Review-and-Recommended-Amendments>
- **Tree Planting Program:** Spring kicks off the Shade Tree Challenge - to plant 400 trees over the next two years. This is possible by the funding from two grants. DCR's Environmental Justice Tree Planting Program is funding the first 100 trees. These will be planted in the town's two Environmental Justice Neighborhoods: in the Falls and near MHC. The remaining 300 trees will be planted town-wide. Trees must be planted in the front or side yard of a property and the property

owner must commit to watering the trees for the first two years. Residents can learn more and apply online. <https://www.southhadley.org/1063/Tree-Planting-Program>

- **MVP FY26:** the department is working on an application for the FY26 MVP Action Grant. This project proposed to restore Titus Pond Conservation Area, create a viewing platform for recreational use, and complete downstream design work for future culvert replacement at Mountain Ave.

Public Health

- **March is colorectal cancer awareness month:** Colorectal cancer is a cancer that starts in the colon or rectum, parts of the digestive system. Information is being posted at Town Hall, Council on Aging and the South Hadley Library - in English and Spanish. The information is also available on the Town website.
- **Behavioral Health 360:** South Hadley Health Department is investing in this software in order to provide additional resources to South Hadley residents. Regional grant funding was secured for South Hadley and additional funding was secured also for Holyoke and Chicopee Health Departments.
- **Hampshire HOPE (Heroin/Opioid Prevention & Education):** Met with Coordinator, Lauren Kelly to talk about opportunities for collaboration.
- **Blood Drive:** Currently working with Baystate Medical Center to sponsor a blood drive in South Hadley. This blood drive is now scheduled for May 27, 2025 from 10:00 am - 2:00 pm and will be held at the South Hadley Library. The COA will also have sign-ups.
- **Massachusetts Virtual Epidemiology Network (MAVEN); an integrated web-based disease surveillance and case management system:** Mass Department of Public Health Seminar completed.
- **Viral respiratory illness (COVID, RSV, Influenza)** is on the rise.
https://www.mass.gov/info-details/viral-respiratory-illness-reporting?_gl=1*8r8lr2*_ga*NTIxNzA0MTQ2LjE2OTUwNDc3MTM.*_ga_MCLPEGW7WM*MTczNjk3NDE2OS4xMi4xLjE3MzY5NzQxODg1uMC4wLjA
- **Informational Message Boards:** Message boards(10) put together to include resources (domestic violence, mental health support, veterans hotline, Narcan, substance use hotline, etc.). These boards will be placed at Town Hall, COA and the Library.
- **Agricultural Restrictions Bylaw:** Meeting with Anne Capra, Planning and Conservation Director and Jason Fogue, Building Commissioner regarding the Agricultural Restrictions Bylaw.
- **Massachusetts Municipal Association):** Virtual workshop on “An Insider’s look at Town Meeting”
- **Massachusetts Department of Public Health:** Participated in the Quarterly Drill.

Public Safety

- Lt. Baran, Sgt Hebert, and Sgt Goulet for successfully completing the Command Leadership Institute (CLI). The CLI is an advanced and intensive leadership program, forming part of the prestigious FBI-LEEDA Trilogy, designed to prepare law enforcement leaders for command-level roles. Well done to these police leaders!
- Police are using socials to promote [One Pill Can Kill](#). In recent years, there has been an alarming increase in the amount of fake prescription pills containing fentanyl or methamphetamine. Criminal drug networks are mass-producing fake pills and falsely marketing them as legitimate prescription pills to deceive the American public. Counterfeit pills are more lethal than ever before. As of 2022, 3 out of every 5 pills with fentanyl contain a potentially lethal dose. The only safe medications are ones prescribed by a trusted medical professional and dispensed by a licensed pharmacist. These drugs are in South Hadley and a risk to our community.
- Police and DPW had conversations to develop better strategies to address violators of the parking snow ban, which resulted in difficulties with DPW clearing the roads on some early February storms. Solutions included more targeted efforts by police personnel to identify, ticket and tow violators; with improved communication to the public. Reports from the DPW Director after the 2nd large storm-ice event were that improvements were seen.
- February-2025: Police investigated 23 incidents that resulted in criminal charges, an overview include: Burglary/2; MV offenses/8; Domestic A&B/2; Operating under influence/2; Shoplifting/2; Abuse Protection Order Violation/2; Harassment Protection Order Violation/2; Disorderly Conduct/2. Monthly Logs can be found at the [SHPD Website](#)
- February-2025: Police investigated 53 new incidents that are ongoing, closed with charges or no charge. A snapshot of incidents and frequency include: A&B/4; Intimidation/2; Theft from Person/1; Identity Fraud-Theft-Online/6; Possession of Child Sexual Exploitation Material/1; Failure to stop/police pursuit/1; Criminal Harassment-Revenge Pornography/1; Unattended Death/2; Suicide/1; Person at Risk/2; Missing Juvenile/1
- After complaints from residents, officers had a heavy presence on Lincoln Ave. attempting to calm speeding and aggressive driving on this street. Education for those who use Lincoln Ave to access the South Hadley High School were conducted by the SRO and SHHS leadership via direct contact and emails to students and caregivers. The Traffic Safety Committee is evaluating other options, beyond enforcement, to reduce the impact of motorists on Lincoln Ave and improve safety. The officers spend several hours monitoring traffic and enforcement of the speed.
- The Police Chief taught a block of instruction on *Police and Community Relations* to the SHHS Criminal Justice program. Throughout the spring, several other officers will lead topics for this important educational program.

Selectboard

- **Budget Task Force:** The Selectboard will be considering the creation of a budget task force with duties that include forecasting, recommending funding sources and prioritizing programs.
- **Rates:** The Selectboard has been discussing any rate changes for FY26 for Sewer and Solid Waste.
- **Board and Committee members:** The Selectboard is seeking applications for various board vacancies that can be found online: <https://southhadley.org/692/Board-Vacancies>