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Town Administrator

***Town Administrator's Monthly Report  
February 2025***

***Administration, Finance and Operations***

● **Administration:**

- **Budget:** The TA is working on a balanced budget in a difficult budget year. The TA, as well as the School Administration, have instituted a spending freeze as of Friday, February 7, as a precaution. Guidance for spending approvals for necessary expenditures have been sent to their respective staff.
- **Municipal Empowerment Act:** The TA has provided support for the Governor's proposal: [www.mass.gov/doc/municipal-empowerment-act-overview/download](http://www.mass.gov/doc/municipal-empowerment-act-overview/download)
- **Collective Bargaining:** The TA is in negotiations with the Police and DPW unions
- **MMA:** The TA is part of the committee organizing the upcoming Women in Government conference.
- **Community Compact Grant:** The town has submitted the IT grant for joint water metering for the two districts to the state.

● **Accounting:**

The Town Accountant has submitted the quarterly report for the months of October, November and December.

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.

● **Assessor:**

- The real estate and personal property abatement filing deadline was February 3. We have received ten (10) applications out of seven thousand four hundred eighteen (7,418) taxable parcels.
- Continued processing of first 2025 motor vehicle excise commitment. The bills will be issued on Monday, March 3.
- Property related tasks such as parcel research, rollback tax issuances, parcel divisions and combinations, educating taxpayers on processes related to assessments.
- Review of fiscal 2026 property data changes including permits, sales and inspection related data.

- **Cable**
  - Cable has one request for 20k for studio equipment. The Town will need to explore additional revenue to maintain services in the next year or so.
- **IT:**
  - Updating Munis to the latest general release.
  - Go live for Online Abutter's List requests.
  - Continue digitization of Property Record Cards.
  - Continue training for TCM Enterprise.
  - Design of Planning permits on Opengov.
  - Configuration of Civicready mobile app

### ***Building and Zoning***

- **Short Term Rentals:** List received from DOR. Working with planning to send notices to all addresses currently registered with the town.
- **0 West Main St.:** Court process has concluded with one family member names to control process going forward. I have been contacted regarding the intention to first make the building safe. A few realtors have called requesting information regarding the status of the lot.
- **Liquor License Inspections:** Three buildings still have remaining issues to address before certificates of inspection will be issued.
- **Certificates on Inspection (3 families and above):** Inspections have begun on numerous properties throughout town. Mailings to continue throughout February in a staggered manner.
- **ADUs:** Law has taken effect, still awaiting full guidance from the state as promised. Additional training scheduled by state inspectors to help all inspectors ensure common application of law throughout the area.

### ***Clerk***

- **Annual Census:** The census has been sent to every residence in South Hadley. Dog licenses can be mailed, completed online or in person.
- **Town Election:** The last day to obtain nomination papers is February 13, 2025 at 5pm and the last day to submit papers is February 18, 2025 at 5pm.

### ***DPW***

**Center/Warner/Grave:** Professional services agreement with PVPC approved. RFQ for engineer services for construction management in progress.

- **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 February (weather related issues).
- **Pearl Street:** Bid award: recommended award to Davenport Trucking, Inc. at 2/4/25 Selectboard Meeting.
- **Buttery Brook Park:** BATTERY Brook Park Improvement Grant Project: site visit 2/3/25; Bid opening 2/12/25; underground utility plans being developed for electrical and communications with SHELD.
- **Trash/Recycling Carts:** Working on resident mailer information for distribution with The Recycling Partnership. June 2025 assembly and distribution by contractor.
- **Main Street TIP Project:** 2025 TEC updated and submitted; 75% submittal due from Tighe and Bond to MassDOT; public hearing date TBA.
- **Morgan Street Bridge:** Grant application submitted.
- **DPW:** Stanton Avenue drainage install; easement in progress with MHC.
- **Ledges Golf Club:** DPW: butt log removal of January 2025 tree work completed.

### ***Emergency Management***

- **Drone Program:** Portable power solution for drone batteries in the field was needed. A portable 2000 watt inverter generator was purchased to charge batteries on scene.
- **Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP),** an all hazards plan developed to address natural and human-caused hazards, was updated, passed along to key departments for review, signed and uploaded to the MEMA's WebEOC site.
- **Emergency Management Requirements for a Large Scale Event:** Created and distributed to Police, FD#1, FD#2 and TA for comments.
- **National Preparedness Survey:** participated in.
- **Massachusetts Interlocal Insurance Association(MIIA):** Batteries: EV, Micromobility & Energy Storage Systems training was completed.

### ***Facilities***

- **High School:** The second phase of the building automation project is in progress and mechanical repairs performed as they arise. Bids for the ADA pathway will be due on February 13.
- **Ledges:** Tree maintenance along the course is complete. An energy project to replace the HVAC system is currently in the planning stage and will be submitted to Green Communities soon for approval

- **Library:** Circulation desk area carpet replacement has been completed.
- **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 progress.
- **COA:** Emergency lighting inverter replacement and automated lighting system repairs are still in progress. More parts were found faulty in the inverter system and lighting components are on order.
- **Capital Planning:** The capital requests for FY26 have been finalized and submitted for Capital Planning Committee review. The CPC meets twice in February to expedite the review process.

### ***Human Services***

- **Recreation:**
  - Agreement has been made with Garder+Gerrish for the golf course master plan for the Ledges Golf Club.
  - The Buttery Brook Park bids are due on February 12. We are currently working with SHELD to bring the internet to the park for patrons to be able to enjoy, to have security camera and to bring the power underground at the pickleball courts.
  - 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:**
  - About 100 % complete with online training for Veterans Administration training (To be able to submit VA disability claims) due date of 1 Feb 2025 for online portion awaiting guidance from State on further training
  - In process of working with Chapter 115 Clients for annual and 3 year recertifications by end of year waiting on documentation from clients waiting on documents from 5 clients have been notified.
  - Veteran evening social hours on third Thursday of the month for individuals that work during the day to pass on information to the vets. Dinner held on 30 Jan with approximately 50 individuals signed up. Requested from and received approval from VFW 3104 for \$750 to fund coffee hour and evening social hour.
  - Veterans Real Estate Tax Exemption- was approached about supporting the doubling the tax exemption for disabled veterans in town. Submitted report to TA on 16 Jan 2025 giving details on how passing this will affect other veterans and dependents in town that include non disabled veterans, other disabled veterans, dependents of veterans, currently serving military members in the community that are not able to get this exemption.

- **Council on Aging:** The COA continues to have multiple open Companion Driver positions open.
  - Kijua Sanders-McMurtry, PH.D. is the VP for Equity and Inclusion at Mt. Holyoke College. In celebration of Black History Month, they will be presenting on a variety of topics related to historical changes within Western Massachusetts and South Hadley specifically. This presentation is open to all ages and will take place Tuesday, February 25th at 2:00 pm at the Council on Aging.
  - 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.
  - WestMass ElderCare, the local Aging Services Area Provider, has officially changes their name to Access Care Providers.
  - Free rides, through the COA's two transportation programs, are open to all South Hadley adults over age 60.
    - Companion Transportation Program - Provides rides to out-of-town medical appointments. Space is very limited while we are still hiring for additional drivers. This program is provided through a grant through Access Care Providers and funding from the Older American Act through the MA Executive Office of Aging & Independence and the Administration for Community Living.
    - In-Town Transportation - Rides are provided for medical and social activities within South Hadley. We also provide a weekly ride to Big Y for grocery shopping.
    - For more information on these programs, please see the Golden Chronicle Newsletter or contact the COA.

### **Human Resources**

- **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 (location: TBD - either HS or 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 will be distributed to employees soon and employees can check the [HR page on the Town website](#) where up-to-date information will be posted when available.
- **HR Newsletter:** the winter edition of the [HR quarterly newsletter is available](#) containing updates, tips, and resources to keep employees connected and informed.

- **Training/Development:** the Town of South Hadley was well represented at the recent MMA Connect 351 conference by members of the Board, HR, and Public Health. The conference included various workshops and trainings on municipal issues, and several keynotes including one from [Suneel Gupta providing tools to build and maintain energy](#) throughout our professional and personal lives.

### **Library**

- **Trees for Kids:** Children can get a free tree to plant for Earth Day this year! The library is partnering with *Neighborhood Forest* to provide free trees for kids. Parents/guardians can [register by March 15](#) to get a free tree for your child(ren)! Trees can be picked up at the library during Earth Week in April.
- **Bruins PJ Drive:** The library is partnering with the Boston Bruins on their 18th annual PJ Drive with the goal of collecting 10,000 pairs of new pajamas from February 1st – March 15th. The drive will benefit nonprofits that ensure positive living conditions for children. For each pair of new pajamas brought to the library, patrons will get a raffle ticket to win an Odyssey Bookshop gift card or Bruins PJ hockey puck.
- **February Vacation Week:** There is a full slate of programs for kids and families happening the week of school vacation including a Toddler Dance Party, Rock-Paper-Scissors Tournament, and Art Workshop. More information (and more programs for all ages) can be found on [the library calendar](#).

### **Planning and Conservation**

- **Routes 202/33 Corridor:** The committee is working on recommendations that will go to the Planning Board next.
- **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 Director of Planning and Conservation provided recommended amendments to bring zoning bylaw 255-50 Accessory Dwelling Units into compliance to the Planning Board for further discussion that will ultimately go to Town Meeting.
- **Affordable Housing Trust:** The committee will hold a strategic planning session on February 27.
- **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>

**Public Health**

- **February is Heart Health month:** Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States but it can be prevented. 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.
- **Bird Flu or Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI):** Guidance for responding to HPAI was received. Information distributed and made available on the Town website and as an event. Guidance was timely as a response was necessary. MDAR and MassWildlife were notified.
- **Blood Drive:** Currently working with Baystate Medical Center to sponsor a blood drive in South Hadley. This blood drive will be scheduled for April/May.
- **Behavioral Health 360:** describes their software as a groundbreaking nationwide program designed to help combat the country's mental health crisis. This program sets a national agenda that empowers local public health departments to improve the mental health status of their local communities. *Behavioral Health 360* will provide foundational tools to apply a public health approach to improve behavioral health. The program focuses on the prevention and early intervention of mental and substance use disorders, which can help reduce the disease burden and strain on the healthcare system. The local digital mental health deployment allows local health departments to mold the program based on their local needs, strategies, culture, demographics, and makeup. South Hadley Health Department will be investing in this software in order to provide additional resources to South Hadley residents at a reasonable cost in a very open and user friendly manner.
- **ADA Improvement Grant Program, Massachusetts Office of Disability (MOD)** was awarded. All equipment has been purchased and received. (Bariatric cots, All Terrain Wheelchairs, Transcending Chairs). Installation and training for the Transcending Chairs will occur in March. We are developing guidelines for use.
- **Cremation of unclaimed bodies:** On July 31, 2018, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts adopted an Act Relative to the Cremation of Certain Unclaimed Bodies (effective July 1, 2018), which states in part "a board of health may serve as the duly authorized representative for the purpose of requesting cremation of unclaimed body remains by signing a cremation form. Working on creating policy.
- **Improving Cultural Competency:** Class completed.
- **ADU's:** Mass Department of Public Health Seminar completed.
- Survey created and distributed at Lathrop Village to identify the needs of the residents and how the Health Department can support them. Some related health topics identified included heart health, COPD, arthritis, depression/anxiety, eye & low vision services,....and BINGO!

- Another pallet (5568) of COVID tests were ordered, received and are being distributed. The Health Department put together bags of COVID tests and masks and distributed them to food establishments and retail. Also, COVID tests were distributed to the faith-based communities. <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-reporting>
- 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\\*MTczNjk3NDE2OS4xMi4xLjE3MzY5NzQxODguMC4wLjA](https://www.mass.gov/info-details/viral-respiratory-illness-reporting?_gl=1*8r8lr2*_ga*NTIxNzA0MTQ2LjE2OTUwNDc3MTM.*_ga_MCLPEGW7WM*MTczNjk3NDE2OS4xMi4xLjE3MzY5NzQxODguMC4wLjA)
- The Health Department has purchased eight (8) Fluentalk which is a handheld portable translation device that can translate in real time, offline and from images and includes a two-year cellular data plan. These translation devices have been distributed to the Council on Aging, Library, Police Department, School Department, Town Hall and Fire Districts #1 & #2 for use on ambulances.

### **Public Safety**

- The Police Department had a successful reaccreditation evaluation in January, 2025. It is anticipated that the Department will be awarded a certificate of Accreditation at the next Massachusetts Police Accreditation Commission, Inc meeting in June.
- With Human Resources, the Department has been interviewing candidates for the position of police officer as the result of an officer resigning in November. A conditional offer of employment has been given to a candidate who is already certified and training as a police officer. Pending a successful background and other onboarding requirements, the new member will start mid March.
- The Department has been promoting in both the media and with visits to local consumers the Project Live Saver Technology. Project Lifesaver is a service provided by the trained staff at the South Hadley Police Department and South Hadley Fire District #2 which utilizes an electronic tracking device to assist in locating at-risk people who may wander. See <https://www.southhadley.org/1467/Project-Lifesaver> for more information
- Community Office hours for the Chief of Police are Feb 11 @ Loomis Village; Feb 25 at the Library; March 5 at the Senior Center; March 7 at Tailgate; March 26 at Neighbors Helping Neighbors.

### **Selectboard**

- **Dangerous Dog Hearing:** The Town will be working with opposing counsel to dismiss the case in court due to compliance with the original Selectboard order.
- **TriBoard meeting:** The School Committee and Appropriations will join Selectboard in the upcoming March 1 public meeting.