

Town Administrator's Monthly Report January 2026

Administration, Finance and Operations

- **Administration:**

- **Budget/Town Meeting:** Save the date for a potential Special Town meeting to discuss the budget/override on February 25, 2026.
 - **State/Federal news:** The Governor's budget is expected to be released by the fourth Wednesday of the month. This budget will give the town an idea of what to expect for state aid. The state has a dashboard to track federal impacts on the state budget: www.mass.gov/info-details/impact-of-trump-administration-and-congressional-cuts-on-massachusetts
 - **Elementary School Building Project:** The committee is working on narrowing preliminary design choices.
 - **Budget Task Force:** Over 1800 respondents to the survey so far. The survey will be open through the end of January but please fill out by Jan 26 to be included in the preliminary results to be shared at the Jan 26 Task Force meeting. A level service budget is \$3.5million higher than anticipated revenues. Cuts would impact most departments. Three main scenarios are being explored:
 - 3m - a 3m override would likely need to be raised in year 1. Unfortunately this would not eliminate service cuts. It would prevent MORE cuts in 2028. Schools receive 200k more but be a net reduction due to loss of ARPA
 - 6m - a 6m override would likely be raised over 3 years. Schools would receive about 700k more and there would still be some service cuts, but not likely to be any deep cuts until 2029 or 2030.
 - 9m - a 9m override would likely be raised over 5 years. Schools would be funded at an amount where cuts would be limited if any.
 - **Needs Assessment:** The town is seeking volunteers to be part of the Needs Assessment advisory committee. Contact Selectboard@southhadleyma.gov for info. Project is 100% grant funded.
 - **PVPC:** They have been awarded the contract to conduct the "South Hadley Community-wide Historic Preservation Plan.", 50% of which will be paid by a grant
- **Accounting:** The department is working on mid year financials.
The Schedule A has been submitted and approved by the State

- **Assessor:**

- Assisted with finalizing numbers on Town of Granby tax rate recap for submission to the Department of Revenue.
- Once Granby tax rate was reviewed and approved, the Fire District #2 tax rate was approved.
- Processed transfer of rubbish and sewer delinquent accounts as well as manually entered electric light delinquent accounts for inclusion on the third quarter actual tax bills as liens.
- Successfully processed property tax exemptions for inclusion on the third quarter actual tax bills.
- Successfully processed both the real estate and personal property tax billing for the Town and two (2) Fire Districts timely.
- Motor vehicle Excise - commitment 5 for 2025 was processed with an issuance date of January 5.
- Fiscal 2027 Personal Property Forms of List were mailed to approximately 480 businesses.
- Working on finalizing database information for closing out fiscal 2026 data and opening fiscal 2027 for property data and ownership changes.
- Working with IT on correcting the bridge between Vision (real estate data) and Open Gov (permitting software).
- Starting to review building permits from July 2025 forward for fiscal 2027 processing.
- Answering a multitude of questions regarding valuation and taxation increases with residents and property owners.
- Training office support staff provided through Administration.
- Participation in educational opportunities regarding laws and software processes.
- Department staff continue on working to restore, replace, update and streamline digital data and processes.
- **Cable:**
 - Closed Captioning Funding: The director is working with the Budget Task force to tape videos.
- **Collector/Treasurer**
 - 3rd Quarter Real Estate and Personal Property bills sent with a due date of 2/2/26.
 - Final Notices for FY25 Trash and Sewer delinquents were sent. Any outstanding amounts from FY25 not paid will be liened onto the 3rd Quarter Real Estate tax bill due on 2/2/26.
 - FY26 Boat bills were issued 11/10/25 and are due 1/10/2026.
- **IT:**
 - Buttery Brook Park: Procure and configure/test equipment for wifi.
 - Configure Scanning on Plotter in Planning/Conservation
 - Replace Obsolete Equipment
 - Continue work on Large Event application form

- Install and configure large format scanner in Building Department

Building and Zoning

- **Liquor License Inspections:** Annual inspections were all completed and issued prior to the end of the year. The two businesses without certificates are now in compliance and have been issued as well.
- **Certificates on Inspection (3 families and above):** All second notices have been sent to delinquent responders. Fines have begun to accrue for any property owner which received a second notice and does not respond within 30 days (about 20 properties currently.) We are over 75% of buildings in town now compliant (from just over 10% when we started) with nearly a dozen more working through final details.
- **Problem Properties:** All notices have been resent to properties with long-standing issues (unregistered vacancies, zoning/building code violations). Fines will begin to accrue 30 days following receipt of notice. All accrued fines will be added to quarterly tax bills going forward. List available to any/all parties interested.
- **Short Term Rental:** Still awaiting state guidance as to whether they will officially modify the code to exclude any short term rental with 5 rooms or less from the sprinkler provision. Any newly registered properties which will need to comply immediately. We are investigating dozens of properties throughout the town to have visual confirmation of these properties in operation that are not in compliance with the local or state regulations. To date, no new properties have been registered with the town

Clerk

- **Nomination papers available:** Nomination papers are now available for this year's Annual Town Election scheduled for April 14, 2026. The deadline to pick up nomination papers is Friday, February 20th. Visit southhadley.org/Elections for more information, including key dates in the election cycle and what positions are on the ballot.
- **Office of Campaign and Political Finance (OCPF) Deadline** - The year-end report is due on or before January 20. The year-end report must be filed each year, so long as a committee is in existence, or a candidate maintains a campaign fund, has outstanding debts, or is an incumbent elected official.
- **Census:** Annual census forms will be mailed to every residence in January 2026. Returning the census keeps registered voters on the active voter list. The data is also used for grant applications, creating the annual street list, helping the school district project upcoming enrollment, and connecting veterans and surviving spouses with our Veterans Agent. Massachusetts is the only state in the nation that conducts a mandatory annual municipal census.
- **Dog Licenses:** Dog License renewal season is here and ends March 31, 2026. Dogs registered after March 31, 2026 are subject to a \$5.00 late fee. All dogs over 6 months old residing in the Town of South Hadley must be licensed annually. Owners who

registered their dogs in 2025 and have an OpenGov account will receive email reminders to renew their license between January and March. The annual census will have a tear off paper application residents can also use to register their dogs. Residents can register their dog(s) after January 1 online:

<https://southhadleyma.portal.opengov.com/categories/1084/record-types/6425>

- **New Voter Registration System:** The MA Elections Division rolled out the new voter registration system used by the Division and all election offices in Massachusetts. Voters and residents will not be affected by the change to the new system.
- **Additional Liquor Licenses:** You can follow the progress of the Act submitted submitted by Representative Gómez here: <malegislature.gov/Bills/194/HD5438>
- **Petitions for 2026 & 2028 ballot questions:** You can find the list of questions that received the required number of certified signatures to be sent to the MA Legislature here: <https://www.sec.state.ma.us/divisions/news/left-story.htm> If the Legislature does not pass an initiative through the normal legislative process by May 5, 2026, petitioners can begin collecting the additional 12,429 needed to place the question on the November 3, 2026 State Election ballot.

Department of Public Works

- **Center/Warner/Graves Project:** DRainage install on Graves St. completed. Granite curb and concrete sidewalks completed: Center St. and Warner St. Graves St. granite curb and sidewalk installs next (weather permitting).
- **Buttery Brook Park:** Project completed, except for pickleball court issue: engineering contract awarded to Levesque; contract in progress.. Spring 2026 construction.
- **Main Street TIP Project:** MassDOT in review of utility and right of way plans. Utility Conflict site walk through: 10am Tuesday January 13, 2026.
- **DPW:** Stanton Avenue drainage install; easement approved with MHC. Construction spring 2026.
- **RT 33 paving:** Paving and temporary road markings in place. Spring 2026, recessed markings and solar x-walk stanchion install, to complete project.
- **Spring 2026 Ch. 90: Road Paving and Cracksealing Projects:** Prep work in progress for April/May projects to take place.Finalizing lists to budget funding.
- **Main Street pump station permanent by-pass project:** Bypass work completed. Spring 2026 loam and seed to complete project.
- **WWTP: CWMP:** Final Report to Town at January 6, 2026 Selectboard Meeting.
- **2025/26 Sidewalk Program:** new sidewalk installations: plans in progress for new installations on : Park Street, Brainerd Street, Hartford Street, Lathrop Street, bidding/oversight/construction as funding allows. DPW removal of existing sidewalks: Upper Prospect Street, Bombardier Street, Douglas Street, Berwyn Street, Camden Street.

- **DPW/COA vehicles auction: COMPLETED by Auctions International: 2000**
International Vac Truck DPW (\$16,600), 2014 Ford E350 Van COA: \$3,050. Fees - \$60.
Net : \$19,590.
- **Rt. 116 brick sidewalk lighting upgrades:** in review with lighting consultant/engineers.
Will provide a safer lighting environment.
- **NEW: RRFB installs:** 4 locations completed: (1) Morgan at Mosier and Park Streets, (2) MESMS at Mosier School, (3) Brainerd St. at Lyman St., (4) Main St. at Pleasant St.
Spring 2026: 1 new install at Main and Spring Street, with advanced warning sign.
- **Tree Wardens:** John Broderick and Rebekah Cornell attended the 2026 Massachusetts Tree Wardens annual conference in Sturbridge, Ma on January 6 and 7.

Emergency Management

- **Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA):** To provide for future matriculation into senior emergency management positions, the South Hadley Emergency Management Director is continuing to work with MEMA to put together workshops that will focus on upskilling first responders. Also, looking into regional incident command classes for Western Mass.
- **Drones:** Drone team (PD, FD1 & 2) continues to train on the drones. The Regional Drone Team participated in an exercise with MHC. Amazing job!
- **Warming Shelters - Times and Locations/Winter Storm Safety Guidance:**
Educational materials continue to be sent out on shelter time and locations and on winter storm preparation for before, during and after.

Facilities

- **Ledges:** HVAC replacement and building envelope sealing is scheduled and awaiting equipment delivery
- **MS:** The elevator modernization project has delays in shipping which may push the project to February break. The building automation system replacement is underway.
- **HS:** Ground fault condition in the fire alarm system has been repaired. Bid for the new dust collection system has been awarded.
- **PD:** Camera system is out for bid on Jan.14 and bids due Feb. 5.
- **Capital Planning:** 5 year plan complete, Department Head presentations started Jan. 6

Human Services

- **Recreation:**
 - Working on band shell and pickleball courts at Buttery Brook Park w/ design firms.
 - Middle School Ski/Snowboard starts Jan 7.
 - Working on the summer schedule now!
- **Veterans:**
 - Recertification period for Veterans Chapter 115 cases.

- **Council on Aging:**

- Federal funding for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program has been released. Fuel Assistance applications are now being processed. The Fuel Assistance window runs until April 30, 2026. All allotted funds must be spent by that date as well, so applying as soon as possible is paramount.
- Our Food Service Coordinator, Dakota Lyman, will be leaving as of January 16. We will be holding a goodbye event at 12 pm on Friday. All are welcome to stop by!
- The COA is holding a special intergenerational Family Fun night during school vacation week, on February 19. Registration is required. Older adults and their younger companions will be treated to a fun movie night with movie refreshments. Cost is \$4 to attend.
- AARP tax appointments will be taking place at the COA, free of charge, starting in February. All appointments filled during the first week of being available. Most COAs are reporting that their appointments have already filled, but as of 1/14, Holyoke COA still has appointments available.
- If anyone is interested in learning more about the independence that can be gained through use of the PVRTA transportation options, they will be presenting their Travel Training Program at the COA on February 26 at 2:00 pm.

Human Resources

- **Now Hiring!** The Town of South Hadley is seeking a **Food Service Coordinator** for the Council on Aging to support daily congregate meals and community food programs for older adults. This full-time, benefitted municipal position offers a predictable weekday schedule and the opportunity to make a meaningful impact serving local seniors. [Click here](#) for a full posting and to apply (open until filled).
- **Insurance/Benefits:** The Hampshire County Group Insurance Trust (HCGIT) is expected to set health insurance rates for FY27 (effective July 1, 2026) by end of February. Once rates are finalized, updated rate charts and related information will be shared with employees and posted on the Human Resources page of the Town website. Employees with questions may contact GCongram@SouthHadleyMA.gov or HR@SouthHadleyMA.gov. The Town is also planning to host a virtual open enrollment fair this year, with a tentative timeframe in early April. The virtual format is expected to include brief, scheduled presentations from health insurance carriers, benefit vendors, and other partners. Presentations would be recorded and made available online to ensure broad and convenient access. Employees are encouraged to share suggestions as planning continues by contacting the Human Resources Department.

Library

- **Technology Grant:** The library has been awarded a technology grant through the Massachusetts Broadband Institute's (MBI) Connected & Online Program. We will receive

devices to replace almost all of the public computers at SHPL and add Chromebooks that people can borrow and use inhouse. This grant will allow us to improve activities related to workforce development, education, and healthcare access.

- **Programming Grants:** The South Hadley Cultural Council awarded the library two grants. One is an original local history program on South Hadley's Pearl City. The second is our family event to kick off the summer reading program featuring [Acrobat Li Liu](#).
- **Staff Anniversaries:** Three staff are hitting milestones this winter. In December both Adult Services Librarian Desiree Smelcer and Circulation Librarian Rena Stromgren hit their 20-year anniversary at SHPL. In January, Library Page Linda Manijak will reach 30 years of library employment.
- **Author Event:** Local author Linda Bass will launch her new book, [A Tiny White Light](#), at a [special event](#) in the Community Room on Tuesday, January 27 at 6:30.

Planning and Conservation

- **Routes 202/33 Corridor Rezoning:** Passed by Town Meeting exceeding a 2/3 vote!! Bylaws submitted to AG's Office for review.
- **Master Plan Annual Forum** - Coordinated registration and participated in Master Plan Annual Forum on 12/12/25.
- **Sign Zoning Bylaw Amendment:** The Planning Board will work on this over the winter for possible submission for May Town Meeting.
- **Agricultural Uses in Zoning Bylaw Amendments:** Advisory Committee held first meeting; attempting to get this through Planning Board for May 2026 ATM adoption.
- **Floodplain Bylaw Update:** The Town is required to update their Floodplain Bylaw. The Planning Board will begin work on this and attempt to get it to Town Meeting in May 2026.
- **Subdivision Regulations Update:** The Planning Board will finalize and adopt updates this winter.
- **Affordable Housing Trust:** First meeting on 12/4/25; submitted grant application to MHP for technical assistance to fund Trust.
- **Tree Planting Program:** The Shade Tree Challenge is accepting applications on a rolling basis from now until June 2026.
<https://www.southhadley.org/1063/Tree-Planting-Program>
- **Planning Board Permit Applications:** Current applications under review by the Planning Board may be viewed online: [Permit Applications | South Hadley, MA - Official Website](#)
- **Conservation Commission Permit Applications:** Current applications under review by the Conservation Commission may be viewed online here: [Project Plans | South Hadley, MA - Official Website](#)
- **Redevelopment Authority:** Winter edition of the Falls Digest under development; Information about how to make a donation to the Frank DeToma South Hadley Falls

Memorial Fund can be viewed here: [Frank DeToma South Hadley Falls Memorial Fund | South Hadley, MA - Official Website](#) ; Applications are being accepted for the Falls Business Improvement Grants [Falls Business Improvement Grant | South Hadley, MA - Official Website](#)

Public Health

- **MPIC** - Participation in the Master Plan Annual Forum by all staff members .
- **Influenza** - Data and notices have gone out. Masks available to residents.
- **Second Generation Anticoagulant Rodenticide regulation:** regulation written, approved by the BOH and sent to Town Counsel for any edits.
- **Kratom regulation:** regulation written, approved by the BOH and will be sent to Town Counsel for any edits.
- **NOISOME TRADE Regulation:** A noisome trade regulation was written and approved by the board of health and regulated under M.G.L. c. 111 s 143: the core law empowering local Boards of Health (BOH) to control trades emitting noisome odors or harming health/property. **Waiting for Town Counsel review.**
- **NITROUS OXIDE Regulation:** A Nitrous Oxide Regulation was written and approved by the board of health. This regulation aims to reduce substance misuse, prevent associated health consequences, and support broader public health efforts in harm reduction. regulation written, approved by the BOH and sent to Town Counsel for any edits. **Waiting for Town Counsel review.**
- **Pilot Project:** The Health Department has been working with Abigail Jeyaraj, a recent Master of Public Health (MPH) graduate to address the chronic health issue of Asthma. We are working on a Pilot Project, creating a survey and providing air purifiers to a select group of families whose youth are affected by this chronic illness. Also, we are working together with Yale(air sensors), the Massachusetts Department of Public Health and Mt. Holyoke College. We hope to develop community outreach programs, increase awareness about asthma triggers, and provide resources for better management.
- **Health Department Drop-in:** The Health Department is hosting a drop-in hour at the South Hadley Public Library on the third Monday of each month to give residents the opportunity to discuss their concerns, hear about new initiatives and learn about programs and services available.
- **BIOBOT:** Biobot wastewater testing started in November and will continue for a year for
High Risk Substances (HRS): Cocaine, Fentanyl, Nicotine, Methamphetamine, Xylazine, Ketamine, Metedomidine, Alprazolam (Xanax)
Substance Use Disorder Treatment (SUD): Naloxone, Buprenorphine, Methadone
Opioids: Heroin, Morphine, Oxycodone, Acetyl fentanyl, Carfentanil, Codeine, Dihydrocodeine, Hydromorphone, Hydrocodone, Oxymorphone, Sufentanil, Tianeptine, Tramadol, Para-fluorofentanyl

OPIOID -

- **School Engagement:** Health Department tabled at several school district events for students and families to share resources related to mental health, substance use

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prevention and recovery support, and other family health information. Increasing local mental health and substance use support, recovery, and harm reduction information available at the South Hadley Health Department.

- **Meeting with SHHS Adjustment Counselor and Graduate Intern:** to review progress on a vaping cessation and support group that was piloted at the high school this fall and identified opportunities for collaboration.
- **Prevention Needs Assessment Survey 2025 Data:** Summary shared with facilitator of Peer Leaders at SHHS with invitation to review to inform areas of collaboration or programming this year.

Public Safety

- **Military Deployment:** The South Hadley Police Department sends its best wishes to Patrol Officer Chance Sliwa (Captain Chance Sliwa, U.S. Army Reserves) as he begins a one-year military deployment. On January 4, 2026, Captain Sliwa was ordered to report to his military base in Vermont, pending further international assignment. The South Hadley Police Department anticipates Captain Sliwa's return to service by December 2026. Be safe, Captain Sliwa, and thank you for your service.
- **Activity:** In December, Police personnel conducted investigations for 42 incident reports, and Dispatch personnel handled 1,944 calls for service. A detailed call summary can be [found here](#). Summary of reported incidents: Larceny or Fraud (Felony) – 4 | Property Destruction (Felony) – 2 | Unattended Death –6 | Welfare Check/Person at Risk/Involuntary Hospitalization – 3 | Burglary – 5 | Assault and Battery – 1| Motor Vehicle -Leaving Scene of Crash – 6 | Civil Dispute-1| Burglary -2 | Missing Person-1 | Harassment-1 | Shoplifting – 1
- A total of 22 individuals were criminally charged during the month of November. Summary of offenses charged: Abuse Prevention Order Violation –2 | Domestic Assault & Battery – 1 | Motor Vehicle Offenses – 3 | Warrant Arrests – 1 | Assault & Battery – 1 | Motor Vehicle, Leaving Scene of Crash- 2| Operating Under the Influence – 3 | | Burglary – 1 | | Assault & Battery-Strangulation-1 | Assault and Battery-Dangerous Weapon – 1 |
- **Community Outreach:** After another successful annual Toy and Gift Card Drive, on 12/22/25 members of the South Hadley Police delivered gifts and cards to Neighbors Helping Neighbors. Thank you to the many SHPD members who helped organize and promote this event.
- **Helping Community:** Officer Whelihan, Officer Swaby and Officer Farber handed out holiday gift bags to South Hadley seniors on 12/17/25. The bags contained many useful items which were packed and had been donated by The Friends of South Hadley Seniors. This has been a tradition the Police Department has been involved with for several years, along with both Fire Departments.
- **Volunteer Efforts:** On 12/07/25 Officer Patrick Burke and his running partner Angel ran the Hot Chocolate Run for Safe Passage. Safe Passage is a charity that assists victims of domestic violence. Officer Burke and Angel have competed this race as a duo for four

consecutive years. This year Officer Burke and Angel ran their best time yet, finishing in 22:31 and beating their previous record by over 30 seconds.

- **Safety Reminder:** The South Hadley Town Bylaw § 315-2.3 requires the removal of snow from sidewalks within twenty-four (24) hours after a snowfall, a tenant or occupant (and if no tenant or occupant, the owner) of property abutting a public way shall remove the snow from the sidewalk(s) abutting such property. Failure to remove snow could result in a fine of \$100 each day the snow is not removed. § 315-2.4 Placement of snow on public streets. No person shall shovel, plow, blow, or otherwise place snow onto any public street. Violating any subsection of this section may be subject to a fine not to exceed \$300.
- **Recruitment:** The South Hadley Police is accepting applications for a lateral transfer of a sworn police officer. [The hiring process is outlined here.](#)
- **Chief's Community Office Hours:** [Police Chief Jennifer Gundersen](#) will hold the following office hours for community members to stop by and share questions or suggestions:
January 20, 2026: 5:00 p.m to 6:30 p.m –*Library*
January 29, 2026: 10:30 a.m.–12:00 p.m. – *Council on Aging*
February 4, 2026: 12:00 p.m.–1:30 p.m. – *Neighbors Helping Neighbors*
February 5, 2026: 12:00 p.m.–1:30 p.m. – *Lathrop Village Community Room*