

Ira Brezinsky, Chair  
Andrea Miles, Vice-Chair  
Jeff Cyr, Clerk  
Sarah Etelman,  
Bruce Forcier

Michael J. Sullivan  
Town Administrator

June 1, 2018

Honorable Selectboard,

Please accept this abridged accounting of the activities and initiatives which we are allocating staff and other municipal resources. This includes projects I am engaged in on behalf of the Town of South Hadley and the Selectboard.

**School Resource Officers**, in a cooperative effort between the Superintendent of Schools, the Police Chief and Administration we have reached an agreement to add another School Resource Officer for the South Hadley Public Schools for September 2018.

Given the issues school settings are facing across the country in respect to violence and/or incidents closer to home, as highlighted by the three community chase over this past weekend. The chase started in South Hadley continued into Holyoke and was terminated at the Three County Fairgrounds in Northampton with all three jurisdictions in pursuit. As you know from the news reports this involved a teenager from South Hadley in possession of explosive devices. As this is a continuing investigation, I have no other information. Luckily none of these devices ended up in any schools (I am not aware if the individual went to South Hadley schools) and it seems prudent if not necessary to consider an additional officer dedicated and trained to protect students.

As we have discussed before it has been difficult to keep up with retirements, vacations, injuries and other interruptions in service for the South Hadley Police Department. Presently we are interviewing for three positions which after the academy and after their in-house training we should be back up to the appropriate level. Of course the recruits will not be available until spring of 2019 given the training needed and required.

With five members of the department on the edge of retirement it is imperative we stay ahead of the trend. Having another experienced officer becoming a SRO while maintaining the level of public safety the citizens of South Hadley expect and deserve is not something which should be consider as an easy task.

As there was no consideration, discussion or request made prior to or during the budget process about a SRO being added. Both the Superintendent and the Police Chief are committed to doing their best to add this position without asking for additional funds. Of course this may cause there to be less flexibility for the Police to cover community events and at the end of the day we may have to ask for a portion or whole of the total cost of a SRO (about \$35K for each department).

**Riverboat Village**, there has been another uptick in calls about the condition of River Lodge Road recently, the DPW continues to fill potholes in an attempt to keep the way passable. They have been on River Lodge Road no less than five times since March with hot patch.

As we have discussed before this is not a public accepted way. It is privately owned and is ultimately, as is the case with most developments the owner's responsibility to bring the street(s) to a condition where it can be recommended to Town Meeting as a public street and therefore authorize public dollars to be used to maintain it into the future.

You may recall I had a very promising meeting with John Rosenthal and Atty. Jerry Belair a number of weeks back where we hashed over the history and ended up in the same place as the 2008 court decree, the municipality must meet the requirements of patching potholes and Meredith will reconstruct the road so it can be accepted by the town. The threshold is based on the number of lots sold and houses built on the final part of the development plan. I hope it comes soon for all parties.

This past week I met with Heather Fillio the property manager at Riverboat Village to discuss the road, the lower calls for service at the complex, the general state of the rental business and how Meredith may become a more active part of the South Hadley community. I felt it was another positive meeting, as we build a better relationship with one of our largest taxpayers. While there still are bumps in the road, I feel we are making progress towards a final action/

**Meeting with MHC President Stephens**, Chair Brezinsky, Vice Chair Miles and I attended a breakfast meeting with Mount Holyoke President Sonya Stephens, Vice President(s) Shannon Gurek and Kevin McCaffrey to discuss issues of mutual importance. It was a pleasant and productive meeting.

MHC is very engaged in working towards a better understanding of diverse cultures internal and external to their campus. There will be a new person heading up those efforts soon and the search for a new police chief continues. There was a great deal of conversation about partnerships which may be formed around the subject of equity and inclusion. Including how we may leverage our programs, including the work of the Symposium of Understanding, PD Days and other trainings which municipal staff has been involved.

We thanked the President for MHC's generous involvement in projects like R2R, VBS, MASH and others, but respectfully encouraged a continued need for investment in community based initiatives. There was conversation about the investment made in equipment for the Fire Districts, there was polite expressions of gratitude. It goes without saying the importance of MHC to South Hadley and having a respectful dialogue about our relationship is beneficial in many different ways. I will work to continue to promote a healthy relationship with MHC.

**River, Roll and Stroll 2018 Wrap-up Meeting**, Recently I met with Price Armstrong, Sean Condon the co-chairs of the 2018 River Roll and Stroll for a wrap up meeting. Marcos Marrero from Holyoke was patched in via phone. The weather has not cooperated over the last two years, so there was some discussion about moving it to a time where statistically less rain dates, there has been some challenges in fundraising, there was not any real answers to that hard question.

However, there was agreement that we must work with MassDOT to have them understand the burden they add to this great public event with requirements such as &o volunteers who must have at least two

hours of training. I feel and the others seemed to agree coordinating this is a monster endeavor which needs to be trimmed back if others are to get involved in the coordination aspect. There will be outreach to MassDOT over the next several months and they will be looking for at least one new co-chair for 2019.



**Update;** we are just a few weeks away from the official launch.



Thank you to everyone in South Hadley who worked to make this happen, especially Richard Harris for attending many of the regional meetings and coordinating with DPW, Bewegen and Valley Bike. This was no easy task. While we will be having the regional kick off for this program, we are working with MHC and E-Ink as major sponsors to coordinate a “roll-out” when the students return for the Fall semester.

These e-bikes will hopefully inspire riders who are less likely to use a traditional bikes, it almost sounds like I am talking myself into trying one. As has been mentioned there will initially be a kiosk at the Town Commons and near the Police Station in the Falls. I did use the VBS logo in the heading, I did not want you to think that was a creation of mine.

**AFSCME Arbitration,** we await the results of our arbitration in respect to the police dispatcher’s overtime. This has been both expensive and time consuming, but I feel the SB made the right decision at the Level 3 grievance hearing on this matter. I am hopeful the arbiter sees the importance of making the hours worked reflected in the hours allotted to sick and vacation leave. Paying an employee more for being absent seems crazy to me, but you never know what the perspective of the arbiter will be, until you get the ruling.

We remain in negotiations with this group, I am hoping we can come to agreement soon and move on. There will be (I am reasonably confident) an executive session to discuss the final details hopefully at the June 19<sup>th</sup> SB meeting. The negotiating team has been cordial and seemingly willing to consider ideas, but only time will tell.

**Leaping Springs Trail Project,** is moving ahead and should be through the bid process in another thirty days or sooner. The Conservation Administrator/Associate Planner Anne Capra will be coordinating the project and I am sure she will be as important to this effort as she has been to the R2R Trail.

The wetlands delineation has created some additional challenges in respect to the type of bog bridge necessary to span the 140 foot are of concern which in turn has raised the estimated cost. In discussions

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with Anne Capra, she feels confident there will be savings in other areas to offset the cost. I suggested that would be the appropriate approach, as there will likely be no additional money for this project.

**Public Building Water Testing**, there was a very productive planning meeting at Water District 1 included members of both districts, the School Superintendent, School Facilities Manager, the Health Director, representatives from the school grant program and Water Commissioners from both districts recently which I attended.

The meeting was for all parties better understand the task at hand and what are some of the best practices being set in place in other communities. This type of meeting is vital when forming a strategy to take on such a monumental task. The representatives from the program complemented us as being somewhat ahead of the curve for seeking tests for all appliances.

The presentation about the issues in regards to lead and copper in drinking water sources was enlightening. They made suggestions on mapping, as well as labeling fixtures. The inclusion of ice machines and food prep faucets was also important, as well as labeling some faucets as “For Hand Washing Only”.

This program uses independent labs, uses a more stringent two bottle test, some states use two bottle test but does not necessarily analyze both bottles, and others only take one sample. They also spent some time on the chain of custody. This program seems like one which will greatly assist us in building a baseline and a greater understanding of the water resources we have in South Hadley. I applaud the Water Districts for taking a leadership position on this matter, as well as the Health Department.

**Natural Gas Prices**; I will be meeting with Secure in the next two weeks about natural gas pricing. They have been working with us for about three years now on buying futures and our using spot market to get the lowest price for natural gas. This is an interesting time for energy pricing, in this case natural gas is starting to trend upward, so we are trying to get out in front of the increase. I am hoping we will lock in a rate only slightly higher than last year.

I have also offered the SEC to have Secure come to one of their meetings in the future to discuss their role in the energy market and how they assist the Town of South Hadley in getting the best price.

**Long Grass Season**; both my phone and the Health Department phones are burning up the lines right now with citizens reporting property neglect. I do understand the frustration residents are experiencing and we do try to address the issue as vigorously as possible. At the outset I need to say, there has to be more than just long grass for us to take aggressive action.

The truth of the matter is often times the issue is an owner being away or working two jobs and just struggling to find the time or they have not gotten around to replacing or repairing last year’s mower. We try to work with people and we must appreciate different residents have different standards when it comes to property maintenance.

We also hope these property owners understand that when they get a notice or a letter from the town warning them they may be in violation, we are just doing our jobs. On occasion we find ourselves getting criticized by both parties.

There have been a couple of properties we have had to work extra hard which at the time seemed to be lost causes. Here is one below which was sold at auction, purchased by Dave Minor and he has turned it in to a little gem, thank you Dave!



This one below took us three years of threatening, cajoling, fining and seeking action through the courts, I wish I could get the picture out of my mind and place it next to this 19 Ludlow property. Again the developer did a great job!



**Chamber of Commerce Breakfast;** the annual South Hadley/ Granby Chamber of Commerce Breakfast was held Friday at the Orchards Golf Club, Chair Ira Brezinsky, Vice Chair Andrea Miles and Member Sarah Etelman were in attendance.

Chamber President Michelle Theroux, Director Sarah Lawrence and Kevin McCaffrey hosted the event which included updates from Senator Rosenberg, Representative Scibak and Representative Solomon Goldstein Rose. While it is great to see some youth in political leadership, it also both somewhat freighting to lose the experience and talent of Messrs. Rosenberg and Scibak. Their advocacy and diligence over their respective tenure has been incredibly important to so many projects in South Hadley and other parts of their districts.

Surprisingly enough for me the Chamber officials asked if I would also make some remarks, luckily the Chair and I discussed some of the important topics the previous day, as I expected he would be making the remarks at this event. I went through a short list of projects and then the Chair was asked to make remarks. He cleaned up the ones I missed and then made some very kind remarks about my work as Town Administrator, I appreciate the comments. However, I am sure there are those which may argue his position on my performance.

There was a very interesting respectful dialogue about the effect of minimum wage on small businesses. This very difficult subject is challenging, as you may recall the SB took a progressive step a couple of years ago now, to bring all full time employees to no less than \$15 per hour. While there were only a half dozen people effected at the time, it served as a statement as to all employees union and non-union that South Hadley leadership is aware of the struggle families or single income individuals. I do agree that part-time, particularly entry level employees is a difficult one to answer, but we would have to remove a number of retiree part time jobs if it all went to \$15 an hour.

Effort does make difference for everyone! Another couple of dozen properties to go....

Respectfully submitted,

Michael J Sullivan  
Town Administrator, South Hadley