

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

Michael J. Sullivan
 Town Administrator

January 4, 2019

Honorable Selectboard;

Please accept my wish in regard to a happy, healthy and prosperous New Year for you and the Town of South Hadley. This report is an abridged accounting of the activities in town hall over the past several weeks. Thank you for your support!

Swearing-In Ceremony For Chief Gundersen ; As you are aware, it was a packed house for the swearing-in of South Hadley Police Chief Jennifer Gundersen. The Northwestern DA Sullivan, more than a dozen chiefs and former chiefs, and Selectboard members Miles, Brezinsky, Forcier and Cyr were all in attendance, along with a large contingent of colleagues, family and friends of Chief Gundersen.



A large deputation of officers from South Hadley and other area departments displayed their support for the chief by attending and then later showering her with well wishes. Her children Noah and Hannah did a superb job leading the gathering in the Pledge of Allegiance and then participating in the pinning. Congratulations Chief Gundersen.

IGM Meeting ; Rec Director Andy Rogers, IGM Ledges Superintendent Mike Fontaine, IGM VP Steve Gano and I had a very productive meeting this past week. It is the first of many as we are committing to regular gatherings throughout the season. Building this relationship is critically important for all parties. I welcome their willingness to collaborate in a diligent manner.

While they technically do not take over until January 15, the reality is they are and have been managing more, if not all, of the business aspects of the Ledges already. We worked out some of the keys/access, deposit practices, received the bond performance bond documents required, discussed some expenses which will be appropriately divided (i.e. telephone, trash, internet) initially and other “housekeeping” items. It is refreshing to have a contractor who will get the job done professionally.

We did discuss the subject of tree removal and the procedure for removing the wood. There has been some citizen concern regarding how some recent future firewood was handled. In the future, when they are cutting trees they will work more closely with our Tree Warden Chris Ryan, and when a tree or fallen trees are removed the DPW will bring it to the compost area for processing.

It is important we ensure that all the public has access to any byproduct. Similar to “sand” being available in winter, any wood should be available to the public. We need to do our best to ensure that access is safe and free of random chainsaws cutting branches based on the permission or authorization from parties who do not possess said authority. I am sure you can see how this could lead to a serious situation on many levels.

There was also conversation about off season use. I stated we want as much access for non-golfers as possible without causing damage or expense to the property. Snowshoes yes. Snow mobiles - **no!**

There is an agreed upon inventory of durable goods (tables, chairs, equipment) and soft assets (forks, knives, staff shirts, etc.) in place between the parties. The SB will have their recommended rates before you on Tuesday for your review and hopeful approval, and we are off and running or golfing!

Chief Steve Parentela ; It goes without saying - I miss Steve Parentela. My statement should not be in any way construed as a negative in regard to Chief Gundersen. The two are, respectfully, separate people in the same position doing the work in a different way at a different time in history.

Steve Parentela as chief, or as a long-time employee of the Town of South Hadley, always displayed a deep and abiding love of this community. He came to work when many would have been inclined to recline at home.

His openness and willingness to assist the incumbent is really what Chief Parentela embodied. He truly would do and did whatever was asked of him at any time. As he said several times, “If you need me at two in the morning, please call me.” Of course, I would not know if I should call him at the office, because he was always there, or so it seemed, day and night. More people with that attitude could make things a whole lot easier in so many ways.



It was unfortunate he was unable to attend the recent meeting of the Selectboard for you to present him with a token of your gratitude. He is certainly back in the “pink” and doing well.

I expressed on your behalf how grateful the Selectboard was for his service to South Hadley. He remains one of the best humans I have had the opportunity to work with. His empathy and work ethic are models for us all. I was able to present your plaque when he stopped by the office recently. Steve Parentela is a class act!

Injury at Buttery Brook Update; By way of an update, the parents of the six-year-old child who was injured at Buttery Brook recently have filed an insurance claim. At this point, much of the information is protected either by HIPPA or by wise practice, as we await settlement of any and all claims. We wish and expect the child a full recovery.

Without admitting any misstep or negligence related to this claim, we have taken steps to remove the heating device and the protective surround. We will be installing a split system which will actually help with warmer weather events in the space as well as supplying heating in the winter.

This incident is unfortunate and it should be noted that hundreds of children annually attend this Friends event without any report of injury when properly supervised. It is appreciated the effort the Friends of Buttery Brook display which results in countless little smiles.

Municipal Vulnerability Program (MVP) Grant; Emergency Management Director Sharon Hart, ATA Jennifer Wolowicz, DPW Superintendent Jim Reidy and I meet with Engineer Nick Lapointe and Environmental Scientist Julianne Busa from the Fuss and O’Neill Engineering firm to discuss the possibilities of South Hadley applying for a MVP grant in an upcoming round.

The first step would be to ask for a “planning grant” from the state (EOEA) which will allow Ms. Busa to conduct charrettes in town with stakeholders to identify priorities for a “Phase 1” grant from the same program. There is no match required and the focus is on climate change and how it affects municipalities.

A number of communities have been reasonably successful in using this grant to address localized flooding (i.e. East Street, Pearl Street, River Road, etc) and how a comprehensive plan may help alleviate some of the damage to private property. There are certainly other aspects - added pump station capacity, power redundancy, health vectors - which may be considered. I am sure you will hear more if we are successful in our grant quest.

COA Architect; There are more than 40 architects or other interested parties who have sought information on the RFQ for the Senior Center Design. Colliers, as you are aware, has been contracted to review and recommend to the SB a qualified firm.

It was reiterated to Colliers we are looking for a firm which can work within the budget as stated to provide a functional and efficient space for a Senior Center. This is yet another important step toward that goal. This will also give us a better vantage point on costs.

Symposium of Understanding MMMA Listening Session; A group of from the Massachusetts Municipal Managers Association will be in South Hadley on Tuesday in the Selectboard Meeting Room to hear about our efforts in becoming a more inclusive and accepting community.

The association is conducting listening sessions throughout the state in communities who have projects relative to the subject matter. South Hadley is their first stop. The time and date would not have been my first choice, but they wanted to come and I want to accommodate. If you can attend it would be helpful.

The effort is an attempt to create a catalog of “best practices” to prepare communities for the quickly evolving demographics and cultural change being experienced by municipalities. Thank you for your continued support on this subject matter.

Artist Sarah Miele ; Some of you have already caught a glimpse of the new art show in the SB Meeting Room. The most common expression has been “impressive.” I hope you agree. The artist will be at the 6:30 reception prior to the meeting. Please introduce yourself.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael J. Sullivan
Town Administrator, South Hadley