

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

Michael J. Sullivan
Town Administrator

March 1, 2019

Honorable Selectboard,

Please accept this abridged account of projects and initiatives my colleagues and I are engaged in on your behalf in town hall and throughout South Hadley. We collectively appreciate your support.

Electronic Information Panels ; As we continue cosmetically and technically updating town hall the number of questions keep rising ... and rightfully so. The new info panels have been installed near the two primary entrances (Pleasant Street and near PD) to provide an assortment of pertinent information.

The questions mostly revolve around how they will be used and how they improve functionality for customers at town hall. We have some primary ways we will use the panels, such as communicating directional information, contact information, announcements, reminders and certain policies (i.e. Visitor's Code of Conduct).

The panels may scroll meeting postings, broadcast meetings when there are larger crowds, connect to Channel 15, provide short training videos or PSAs. To be honest, we have some key functions already developed as part of the strategy, but we do not want to be limited by our own imaginations. One visitors suggested we should have pictures scrolling of different iconic spots in South Hadley - great idea! We will be meeting in the next week with stakeholders to develop use policies and discuss ideas for utilization of the panels.

ATA Wolowicz has coordinated this part of the "hallway rehab" as she has with other aspects (ie. the flooring). The compliments are consistent from the public. As always, we appreciate the SB's support and investment in our efforts to make steady progress on a modest budget in regard to maintaining town hall.

There have been some who have raised questions about these changes and I understand it is difficult for some people to see historic debris removed for efficiency, cleanliness or in some cases safety. I assure you, as I have explained before, we take great effort to have all materials reviewed by persons in our system who understand the difference between historical importance and "old things" in town hall. Joe Rodio and Desiree Smelcer from the library reviewed all the artifacts and advised us on what "treasure" is and what is not, and what might be of limited value in the marketplace. More to come as we progress.

Both the credenza and sealers display were determined to have no historical value and sold on MuniBid as is our common practice for surplus material. I have spoken before about the dangers of municipal hoarding and appreciate the SB's continued support in keeping town hall from becoming an area that resembles the shoes in the bottom of my closet.

116 MAIN STREET, SUITE 109, SOUTH HADLEY, MASSACHUSETTS 01075-2896

Appropriations Budget Hearing ; The initial FY 2020 budget meeting with Appropriations went well. It was the same evening as the Open Space and Master Plan listening session. It also was a snowy evening which I imagine had an affect on both crowds.

The Appropriations Committee heard about where the FY20 draft is in the process. I communicated to the body how much more difficult this year's budget is, and how between the sharp increase in the 2020 retirement assessment and the money provided for the schools, albeit far from what is needed by the schools for FY 20, to maintain an apposite service level for all departments.

There will likely be some necessary contraction for FY 21 as well, but I caution about using reserve funds (i.e. stabilization accounts) or unreserved free cash for re-occurring municipal cost. We also discussed the DPW budget consolidation.

School Committee Invitation : Superintendent Young has extended an invitation and I have accepted to discuss the FY20 budget on Monday, March 4. I understand there is a great deal of concern related to the amount available and the causal effect to the schools.

There will be no disagreement from me that there is significant evidence of need for a larger increase. I can say it was my sincere hope earlier on in the process there would more general fund available to ease the pain the budgetary realities tend to create. The bottom line is, over the last six years I have tried allocate as much as possible to the school budget side. I would say the Selectboard and Town Meeting has always shown support for that approach, as education is a top priority for them as well.

However, it is critical we have a budget which is interdependent when it comes to predicted reoccurring revenues and reoccurring costs. Using URFC to plug holes now would likely make the matters more difficult in future years, unless there is a concrete plan to correct over a year. There is nothing I can see in the immediate future which would make sense to such an approach.

Bartholomew Investments ; On a brighter note our investment portfolio has recovered over the last 45 days and has now topped \$20 million for the first time, from what I can tell, in history. This is including \$5 plus million of SHELD funds. While this does not include the approximately \$1.2 million in OPEB, it does include all stabilization accounts, scholarship endowments and enterprise retained earnings.

Treasurer/ Collector Donna Whiteley and I recently met with Dory Huard, our advisor from Bartholomew, and did express concerns about what is on the horizon from an economic perspective. To protect against a "recession" we would be looking at some funds which are meant to combat the effects of such a market condition.

Officer Dominick 's Last Day ; After more than 30 years of police work Mark Dominick is leaving the South Hadley Police Department. Having been involved in almost every facet of police work he leaves respected by the citizens and his colleagues alike. The esteem in which he is held by his fellow officers was on display as people came from near and far on his last day to honor his service. Selectboard Member Cyr was on hand to wish him well on behalf of the SB. Best of luck Mark!



South Hadley/Granby Chamber of Commerce ; I had the pleasure of meeting with Michelle Theroux (Berkshire Hills) and Steve Laplante (Laplante Realtors), as the co-chairs of the SoHa/Granby Chamber. The Chamber is re-tooling and re-inventing the organization. I was very encouraged and inspired by what I heard.

They are looking to be a more responsive and involved organization in terms of local government. We discussed the possibility of having a more productive dialogue on matters which concern government and business, particularly thinking about regulations, policies or bylaws. They hope to outline what may be unnecessary impediments to growth of South Hadley businesses. I appreciate their outreach and their desire to forge such a partnership of thought to benefit the community as whole.

April 26 Professional Development ; I know it seems like it is two months ahead, because it is, but I wanted to make sure you were aware of some of the exciting changes coming for the spring professional development day.

As I have mentioned we will be closed all day on Friday, April 26 to accommodate this event. However, we will not have a "summer" ProDev half day, as is our normal schedule.

This will be quite a change as there will be training sessions in the morning which will be different and innovative in the municipal space. Female employees will take a two-hour RAD

class. This class is gender specific according to the curriculum requirements. It will run from 9:30 until 11:30 and will provide the participants with defense skills designed for women. I fully understand why this class needs to be gender specific. There are nearly 40 female employees who have already expressed interest in participating.

Their male colleagues will go golfing for the morning ... kidding! For the male employees, we will be led in some group exercise by Tom Schiff on how we can better understand the “#metoo” movement. The avoidance of risk has a fundamental component to have persons understand just how that risk may manifest itself in our everyday life - having male employees have the opportunity to ask questions, explore concerns and generally become more aware of their actions and how their words or actions may affect their female colleagues. There will be 20 employees participating in this training.

The afternoon will be about technologies and platforms we have invested in and how they may make our work easier or how it may allow the public to access information more fluidly. This is important as well, but I can say I think the morning, as planned out by ATA Wolowicz, is one of the most innovative uses of PD time we have witnessed. I am extremely excited about this PD.

ADA Plan Kickoff ; The Assessment and Implementation Plan has begun. The team was in this past Wednesday, all day. While their complete report will not be received until mid-summer, we had the opportunity to see firsthand how these barriers innocently diminish accessibility.

There are some very basic steps we can take to improve access, but we also have some difficult obstacles. The age of the building and the period in which it was built stands as a challenge. We will start to incorporate some of the suggestions in advance of the report being received and will make accommodations as best as we can for employees and visitors. They will be assessing all public buildings including the schools over the next several months.

We recently had a request for an accessible portable toilet at the town farm. I am happy to report Rec Director Rogers got right on it and all our portable units will be accessible units for the spring of 2019, including the town farm.

Hampshire County Health Insurance Trust : The proposed design plan changes were seeking final approval from the Hampshire Council of Governments this week, and we will likely be receiving official word early next week.

The Town of South Hadley will work as quickly as it can to convene the PEC, initiate the bargaining, and complete the process required by MGL. It is my sincere desire to make this as painless as possible for all parties.

Had this undesirable step of changing the plan had not been taken, as Selectboard members are painfully aware, there would be a sizable hole in the already tight budget. Again, thank you for your leadership in allowing the pathway to change.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael J. Sullivan

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