

Andrea Miles, Chair  
Jeff Cyr, Vice-Chair  
Christopher Geraghty, Clerk  
Sarah Etelman  
Bruce Forcier

Michael J. Sullivan  
Town Administrator

May 3, 2019

Honorable Selectboard,

Please accept this report as an abridged version of the activities we have been addressing in Town over the last several weeks.

It is a time in the municipal calendar when everything seems to spring to life, and this year is no exception. As always we sincerely appreciate the support and guidance you offer.

**Appropriations Meeting, Appropriations Hearing** ; Since our last SB Meeting I have attended a meeting and participated and presented at a hearing for Appropriations. I cannot say enough about the hard work and diligence this board puts in to consider the budget and in particularly guide the finances of South Hadley.

In reading their report to Town Meeting I would surmise they feel confident their concerns as expressed in the meetings and most recent hearing have been addressed to a level of satisfaction appropriate for their duties. I would encourage everyone to check out the online "Budget Book." Thank you Lynn and Bill!

The Appropriations Chair Tom Terry, as always, takes his responsibility seriously and approaches the analysis of the budget and related financial picture like the TOSH was a client. The other members approach the task with similar zeal. Their advice and counsel has helped immensely to keep South Hadley in a fair fiscal position.

This is not to say there are not significant challenges ahead. The budget as presented is a reasonable approach to balancing the cost of services with the need to invest in infrastructure and equipment. Thank you to the Appropriation's Committee for their work and patience.

**Municipal Vulnerability Grant** ; Thank you to Governor Baker's Office for offering a grant opportunity to address the challenges presented to local government in respect to climate change.

The change in weather patterns and particularly in hydrology have made a significant impact in South Hadley. Streams and ponds forming where we have never seen them before, trees just falling over from the roots due to saturated soil, and basements flooding that never saw a drop of water before. TOSH is seeing an unprecedented number of crumbling streets and sidewalks far before their time, costing taxpayers money in numerous ways.

Thank you to Anne Capra in particular and Richard Harris for navigating the grant process successfully (although we do not have our official letter). The focus of our planning grant will be on the rising water tables. One of the helpful and well-thought-out parts of this grant program is there will be applicable money to follow when a community identifies the problems and then can actually address it by way of capital infrastructure improvements, education or both.

**Clean Water Forum :** On Saturday, April 27 District 1 Water Superintendent Jeff Cyr and District 2 Water Superintendent Mark Aiken host MWRA's Steve Estes-Smargiassi to discuss the high quality water entering homes in South Hadley (through the pipes, not the basement wall). While it was unfortunately sparsely attended, I would encourage residents to pick it up on SHCTV.

It was very informative as both superintendents detailed their sources and processes for ensuring high quality water to your door. They also discussed the issues facing residents in respect to old plumbing which had higher concentrations of lead and copper. The bottom line is if you think there is a problem call your respective district and they can help you get you good information or testing.

**TA Warrant Article Presentation ;** There was a wonderful four hours of discussion on May 1 of the 36 Articles (STM 8 ATM 28) to be considered on May 8 by Town Meeting. The attendance and commitment by Town Meeting Members makes this a better community in so many ways.

The questions asked that evening and the week before at the TA/Appropriations Committee roadshow indicate the interest and growing understanding of the TMMs. This is also reflected in the email questions I get from members regularly.

There was a robust discussion about feeding wildlife which if nothing else hopefully will make people aware they should not do so. I encourage all citizens to go to the Mass Wildlife web page to hear and see more about the dangers of trying to domesticate skunks or trash pandas. The issue is something we in town hall know is a problem and look for your assistance in finding a way to keep people safe.

It goes without saying there was a lot of debate on the planning articles. One thing that stood out in my mind was that a great deal of work and thought went into them with the sole intent of making South Hadley a better community. Thank you all for sharing your thoughts and for caring about your town.

**New Moderator Orientation ;** Moderator John Hine held a "New Town Meeting Member Orientation" just prior to my presentation on May 1. He did a nice job of covering the mysteries of Town Meeting.

There were a number of new members in attendance and I believe both new and old members appreciated his easy and open approach. As approaches to Town Meetings differ from town to town it becomes readily apparent there is a wide legal swath of acceptable ways to approach this time honored democratic form of government.

The Moderator is available for questions by email at [jhine@southhadley.ma.gov](mailto:jhine@southhadley.ma.gov) I encourage Town Meeting Members to reach out to the Moderator with any Town Meeting related questions. I wish John every success in his role as Moderator.

**Dog Park Update** ; There is much to report here. I did have the opportunity to meet with Brenda Mathieu and Jen Cullen who have taken over much of the responsibilities for the Friends of The South Hadley Dog Park (FOSHDP) from former FOSHDP President Bob Berwick. We discussed and agreed on the enormous foundational work Bob and Sue Kelsey have done to get this project wagging its tail. To abandon their work and start ab ovo would have been unwise and likely sent this initiative asunder.

SOUTH HADLEY DOG PARK  
 CONCEPT 3  
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Jen and Brenda renewed my confidence in the FOSHDP to successfully raise the necessary funds to sustain the management of the dog park. They now report having more than \$12K which I believe will be sufficient to operate and maintain the park through the autumn of 2022 (if built this year). I share their confidence regarding more donations being made and fundraising opportunities being created once the park is operational.

Both of these residents bring different constituencies to the table, an impressive number of contacts and a renewed enthusiasm to the effort. They also fully embrace and understand the importance of the commitment made to Town Meeting and the Selectboard to have this be a revenue neutral venture for South Hadley.

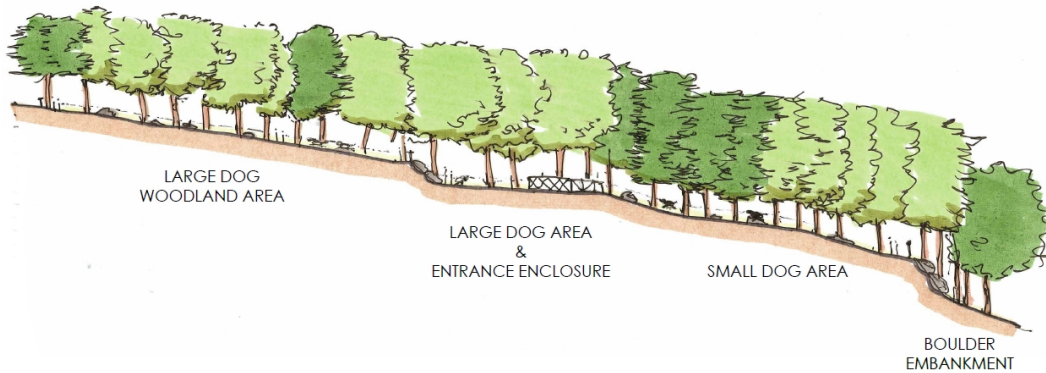
I also meet separately with Doug Serrill from Berkshire Design about the change in positioning of the park on Mulligan Drive (moved to the North side). While this is a bit smaller concept, it does avoid possible interference with the driving range, avoids wetlands, allows sufficient buffers from the neighbors and creates a more interesting play space for the large dogs in

SOUTH HADLEY DOG PARK  
 CONCEPTUAL SECTION  
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particular. The design team has done an excellent job incorporating the terrain and the sloping topography into their latest renderings.

We can expect a completed design by late May which will allow the Selectboard to make a decision on the possibility



of proceeding to seek a construction grant application from the Stanton Foundation. I did make it clear the Town of South Hadley is not likely to consider any tax dollar investment other than the original commitment of \$30K. In plain language the project has to be less than or no more than \$221K as set by the predicted grant receipt.

**Professional Development Day** : This was the first time we attempted a full day of development. I want to thank ATA Jennifer Wolowicz, HR/Payroll Manager Michelle Parent and Health Director Sharon Hart for their involvement.

In the morning session our female colleagues participated in a RAD Course (self-defense) for two hours at the same time the male employees participated in a Me & #MeToo! Seminar. I cannot tell you how the RAD class went, other than I have a heightened sense of fear, but the “Me” class was well done by facilitator Tom Schiff.

It was meant to and succeeded in making me and hopefully the other men in municipal employ aware of our role and need to evolve in a changing workplace. I understand there are those people who say this is going too far. I would suggest if we can make the workplace better for all and try to avoid some costly missteps, we as a community are better for the effort.

In the afternoon session we worked with Sarah Webber from ClearGov to learn more about that platform and how we may use it to our advantage internally and how we may increase transparency for our constituents through this product. It is especially handy this time of year to better understand the finances.



ClearGov is introducing a number of new features. However our main focus is to drive more people to use the platform before any expansion or addition of features (all have an added cost).

**Town Counsel Meeting**; On Friday, April 25 following the Quarterly Professional Development Day Atty. Lisa Mead and her labor associate Atty. Kate Federoff met with department managers and other key staff who normally access legal advice from Town Counsel.

Clerk Hamlin, Town Accountant Sutton, Recreation Director Rogers, Treasurer/Collector Whiteley, Chief Gunderson and others met with the firm’s representatives to generally discuss the protocol for engaging counsel and their areas of expertise. I unfortunately had to leave to go to PEC bargaining in the SB Meeting Room, but there was an open conversation about the usual things we face in South Hadley, as well as some of the more unusual things we are tasked with addressing. None of our experiences were completely dissimilar to the knowledge base held by Mead Talerman Costa.



After the session ATA Wolowicz and HR/Payroll Manager Michelle Parent met with Atty. Federoff (labor) to discuss some of the specific issues the Town of South Hadley is facing in that realm. At the same time Building Commissioner Gardner, Conservation Administrator/Associate nner Capra, Town Planner Harris, Health Director Hart and (eventually) I met with Atty. Mead to fully discuss some of the issues which are at top of our community mind. This included a very detailed conversation about legal parameters which board and commission members need to stay inside ofPla when

considering applications or requests. This is necessary in order

After the session finished up I believe all had a better understanding of the firm and an increased confidence in their ability to represent and serve the town and its professional managers.

**PEC:** Just a quick update - while a majority of the units expressed interest in settling on a distribution model, the SHEA president was unable to agree whether the \$38, 233 should be sent by check, deducted from their first premium or sent to a third party to administer. The president did ask to have additional years added to the reimbursement, given that is not required by the law (32B chapter 21-22) and that both the employees and town will enjoy the reduced annual increase in premiums which is due to the design plan changes. To offer more than is required would create a particularly unfair position for the taxpayers. I also pointed out it would only make the budget challenge the schools are now facing worse and may cause more lay-offs and cuts.

This unfortunate turn of events will put the issue before a “Three Person Panel” from the state and will cost the town and the unions money for the third party to be appointed. It is truly unfortunate for all.

**SEC;** I recently met with John Howard to review ideas and progress for the Sustainable Energy Committee. The most important issue at hand is they would like to attract some new members for the June appointment cycle.

The committee continues to work toward a “Green Communities” designation and has some great ideas as to how we can become a more sustainable community. Anyone who is interested in being part of that local movement should go to [the town website and apply](#) to be appointed.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael J. Sullivan  
Town Administrator, South Hadley