

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

Michael J. Sullivan
Town Administrator

Friday the 13th of 2019

Honorable Selectboard,

Please accept this abridged accounting of the activities and projects to which I and the dedicated employees who work for the Town of South Hadley have been allocating efforts over the last two weeks.

Thank you for your interest and guidance in these matters.

Capital Planning; Safety, Health and Facilities Coordinator Matt Cowie was introduced to the committee last evening. I outlined Matt's responsibilities and how he would help to facilitate the Capital Planning Committee.

He presented his observation at this early stage of issues and challenges for various public buildings, including the schools. There was an expanded conversation on Mosier School challenges regarding the portable (although I would not want to be tasked with moving them) classrooms, including the precarious hallway conditions leading to the building from the school. These structures continue to limp along far past their intended life.

The committee also reviewed the list of projects and equipment reported out at the last Annual Town Meeting as part of the bond issuance. I would have to say even though there is progress on most, it has exactly been at a tantivy pace.

I relayed to Capital Planning Committee that at this point in the process I have no formal requests for the committee to consider any existing or new request which would call for capital to review. The upcoming ADA report was also deliberated upon as I conveyed there would likely be a number of items related to the final report which would require Capital Planning discussion.

Western Mass Economic Development Plan Committee ; Associate Planner Anne Capra did an outstanding job at presenting South Hadley's annual economic outlook to the group. The PowerPoint was concise and touched on all the important areas of interest. Her delivery was excellent.

There was a consensus familiarity with the Village Commons among all the regional attendees. Many commented how much they enjoy various restaurants, shops and the general feel of the property. The Village Commons clearly is a regional draw for the town.

There was also information given for the Woodlawn area's developments, the route 33 and 202 corridor, and the Falls URRP. The mixed housing at the Park at Woodlawn was recognized as a need for the Pioneer Valley and similar to other efforts in other towns.

The item which caused the most excitement was the “dog park.” There were communities represented from all four western counties and they were like a “dog on a bone” - pardon the reference - in respect to the park. Some mentioned how dog parks in their communities were a great success and other were envious of the model and design.

Either way it was another great opportunity to have some external exposure for the Town of South Hadley which is important to lay the ground work for developers who may be shopping the region. Isolationism is the enemy of regionalization - you have to show up to be seen.

Regional Age Friendly Committee ; COA Director Leslie Hennessey, Planner Anne Capra and I joined Chicopee Mayor Kos and other colleagues from Holyoke, Chicopee and South Hadley who are working on Age and Dementia Friendly Plan. The plan is still in “draft” form, but is available for anyone interested. (see Selectboard web page)

The primary focus was to discuss the results from the surveys, meetings and other demographic data which was compiled by Pioneer Valley Planning Commission as part of their work.

It was not surprising one of South Hadley’s citizens’ favorite attributes of the Town of South Hadley is the “open space” according to the open forum session held on March 27, 2019 and it is reflected by the fact South Hadley has a 23.2% open space slightly more than Holyoke (20%), more than the state average (18%) and more than what was listed for Chicopee (7.6%). I asked the Chicopee 7.6% representatives if that was correct, as it is surprisingly low. It may have something to do with how Westover is considered in data related to open space.

We discussed the possibility of all three communities working together on a grant which may result in increasing transportation options in a shared manner, including “weekend” ride service. This is a great example of working across boundaries to enhance services and controlling costs. We also will look how we may cooperatively enhance or create new senior services together.

Future Project Borrowing; Treasurer/Collector Whiteley, Town Accountant William Sutton, Bond Advisor David Eisenthal and I recently met to discuss strategies for borrowing needs leading into calendar year 2020.

As suspected the chief driver for borrowing is the Senior Center project. You may recall we had conversations about timing of the notes. We have now decided based on updated cash flow projections from the OPM and cash on-hand patterns internally we likely will be able to wait until January to ask the Selectboard to issue short term bonds.

We have started to gear up for a larger borrowing in July which would be a significant portion of the \$9.8 million approved by Town Meeting to be borrowed for the Senior Center project. We will have more definitive schedule for the long and short term borrowing by late October. Having the borrowing in January will lessen the effect on tax rates for FY20.

On a related note I have had discussions with the COA Director Leslie Hennessey whether the Senior Center Building Committee and the Council on Aging is ready to ask Town Meeting to

allocate the approximately \$1 million in the Senior Center Stabilization Fund to the actual project.

The stated use of those funds will be important to know. It has become clear the present iteration of the design will require all the funding sources. If Town Meeting was to vote in the contrary the planning committee and the design team will have to know now and make adjustments, some of which I imagine would be painful. At this juncture I do not have a formal request from the Senior Center Planning Committee to develop request in the form of a warrant, but I expect it soon.

September 18th Legal Seminar; As of this date we have over 30 people signed up for the Legal Forum scheduled for September 18, hosted by the Selectboard. This has become a very popular item, so much so some members of the Districts' government have asked and have been granted attendance (it is open to the public).

There is a need to remind attendees and interested parties about the focus on "chairs" of committees. One may worry this forum getting hijacked by some into a "legal opinion free-for-all" where different individuals are trying to get to granular on detailed issues which affect their specific committee. However, I have great confidence in Atty. Mead and Chair Miles in respect to keeping it on track and focusing on the broader subject matter.

The primary emphasis is to enhance committee members' understanding, especially where each of those bodies derive their charge. Is it by-laws, state law or other regulations? Does each chair adhere to Open Meeting law? Does each have a confident understanding of those laws? Does the board committee stay in its lane? The forum will also review conflict of interest and public records law.

Joint Labor Management Mediation; This is to inform you and the public we have had our first fact finding meeting with the Joint Labor Management Commission field rep. As all of these proceeding are under executive privileged there is not much else I can add, other than we look forward to an amicable resolution with the South Hadley Police Union MCP Local 428. We will meet again by the end of September.

South Hadley Internal Trash Team; The internal group met and had an excellent discussion about possible issues with each likely proposal or scenario. Cost is the central issue. We are likely to see some hefty increases in tipping fees in our next contract according to industry trends. This will be acerbated by the dramatically changing world of recycling.

I hope to have more information before the Selectboard for the October 1 meeting. There are more moving parts than one would expect.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael J. Sullivan
Town Administrator, South Hadley

