

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

February 2, 2020

Honorable Selectboard,

Please accept this abridged version of the activities and projects I and other municipal employees have been working on over the past couple of weeks. As always, we are thankful for your support and interest in these matters and others related to making South Hadley a community of pride!

Solid Waste and Recycling Forum: There is growing interest in the upcoming Saturday, Feb. forum (Town hall auditorium, 10 a.m.) designed to inform the public on the quickly evolving market for recycling and how that is affecting solid waste costs not only for South Hadley but for the entire northeast and beyond.

The forum will help shape the citizen understanding of the issue and hopefully give a general insight of the increased cost, challenges, and the need for all of us to change certain habits and practices.

It has become very clear there must be a new and exceptionally bold approach in terms of not only reducing consumption, but also allocating costs for collection equitably to meet the public need. This will require new policies which may raise concerns or questions going forward. This forum is intended to allow critical input into the formation of those policies in advance.

The Town of South Hadley is facing the significant changes in the recycling market at the same time the municipal contract with our trash hauler contract with Republic ends on June 30, 2020. The Selectboard has taken a sensible and forward-thinking approach by starting discussions about how the change in recycling, the contract issue, and how the present trash and recycling policies are working for the community. The question that remains is how the system should be adjusted to be a fair, cost effective and multi-year strategy for all.

The Selectboard began discussing this problem in May of 2019. It became apparent early on that the present rate schedule would not be sustainable. After exhausting all other reasonable possibilities, the annual fee for trash was raised by 83 cents per month, or, \$10 annually. The SB also started the process of reviewing the "Green Bag" program to determine if that still works as intended for the town, whether it is priced appropriately, and/or if there are other alternatives or innovations which would better serve residents. I know there are those who say it does not have to be this complicated or costly.... I truly wish they were right.

The cost of trash and recycling for households in communities across the Commonwealth is suggested to rise as much as 60%. I applaud the SB for their diligence. Vice Chair Cyr, Member Forcier and I were appointed by Chair Miles to a sub-committee to meet with major haulers and attend meetings throughout the region and state to learn more about the looming challenges.

This sub-committee was preceded by a group of employees who met to discuss and debate the present model and other systems in other communities. A report was delivered to the SB from this group in September and is available on the website.

The sub-committee has met with Waste Management, USA, Casella and our present provider Republic. These four are the leading trash contractors in this region. It should be noted this industry has been consolidating at a pace reminiscent of the cable provider industry of the 70s. Smaller operations continue to be cannibalized by larger groups leaving less competition, while at the same time regulations on disposal and recycling are becoming more and more stringent/costly. We continue to sift through how these factors, along with other industry internal and external pressures, are contributing to the meteoric rise in costs and how we may best effectuate a slowing of those increases.

We also have collectively attended tutorials and info sessions in Springfield, Northampton, at PVPC and most recently in the office of the Holyoke mayor (love what they have done with the place) with representatives from N'hamp to explore recycling alternatives as dual stream communities in a sub-regional joint effort. There were several conversations had by all at the recent MMA conference in Boston with vendors, colleagues from other towns, and state officials.

Hopefully, all the parties affected by this (which is everyone) consider the issue and if possible, attend the forum or other wise make their feelings known about the issue of trash. The forum on Saturday, Feb. 8 in the town hall auditorium at 10 a.m. is a prime opportunity to voice your opinion.

The time and effort the SB and particularly the sub-committee members are dedicating to this critical issue is commendable. I can tell you leaders in other communities have not been as engaged, and I believe that will be a mistake for those communities in the long run.

Town Administrator Search Process: Chair Miles appointed a sub-committee at a recent SB meeting to begin developing a strategy to find a new TA for the Town of South Hadley. Clerk Geraghty, Member Etelman and I were appointed, and the committee has begun its work of meeting with experts in the municipal recruitment field.

It should be clarified my role in the search for a future TA is only facilitative and administrative for the purposes of developing the strategy. The SB is acutely aware they are responsible by way of the Acts of 2012 Chapter 458 for the final decision on process and appointment of the town administrator. My role is assisting in finding process options for the SB to consider.

I have expressed to the sub-committee and to the members of the Selectboard I will make myself available in respect to future needs, including temporarily assisting the incoming TA once the person is chosen and/or accommodating their schedule of arrival.

The present contract I have with the Town of South Hadley is set to expire June 30, 2021 (17 months away). The SB should be commended for not waiting for the final months to start exploring methods for recruitment. It speaks to their forward thinking and thoughtful planning on such matters. I cannot overstate how lucky the next TA will be to work for the Town of South Hadley. It is a wonderful (although not perfect) community!

Officer Karl Kapinos Swearing-In: Chair Miles and Vice Chair Cyr were on hand to witness the swearing-in of Officer Karl Kapinos as a South Hadley Police Officer by Clerk Hamlin.

Chief Gundersen was in attendance as well and made remarks expressing her gratitude for the support her department receives from the Selectboard and the community at large.

Officer Kapinos was born and raised in South Hadley. He has most recently been a police officer in Hampton, New Hampshire. Welcome home, Officer Kapinos.



Professional Development Day: On Friday, Jan. 31, town hall staff and others from across the municipal complex came together for a day of training and info sharing. This PD Day was different than those in the past in terms of the format. In past seminars we relied heavily on outside presenters to deliver a message on a specific subject matter. With this one we learned from within - something we have not done as much as we should, as there is a wealth of knowledge inside the TH walls.

In the morning session Clerk Hamlin brought the group up to date on Census 2020 and the critical importance of the decennial federally required exercise. Clerk Hamlin touched on the difference between the annual local census through the clerk's office, which South Hadley is doing now (get those forms in if you have not already) and the upcoming Census 2020, as an every 10- year decennial census, starting April 1.

Her presentation included how the information collected is protected, why it is important to cities and towns, how this is a constitutional requirement, and where to go to get additional information (<https://www.2020census.gov/>) if needed.

As you are aware, transportation, road, infrastructure (sewer, water), education, housing, senior service, disaster relief and more depend on federal funding on which the census is foundational. The more accurate the count in South Hadley the better we will fare in accessing those federal grants and entitlements. I would add that all state grants also rely on demographics gleaned from the federal census.

We ask all citizens to participate and advocate to family, friends, neighbors and colleagues to fill out the information requested of them when the forms start to arrive by April 1. Your efforts will benefit South Hadley for the years to come.

At PD Day we also did a small group exercise which allowed members of various departments to come together in a more intimate setting to learn more about each other's duties and challenges. Each group was tasked with coming up with some ideas and strategies which would benefit the greater good. People seemed to enjoy it and came up with solid ideas as to how we may accomplish our collective mission in

servicing the people of South Hadley.



This dovetailed nicely into the afternoon presentation by Associate Planner/Conservation Administrator Anne Capra on the Master Plan Update and Open Space and Recreation Plan. We were pleased to have MPIC Chair Judith Gooch and Vice Chair Nate Therein present at the training. Capra did a wonderful job covering the purpose of the update and how the employees' voice could be heard in the final product. It was

a very interesting day of learningat least for me. I thank you for allowing us to have these PD events three times a year and for the participants input and attendance.

Budget FY 21: We continue to make progress on the FY 21 budget, not as swiftly as I had hoped, but I believe we will have a draft for the next SB meeting to begin deliberation. I have suggested to Appropriations Chair Tom Terry any time after Feb. 18 would be helpful to meet with his committee and get their input and guidance.

I have had about a half dozen meetings with managers about the FY 21 budget and I expect to have another dozen or so in the next two weeks. The schools have received some good news from the Governor about additional \$600K in his budget for the South Hadley Public Schools. This infusion of state money is greatly appreciated, but as we all are aware the Governor's budget has a long and winding trail before it comes to final form. I continue to work to find any financial help we may be able to provide from the municipal side of the ledger for the schools.

Last week the Hampshire Health Insurance Trust Insurance Advisory Committee voted for a 0% increase for July 1, 2020. This was great news for the Town of South Hadley employee and the municipal budgets. As the GIC is suggesting a 4.8% increase and other communities are facing 14% or more increases for health insurance, I am thankful not to have to deal with that size of an increase. I would suggest the full

effects of the design plan changes have not been completely realized but suffice to say without those relatively small changes an increase would be inevitable. Oh yeah - acupuncture procedures will now be covered by the plan with no additional increase to premiums.

If you or your constituents have any specific questions or suggestions on the budget, I would encourage they call. I would be happy to discuss ideas. It is always helpful to hear that input early in the process.

Master Plan Updated: The small group meeting with department managers and key personnel have been completed and I have submitted my observations and opinions to MPIC, as have most to the requested parties. In my suggestions I included an idea to create a Council of Chairs which would meet annually or as needed to annually develop strategies for boards and committees to review the progress, individually and collectively, that the Town of South Hadley is making to reach those goals and objectives of the Master Plan. I know there were some discussion of trying to have the SB be responsible for directing that task, but I feel it would be unfair for the SB to be held responsible for the diligence or success of other boards and commissions, particularly duly elected bodies. The Council of Chairs may be something to be considered as a bylaw.

As a caveat I would recommend there not be a rush to establish any bylaws which may be spawned by the update for the upcoming ATM, but wait until such time as sufficient public debate and discourse can occur to help form a well-thought-out and sensible bylaw.

Thank you for your support and guidance.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael J. Sullivan
South Hadley Town Administrator