

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

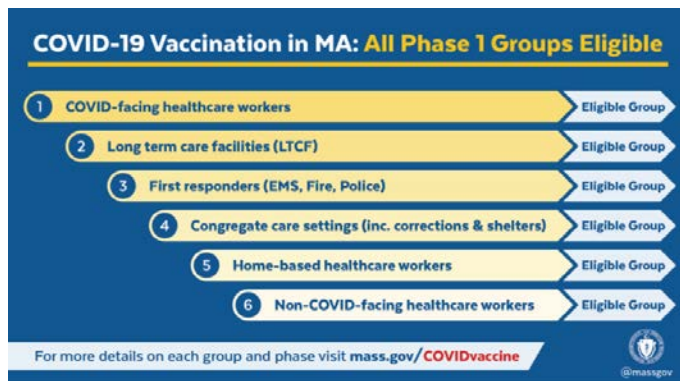
Michael J. Sullivan
 Town Administrator

**Report to the South Hadley Selectboard January 28, 2021
 from Town Administrator Michael Sullivan**

COVID 19 Update;

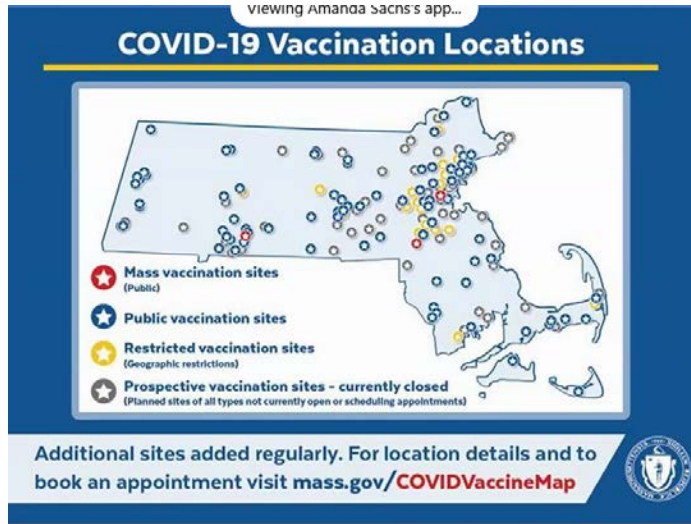
There have been more questions about vaccines and there is, as you may suspect, plenty of misinformation and plenty of unknowns. We strongly encourage everyone to go to the link below to get information. You may have to check back several times as the directives keep changing....I get it it....it is frustrating for us as well. However, everyone is doing the best they can to piece together strategies with the few puzzle pieces they actually have in their possession.

I was on a call with DPH Secretary Mary Lou Sudders Monday evening and it was clear they certainly were doing their best at creating a complete picture of the future, but I think they would readily admit they were missing puzzle pieces. For instance, a mass vaccination center was opening at the Eastfield Mall, but they were not sure how many vaccinations, if any, they would be available to administer.



Phase 1 was completely open for eligible categories (see box to left), yet half of those eligible had not received a first shot, nor was there a supply assigned to this group. There is mounting pressure from the public by the shortage of vaccines, and I can assure you locally we will do everything possible to obtain vaccines for TOSH residents.

The Town of South Hadley, as part of the Hampshire County Health Preparedness Coalition, will be initially offering vaccines (when available) through that partnership. There will be a mass vaccination center in Amherst and Northampton. For more details and/or to make an appointment go to www.amherstcovid19.org in Amherst or <http://www.northamptonma.gov/vaccineclinics> in Northampton. Or you can call the South Hadley COA 413 538 5042 for more information. When and if dose supply becomes more plentiful, the Health Department is prepared to have local clinics to distribute vaccines. However, do not wait. Use the resources available as described to get a shot in the arm as soon as possible.



Here is a map of vaccine sites throughout the Commonwealth. The ones depicted in yellow are presently not for the public but are for frontline workers.

If you go to the link offered at the beginning of this report you will find it to be interactive. If you click on one of the dots on the screen it will give you the location and other contact information for that site.

You will find some familiar names like CVS, Walgreens, Big Y, WalMart and Stop & Shops with pharmacies that will be offering vaccines, but again, they can only administer what they receive.

The following link will give you more details on the vaccine’s availability and mapping.

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-vaccine-locations-for-individuals-in-phase-1#find-a-location-to-get-vaccinated-if-eligible->

It's SAFE

The available COVID-19 Vaccines are approved and recommended by the FDA and CDC.

By prioritizing resources and efforts, the vaccines were developed quickly and **never** at the expense of safety.

mass.gov/COVIDVaccinePhases
SWIPE >>>

It's FREE

The COVID-19 vaccine is being administered **free of charge** to all individuals by the federal government.

No insurance is required.

mass.gov/COVIDVaccinePhases
SWIPE >>>

Other FAQs are available on mass.gov/covidvaccine

Is the vaccine safe?

- **Yes. The vaccine is safe.**
- Vaccines go through more testing than any other pharmaceuticals, including extensive testing in clinical trials
- The FDA, which approves the vaccine, and the CDC’s Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), reviewed data to ensure the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines are both safe and effective
- The infectious disease leads in the state’s academic medical centers also reviewed the EUA data for both vaccines and provided an independent opinion about their safety and efficacy and recommended their use

What will the vaccine cost?

- The vaccine is being provided free of charge to all individuals
- There is no cost to the individual.
- Insurance companies will not charge any out-of-pocket fees or co-payments related to COVID-19 vaccine administration
- All health care provider sites that receive vaccine must agree to not charge patients out-of-pocket fees or deny anyone vaccination

If you have health insurance you will be asked for the information. Your insurance will be billed for the administration of the vaccine. The cost of the vaccine will be paid for by the federal government. There is no “co-pay” for the vaccine. This is true if you (when available) get the shot in your primary care physicians office. We are told vaccines will eventually be available to local doctors to give to their patients, as well!

This week’s tabulation (see top on next page) of cases in South Hadley. As you can see, with 39

cases in the last seven days as opposed to 64 confirmed cases the week prior, there are indications we are seeing a slight easing of the spread. Every credible expert attributes this to people abiding by the guidelines - Wear a Mask, Social Distance, Wash your Hands, Avoid Gatherings of 10 or more - likely playing a larger part in the post-holiday calendar to the leveling of the viral increases.

If you have been watching the news recently you are probably aware of the more virulent strains which experts are suggesting could increase the spread, and in respect to the Brazilian or South African strains could be more deadly. This all should strongly encourage each of us to re-double our efforts to do our part to fight this war!

LBOH Count - Events Per Disease and Classification in Jurisdiction					
Classification: confirmed,contact,probable,suspect					
Event Dates 03/01/2020 to 01/27/2021					
Jurisdiction selected: SOUTH HADLEY					
Disease	Status	Cases	1/19/21	1/12/21	1/5/2021
Novel Coronavirus	CONFIRMED	744	705	641	582
Novel Coronavirus	CONTACT	560	535	514	496
Novel Coronavirus	PROBABLE	38	37	36	34
Novel Coronavirus	SUSPECT	18	17	18	18

As you can see to the right, after several weeks in the “red” South Hadley has moved to the “yellow.” I would suggest it is not as sunny as you would suspect. First if you notice we are at 4.28% positivity rate. That is the number of positive cases over the number of tests given to South Hadley residents. With Mount Holyoke giving everyone two test a week (good thing) it does skew the numbers and if you look at rates in the summer when SoHa was hovering around 1.3% consistently it is less impressive and suggests we need to remain diligent. All that said, I will take a day in the sun during a winter of discontent anytime!



Massachusetts Department of Public Health COVID-19 Dashboard – Thursday, January 21, 2021
Count and Rate of Confirmed COVID-19 Cases and Tests Performed in MA by City/Town, January 1, 2020 – January 19, 2021

City/Town	Total Case Count	Case Count (Last 14 Days)	Average Daily Incidence Rate per 100,000 (Last 14 days) ¹	Relative Change in Case Counts ²	Total Tests	Total Tests (Last 14 days)	Total Positive Tests (Last 14 days)	Percent Positivity (Last 14 days)	Change in Percent Positivity ³
Somerset	1491	243	93.7	Lower	22713	2435	276	11.33%	Lower
Somerville	3973	602	56.8	Lower	285478	19371	686	3.54%	Lower
South Hadley	706	115	45.4	Lower	29161	3104	133	4.28%	Lower
Southampton	254	52	61.7	Lower	7248	884	66	7.47%	Lower
Southborough	327	44	32.5	Lower	19531	2129	47	2.21%	Lower
Southbridge	1292	267	113.7	Higher	19847	2365	307	12.98%	Lower
Southwick	365	56	40.8	Lower	9191	893	65	7.28%	Lower
Spencer	575	108	67.3	Lower	13235	1304	115	8.82%	Lower
Springfield	14157	2146	98.1	Lower	225339	24141	2583	10.70%	Lower
Sterling	509	65	59.4	Lower	12316	1167	67	5.74%	Lower
Stockbridge	56	18	75.4	Lower	2875	480	18	3.75%	Lower
Stoneham	1716	245	78.6	Lower	40972	4612	279	6.05%	Lower
Stoughton	2065	421	108.6	Higher	36441	4835	461	9.53%	Lower
Stow	173	29	28.6	Lower	8708	861	31	3.60%	Lower
Sturbridge	436	102	68.9	Lower	10072	1101	102	9.26%	Lower
Sudbury	545	106	42.5	Higher	25898	3332	117	3.51%	Higher
Sunderland	121	29	55.7	No Change	14318	827	30	3.63%	Lower

Data are current as of 11:59pm on 01/19/2021. For populations <50,000, <5 cases are reported as such or suppressed for confidentiality purposes. ¹ For the calculations used to delineate Grey, Green, Yellow, and Red, please see table on page 24. ² Number of new cases occurring over the current two-week period (1/03/2021 – 01/16/2021) compared to the previous two-week period (12/27/2020 – 01/09/2021). Higher=number of new cases in the current two-week period higher than the number of new cases during the last two-week period. Lower=number of new cases in the current two-week period lower than number of new cases during the last two-week period. No change=number of new cases in current two-week period is equal to the number of new cases during the last two-week period. ³Change in percent positivity compared to the previous week's (1/14/2021) report. No Change= <0.10% difference in the percent positivity. DPH calculates rates per 100,000 population using denominators estimated by the University of Massachusetts Donahue Institute using a modified Hamilton-Perry model (Strate S, et al. Small Area Population Estimates for 2011 through 2020, report, Oct 2016.) As of 11/5/2020, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health is using the 2019 population estimates, the most current available data. Please note: Data for these tables are based on information available in the DPH surveillance database at a single point in time. Case counts for specific cities and towns change throughout the day as data cleaning occurs (removal of duplicate reports within the system) and new demographic information (assigning cases to their city or town of residence) is obtained.

IT Cohort

We have recently formed a technology team to address communications, information and opportunities related to the growing need of cyber acumen. The team is comprised of James Doolittle, our IT Coordinator, Kristin Maher, Executive Assistant to Administration, Dan Pease, Cable Studio Coordinator and Sarah Gmeiner, Assistant Town Clerk (soon to be Senior Center Coordinator). Everyone brings varied and valuable experiences and responsibilities to the group.

The goal is to have an internal, regular centralized discussion around capacity, needs, use, training, innovation, and execution in and around technical challenges or opportunities. We are very aware we need to use the strength of various platforms to better serve the public.

The cohort will meet monthly or more often if necessary to ensure we are cross pollinating ideas from not only these four, but also from the public and their peers. Requests for new platforms, expansion of software or new ways we may use existing tech tools is critical to the future of the community.

This project will explore expanded use of all our tech tools. Including but not limited to Ch. 15, our website, our Twitter and Facebook accounts, CivicReady and other traditional forms of communication. It is part of our continued desire to provide as much information to as many South Hadley residents as reasonably possible.

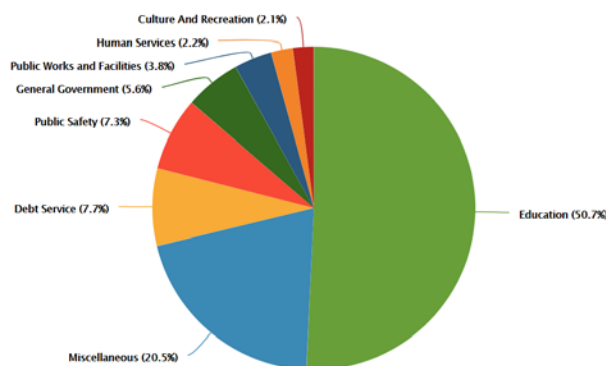
FY 22 Budget Update

The 2022 budget is starting to take shape. I still feel South Hadley is in a very solid position, and with a continued conservative approach to budgeting you will be able to keep it that way. A very smart person once told me “Don’t spend what you don’t have.” It is advice I have always considered in terms of municipal budgeting. Wish I was as attentive in my personal life.

Another important guideline of municipal financing is not to spend non-reoccurring funds on reoccurring expenses. This should include use of Unreserved Free Cash (URFC) in almost every situation. The sensibility is: once it runs out, where do you go the following year when the gap is even larger?

The town also must consider its many capital needs, which in many cases are an appropriate use of URFC. These are items which have a longer life, and you are not specifically seeking replacement of every year. There are many capital needs facing South Hadley which need to be addressed - communication systems for the PD and DPW, a front-end loader, sidewalks, roads and even a police cruiser (you should not replace the same cruiser every year and South Hadley does not consider such a strategy).

There are some changes we are making which should produce savings without affecting service to the community. We have recently made some changes including asking Viv Price, who served as the Assistant Superintendent at the DPW, to transition over to Facilities Coordinator in the administrative suite. He brings incredible work ethic and skill sets to the position, including a technical background and training in workplace safety. We also are moving Assistant Town Clerk Sarah Gmeiner to the Senior Center Coordinator position. She brings talent from previous employment at the Ludlow Senior Center, the knowledge she has gained in the Town Clerk’s Office, impressive tech skills and a very cooperative approach. These changes will allow us to retain very talented, highly skilled individuals and expand service in the areas we need to address. There also are budget savings and expansion avoidance with needed new positions.



If taxpayers would like to know more about how their tax dollars are spent, I would encourage them to take a look at the ClearGov feature on the town’s website. Go to the website, click “I Want To,” then “Access,” then “ClearGov.” The feature also allows you to benchmark against other communities.

There will be a substantial increase in borrowing costs, about \$500K, but it should be noted that increase will be offset by the previous planning which added money in the FY21 budget “Senior

Center Stabilization” account. Essentially that appropriation makes the net effect on Interest and Principal accounts combined of about \$90K.

It is always worth noting that South Hadley strictly adheres to the restrictions of Proposition 2 ½ which limits the growth of taxes by 2.5% annually. If any area of government cannot stay within those parameters, they would need to go to the voters for an operational override. I do not see a need for any such vote and all departments should stay within the funding available - another rule!

Senior Center Project

As recently mentioned at a Selectboard meeting, the project had to be closed down for two weeks as there was a significant outbreak of COVID 19 among the trades on the job. This and other factors will likely impact the scheduled completion.

The public should be confident the Senior Center Building Committee and the OPM (Colliers) is doing everything in its powers to keep this project on schedule. It is a Herculean task to say the least. The public’s patience is important as we all are striving to have a final product that is within budget, as well as a quality product.

The public should know that due to the hard work of many this project is still on track financially, and as previously mentioned, will have very little impact on the budget for FY 22. Thank you!

Commission on Disabilities

The COD has been diligent in prioritizing the ADA needs outlined in the Transition Plan done last year by the Center for Work and Living. The first area of their prioritization is to continue and increase removal for barriers on sidewalks and roads to allow people with mobility challenges to navigate more freely.

The prioritization list has been distributed to various departments and responsible parties to address and or give a progress report on how they are working to eradicate the obstacles to accessibility.

The COD will also be publishing on the town website very soon a survey so they can hear from a broader audience about what they see as barriers throughout the community. It will be circulated through the website. Anyone interested in getting a copy can call or email me, and as soon as it is available I will get it out to you. Please encourage persons with different abilities to participate in the survey as it will greatly help the COD in their work. We should all be thankful they have taken this on as a tremendous task.

Respectfully Submitted,

Michael J. Sullivan
Town Administrator, South Hadley