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Michael J. Sullivan  
 Town Administrator

**Town Administrator 's Report to the Selectboard for February 10, 2021**

**Health Insurance Rates IY 22**

The Hampshire Health Insurance Trust Insurance Advisory Committee recently met virtually to approve a recommendation from the trust’s Executive Committee to reduce premium rates by 2% for the IY 2022 or Insurance Year 2022. IY follow closely a fiscal year in the case of Hampshire Health Insurance Trust (HHIT). MEDEX went down for retirees January 1 by a similar amount.

This is welcomed news for not only the employees, but for the municipality as well. It has allowed me to reduce the health insurance line item in the FY22 budget by \$90K. There may be additional savings depending on hiring practices associated with the schools staffing in FY22.

As a member of the Executive Committee for the trust I was able to see some of the trends on claims (not individually, but collectively) for HHIT. While there was an effect on the rate pressure due to members having less doctor visits, the biggest factor in the changes was really the rise in the investment account. The value has grown another \$7 million from investments and other contributing factors and now stands at about \$29 million. The reduction of premiums will be supported by about \$2 million for IY 22.

Blue Cross/Blue Shield recommended up to a 3% increase in premiums. It might be said if South Hadley were not a member of the trust employees and the municipality would see that increase. It is important to note as most employees do not realize they do not have BC/BS insurance, as BS/BS only provides administration of claims therefore you carry their card. Congratulations to those who back in the 90’s decided to join the trust!

**COVID 19 Update**

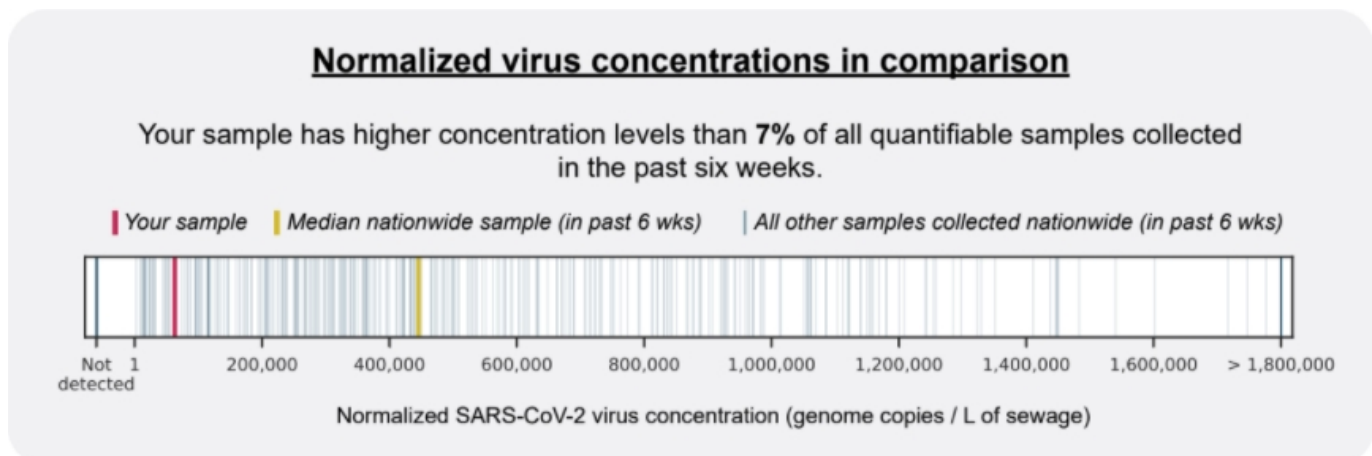
Here are the numbers for the week ending 2/9/21

Disease	Status	2/9/21	2/2/21	1/26/21	1/19/21	1/12/21	1/5/21
Novel Coronavirus	CONFIRMED	807	782	744	705	641	582
Novel Coronavirus	CONTACT	617	588	560	535	514	496
Novel Coronavirus	PROBABLE	46	40	38	37	36	34
Novel Coronavirus	SUSPECT	19	19	18	17	18	18

The good news is we are trending in a good direction, “Confirmed” cases have grown at a slower pace over the last two weeks. The low “Positivity Rate” (February 2<sup>nd</sup> 1.96%) is somewhat due to the 5,000 test performed in South Hadley which the vast majority from MHC. Testing is great, however in this case it may give some a false sense of security. Students at MHC are tested

twice a week as well as staff those numbers are included in the town data by the Commonwealth. The students are required to follow strict guidelines to avoid an outbreak and unlike what is happening at UMass (according to reports in the press) South Hadley has been able to avoid a large outbreak. I thank the MHC students and staff for being such a responsible part of the community.

Below we have the latest BioBot information with more detail on southhadley.org COVID 19 page.



The sampling would support the trend as the trace amounts of viral RNA continue to decrease and we are below the national average. All good indicators, but it can change very rapidly as we learned just a few weeks ago.

**Biobot COVID19 incidence estimate\***

\* using Biobot's current analysis model v2.0, which reflects active R&D and will change over time with developing research

**5 new cases / day**  
(0.04% incidence rate)

Using a reported flow rate of 2.71 MGD

For more information, read the whitepaper:  
<https://doi.org/10.1101/2020.06.15.20117747>

This incidence estimate represents the projected average of **confirmed new clinical cases (per day)** that will be reported in your community 7 days from the sampling date. This estimate reflects active R&D.

This number is derived from Biobot's latest proprietary case model, leveraging thousands of samples analyzed for Covid-19. For context, USAFacts reports **0 new cases** on this sampling date and an average of **46.4 cases** per day for the past 7 days in **Hampshire County, MA.**

Visit our website for more details behind the process:  
<https://www.biobot.io/case-estimates>  
<https://www.biobot.io/updated-model>

We continue to update information about vaccines on the town website as well as through "News and Announcements". The COA is working on establishing a "Vaccine Hotline" which will give basic information about availability and will allow you to leave a message to be called back to answer specific questions. I would like to thank everyone who is working in Town Hall and the COA to get you information as it becomes available. It is encouraging to hear CVS, Walgreens and others will soon be getting vaccines to help in the distribution. It is also being discussed how PCPs will be added to allow another possibility.

### Town Hall Staff Changes

Recently we made a couple of changes which will hopefully improve service without adding any additional personnel costs.

Viv Price is moving from the DPW to the Administrative Suite to be the Facilities Coordinator. Viv is well respected and has a working knowledge of construction, maintenance and OSHA regulations. He will be able to assist building managers with their needs and having already been familiar to most of them he will be able to adapt quickly. We are not filling his position at the DPW at the present time, as the DPW Director contemplates how to navigate his changing needs.

Sarah Gmeiner will be moving from the Clerk’s Office to the Council on Aging to COA Activities Coordinator position. Sarah had previous experience working for number of years at the Ludlow COA. She also serves on the IT Team and will bring additional skills in that area to the center as well.

We are also very excited to welcome Monasia Ceasar to the Health Department as Health Compliance Officer. It goes without saying this department was threadbare prior to the pandemic but has seen their workload accelerate with COVID 19. She will be focusing on reviewing CV 19 opening plans for businesses as required by the Commonwealth and she will be helping establishments abide by the guidelines, among other tasks as assigned.

### Senior Center Update



As you can see from these photos there is progress being made on Dayton Street. We did have a significant interruption for two weeks due to a COVID-19 outbreak among the tradesmen. We hope that is behind us as we encourage the contractor to move the project along as expeditiously as possible without cutting any corners.

The Owners Project Manager has made assurances they would be ever-present in convey our communal desire to get this done. It is still our hope the project will be substantially complete in the spring of 2, or at least the early days of June. The good news is due to the hard work of the Senior Center Building Committee cost related to the project are still on track to



be at or (hopefully) below budget.

### Winter Advisory

We want to remind residents for most of the town clearing sidewalks is the responsibility of the homeowner, it is also prohibited to move snow across a way. We understand the frustration, but also would like to thank the vast majority of residents who are respectful of neighbors and others as we try and navigate sidewalks and streets during winter.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael J Sullivan  
South Hadley Town Administrator