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Michael J. Sullivan
Town Administrator

Town Administrator's Report to the South Hadley Selectboard August 6, 2021

Transition and Promotion Update



On July 20th Officer Raymond Hebert was promoted to the rank of Sergeant for the South Hadley Police Department. Sgt. Hebert's proud parents, lovely wife, adorable daughter, and esteemed colleagues assembled in front of Town Hall to witness his swearing -in, administered by Town Clerk Carlene Hamlin. It was a beautiful ceremony, and the setting was exceptional due to the incredible work performed by the Parks crew which maintains the Town Hall grounds, thank you!

Ray had the highest Civil Service score of those signing to seek the position. He was vetted along with two other distinguished colleagues by a panel of three. Sgt. Hebert's recommendation by the panel was made to Chief Jennifer Gundersen who endorsed his promotion.

Raymond Hebert is a proud product of South Hadley and is well regarded for his sensible approach to police work. His levelheaded and measured approach to protecting and serving the citizens of South Hadley will be magnified as he becomes a role model for new officers joining the force.

The department also wished Sgt. Robert Whelihan a long and healthy retirement just a few days prior. Sgt. Whelihan's experience will be missed. His decades of service to the community are reflected in the respectful comments sent from many far and wide upon learning of his retirement. Best wishes to Bob in his retirement.

Town Administrator Lisa Wong has signed a negotiated agreement between the Selectboard and Ms. Wong. She will begin her duties on October 31st and will bring with her an incredible store of experience and new ideas to South Hadley. The Selectboard and I will be working with Ms. Wong to make the transition fluid and beneficial for all. Having known of her work for more than a decade and recently serving on a Massachusetts Municipal Managers Association committee on Diversity, Inclusion and Equity I can assure the citizens of South Hadley you are getting an incredibly talented and thoughtful Town Administrator.

Also, Chief Jennifer Gundersen has agreed to extend her contract for three more years. I think everyone will agree she continues to be an instrument of positive change for the community and

beyond. I was honored to be invited recently to meet with a group of observers reviewing the South Hadley Police Department as a part of a national accreditation. I was impressed to learn more about how the department is evolving their practices and policies to better serve the public. Chief Gundersen's leadership in integral to continuing to evolve an already outstanding department to meet those service needs. Both contracts are on the Town website for public review.

Senior Center

It is happening the new Senior Center is starting to come to life. It is not to say that there are not some lingering problems challenging the final days of construction. There is still some kitchen equipment yet to arrive, as anyone who has ordered even household appliance have experienced the delays are very difficult to endure.



There was a leak in the roof which was addressed immediately by the contractor and the roofing sub-contractor to address the imperfection and ensure repair to any interior damage as well. The recent rainy weather certainly provided a significant test to the roof. The punch list of other items from switches that do not work in storage closets to balancing the function heating and cooling with the outdoor ambient temperature are being addressed.

It should be comforting to know that our Owners Project Manager Colliers is also setting review dates out as far as January 2022 to further review performance of systems and warranties. No one is losing site of the importance and the investment in this building and will do everything reasonably possible to protect the property.

There are still some opportunities to get a guided tour by calling 413 538 5030 or email to coa@southhadley.ma.gov. There is continued planning for the grand opening of the Peoples Woodlawn Café scheduled for September 15. The Café will offer a soup and sandwich menu at affordable levels. We would like to remind visitors there is a mask mandate in place when visiting the Senior Center.

Woodlawn Plaza

The affordable housing project at Woodlawn has been funded by HUD and it looks like the investments in that project will start to move quickly in that area. The 68 units of work force housing have been fully funded through DHCD by way of a tax credit program.

I spoke recently to Rocco Falcone owner of Rocky's Hardware, and he has received all the approvals for Rocky's separate "garden center" and new hardware store at the Woodlawn. He is considering starting that project sooner than expected. As I have said before the investment in this area is significant and will pay dividends for years to come for South Hadley.

COVID 19 Update

Does it feel to others the challenge we are experiencing with this virus is even more than originally predicted? The Town of South Hadley has seen 23 new cases since around Memorial

Day (May 25th), 19 of those 23 cases have been identified in the last two weeks. The total number of confirmed cases in South Hadley since March 2020 is 1073. Reported contact cases are on the rise as well, BioBot data is also increasing the RNA tracing at the Water Pollution Control Facility.

Health Director Sharon Hart continues to monitor the trending data and review suggested practices. We have requested that all vaccinated and non-vaccinated people wear a mask when coming into public buildings, ask that everyone consider getting a vaccine and if you feel sick stay home. This should not be considered punitive, part of a conspiracy theory or an invitation to debate the origins of the virus. It is simply an easy step for us to do our civic duty as a member of a community.

Solar Traffic Signs

You all may have seen that some of the solar safety signs promised two years ago are starting to be installed. Some measure speed others warn of road hazard in all cases they hopefully will get people to slow down. Because even in "small, rural college towns" people speed.

We hope these like the message boards remind us of where we need to change behavior and if in either case lives are saved, all the better. However, it is hard to measure something you prevent!

Respectfully submitted,

Michael J. Sullivan
Town Administrator, South Hadley