

Jeff Cyr, Chair
 Sarah Etelman, Vice-Chair
 Carol Constant, Clerk
 Christopher Geraghty
 Andrea Miles

Michael J. Sullivan
 Town Administrator

**Report to the South Hadley Selectboard October 15, 2021
 Town Administrator Michael J. Sullivan**

Please accept this Town Administrators Report as the final installment of the more than 150 such reports delivered to the Selectboard over the last eight years and seven months that I have authored as your town administrator in an attempt to be transparent and communicate to you and the public the complicated and difficult work performed by some of the most dedicated public employees I have had the pleasure to work with in my career. It truly has been an honor to serve this community. Thank you!

As I prepared this final report, I browsed some previous communiqués from over the years. There is so much I have forgotten and so much I have learned. Thank you for your guidance and leadership.

By way of example, in April of 2014 we were dealing with the demolition of the Fibermark building, including the hazardous items, the caved-in roof and what to do with the land. After numerous discussions and a long process, the land was cleared, made available for development and now is the site of 12 new condos. It all sounds so easy in retrospect.



This derelict and abandoned property is now called home by nearly a dozen families as the project is near completion. I understand that all twelve units are under agreement, including eight which have been transferred to the new owners. It sometimes is impossible to understand how far you have come until you look behind you.

This site will now produce real estate taxes, but between the purchase and the building permits it generated nearly \$50,000 in new direct revenues. Turning publicly-held land which was costing the town money and exposure to liability is now a new source of revenue. This change of position should never be seen as a bad thing.



Now, I am aware there are some not drawn to the design, the configuration, the color, the landscaping, the garage doors.... or even the location. I have heard a multitude of reasons why some citizens are not enamored with the condos. However, it is important to consider these units are selling at nearly \$300,000 a unit and add to the diverse style and price point for new or present residents who are looking for a different, and in this market are seen as an affordable, ownership opportunity. I get it - there are those who are still suggesting South Hadley would have been better with an empty, derelict, exposure-to-liability field, with no plan

to utilize. I disagree. Thank you to the Selectboard, the Planning Board, Town Meeting, and the Redevelopment Authority for making this happen.

In other reports there was accounts of initiating discussion on forming the Bike Walk Committee, the Commission on Disabilities, Dementia Friendly which eventually morphed into Age and Dementia Friendly Committee, and South Hadley Redevelopment Authority. In other reports, I touched on re-writing Personnel Policies, Financial Policies, DPW Operations, establishing “Complete Streets” Policy, the still-unsolved puzzle of becoming a “Green Community” through DOER. We jointly developed social media, email and website policies, a Visitor Code of Conduct, COVID-19 restrictions and other necessary standards for the municipality to function within.

There were updates on projects including the library (opened three months after I arrived), Plains School, Dog Park, Batchelor Brook and Leaping Wells Trails, the Ted Belsky Overlook at Canal Park (and improvements to the park), increased bike lane and sidewalk upgrades throughout the town, the 116 and the Main Street rebuild, the 33/202 intersection upgrade projects all which continue to improve and, in some cases, evolve.

There were the painful steps to bring cost controls to the Ledges (which for the first time in FY 21 it had a generous surplus under the IGM contract) and with the help of the DPW Director Chris Bouchard implemented painful, but necessary to preserve, enhance and stabilize the trash and recycling services. Of course it goes without saying the complex discussions and attempts to control a world-wide pandemic at the local level, a truly impossible task. Particularly when there is an expert opinion on every corner in every town and village.

Change is always difficult, but necessary. There were changes which have had other profound effect, for example the expansion of the SHELD Board at a critical time, increasing other commissions like Conservation when requested. It also takes leadership, which the Selectboard has always provided over my tenure.

Some reports spoke about the Energy Savings and Conservation Bond (ESCO) which by way a of a low rate federally supported bond South Hadley qualified, applied and was approved. The result was hundreds of thousands saved over the life of the borrowing. We also recently were informed we have outperformed the threshold set by our partner Siemens by an incredible 7%, something rarely experienced in energy savings projects this large.

There were reports on how we changed the Treasurer/Clerk and the Collector responsibilities as outlined in the legislation and revamped bonding and investments all to the fiscal benefit of the Town of South Hadley. How other changes including but not limited to reassignment of staff, new on-line services, increased outreach, award winning website improvements, adjustments to practices at Town Meeting, both during and leading up to the event, all in an attempt to better serve the public.

I had the incredible honor to work with so many wonderful South Hadleyites. I will always cherish the memories of Atty. Ed Ryan who gave so much to the town and did so in a quiet and humble way as Moderator and Town Counsel. He was a true “townie” who loved and invested in the community. He leaves a legacy which will hopefully someday be honored by the town. He is missed in many ways, we have been fortunate to have a new capable Moderator in John Hine and Mead, Talerman, Costa has brought next level service to the Town Counsel function, which is critical in this day and age.

As Town Administrator I was so lucky to work with Selectboard members who are reasonable and intelligent in their leadership roles. The present board of Jeff Cyr, Sarah Etelman, Andre Miles, Chris Geraghty and Carol Constant is a great balance of policy views who work to find common ground which benefits and promotes the Town of South Hadley. Thank you as well to Marilyn Ishler, Bruce Forcier, Frank Detoma, Ira Brezinsky and John Hine who I will always admire for their selfless dedication to their town.

It goes without saying there were others who I admire for their roles in making this special community Tom Terry and the Appropriations Committee, Linda Young and Martha Terry from KYT, Michelle Theroux in her dual roles with Berkshire Music Academy and South Hadley/Granby Chamber of Commerce (and now SHRDA). Looking back over my tenure, I had the pleasure to work with community leaders like Ted Boulais, Dianne Mulvaney, Brenda Mathieu, Jon Camp, Brad Hutchison, Ally Schlachter, Jessica Collins, Pat Greenfield, Marilyn Gass, Kevin McCaffrey, Mitch Resnick, Judy Gooch, Margaret Jodoin, Maryanne Millard, Liz Austin, Ray Labarre, Steve O'Brien, Jeff Labrecque, Bill Deluca, Rick Constant, Kevin Taugher, Kathy Davis and so many others on projects as diverse as one could ever imagine. Trees, trails, trash, signs, stolen benches, gravel pits, bears, freezers, e-vehicles, dog extradition and a host of other topics are some of my most prized South Hadley experiences. I cannot thank each person of South Hadley who were so helpful, enough for the opportunity to work in your incredible community.

Also, I was fortunate to work with some of the greatest people I could ever hope to be in the workplace presence. I can say without reservation the employees in South Hadley are dedicated professionals who are diligent in delivering the best services possible. It is always easy to criticize from outside the tent and with rumor or secondhand knowledge. I will express my gratitude to each of those valued employees in the coming weeks.

There are those who have made a difference in the municipal function but have moved on to other pursuits who I will be eternally grateful. Thank Richard Harris, Jennifer Wolowicz, Joanne Trybus, Deb Baldini, Steve Parentela, David Labrie and Jim Reidy as former employees for their enormous contribution to the collective efforts.

Lastly thank you to the taxpayers, Town Meeting Members, businesses, non-profits and regional partners for all your efforts, sacrifices and contributions during my time here in South Hadley. It was an awesome experience because of all of you!

Now some recent topics;

COVID 19

Confirmed cases continue to rise in South Hadley but seem to have reached at least a temporary plateau. We continue to ask all people who are vaccinated or not to wear a mask when in public places, it is mandated for all public buildings as well.

Curative will be offering testing at Town Hall (Main Street) outdoors on Saturday mornings between 10 AM and 2 PM. The Town of South Hadley is acting as a host for this effort please go to the town website or <https://curative.com/> for more information. There has been over 100 test administered so far by this

program. We have asked the Curative representative about the slow return of results and they acknowledged the same and vowed to make every effort to get results to participants sooner.

You can see on the next page how the progression of the virus has impacted South Hadley recently. We continue to encourage people to consider the vaccine and to always follow best practices to reduce the spread.

Disease	Status	Num of Cases	10/6/2021	9/28/2021	9/21/2021
Novel Coronavirus (SARS, MERS, etc)	CONFIRMED	1348	1307	1281	1252
Novel Coronavirus (SARS, MERS, etc)	CONTACT	1055	1034	989	967
Novel Coronavirus (SARS, MERS, etc)	PROBABLE	124	124	122	124
Novel Coronavirus (SARS, MERS, etc)	SUSPECT	54	52	50	48

Thank you to Beers and Story Funeral Home for again hosting a recent drive through flu/COVID Booster Clinic. Also thank you Sharon Hart and her staff for coordinating the program. Over 125 shots were given between the boosters and the flu shots. Please consult the town website COVID 19 page for other sites for testing and vaccines. Please consider a vaccine if you have not already received one, it takes a community to fight this virus!



COVID-19 Community Report provided: October 14, 2021
Kit ID: KIT-3474

South Hadley Div. of Water Pollution Control

Sample collection date: **October 11, 2021**

SARS-CoV-2 virus in wastewater

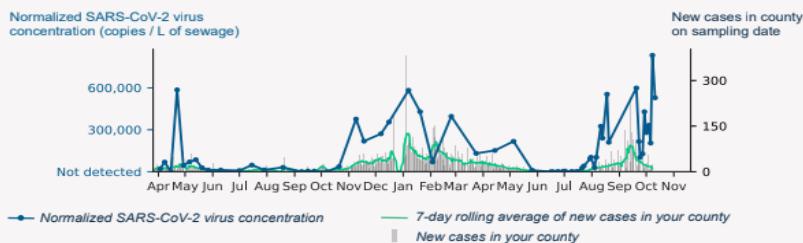
DETECTED

Virus concentration (copies per liter of sewage)
260,293

Normalized* virus concentration (copies per liter of sewage)
528,729

*Normalized virus concentration value is derived by adjusting the raw virus concentration to the PMMoV fecal marker in order to account for dilution

Normalized virus concentration over time



As you can see from the adjacent graph the BioBot tracing of COVID 19 RNA at the Water Pollution Control Plant is more erratic than ever. Some of that is the fact we are now part of a larger study so there is more testing being done weekly (previously bi-weekly) and with kids back at school there is likely more transmission.

It should be noted we are looking at some capabilities BioBot has to trace increases of heavy metals, contaminants, and opioid use in South Hadley. It will be interesting how these technologies and advancement may inform treatment and precautionary measures.

Congratulations to the Town of

South Hadley for continuing to be in the forefront of this new frontier and thank you Melissa Labonte for finding grant funding for most of the costs associated with the work.

Mosier School

Recently I attended a meeting to discuss the future needs of the Mosier School and how it related to other capital needs for the South Hadley Public Schools. This meeting was part of the outreach developed by the Chair of the School Committee Alyson Schlacter and Selectboard Member Chris Geraghty to provide a better understanding of the needs and challenges at Mosier and the district as a whole.

Superintendent Mosely, Business Agent Voyik, Mosier School Principal Flynn, Chair Schlacter SB Member Geraghty and I all participated. Dr. Mosely was clear in his priorities for capital needs. As you may recall there was discussion last year at budget time about the MESMS replacement, HVAC upgrades at the high school, MESMS and Mosier and several other project. This year the Superintendent is laser focused on the Mosier School and sees it (and I agree) as a replacement not a refurbishing of the existing structure. He also is aware of the other challenges throughout the district, his leadership and foresight is extremely valuable at this time in history and he is clearly up to the task.

The next step with get project approval from MSBA as soon as that process opens. In the meantime, I have asked our bond advisor to present me with some borrowing schedules to get an idea of how best to approach that commitment in the future.

If the project is accepted by MSBA there will be a required and thorough needs assessment performed by a third party, and previously estimated just short of a million. The assessment is required by the MSBA to identify any and all deficiencies in the present structure and make recommendations as to what will be required to bring it the elementary school up to the present standards for 21st century education.

It was my impression in the meeting this was a critical need for the SHPS and I appreciate the Business Manager and Superintendent being direct and clear as to the focus, it certainly makes planning much easier. I suspect SB Member Geraghty will add to this recitation and I greatly appreciate his presence and participation.

Saint Theresa's Lease

First and foremost, I want to thank Father Michael Twohig, and Pat Smith for all their hospitality and cooperation during this lease at a strange time in history. While we did not get to utilize the facility in respect to COA programing it was crucial to continuing program at a key period in history and process for seniors. We also were accommodated for two drive in Town Meetings and there was no charge (or for anything related to TM) for the sprinklers going off during those proceedings.

However, there was some unexpected wear and tear beyond normal use to a few sections of flooring including at the entrance to the gymnasium which was used for programing. The pastor asked for the COA Director and I to come and inspect the damage, which we did and found there was in fact damage to the floor in three different areas.

In discussions with the pastor, I agreed to request the Selectboard to extend the lease for the month of July (\$6,000) with the approval of the Senior Center Building Committee to settle all claims related to use or

exit from St Theresa's by the COA. I do want to make it clear the damage was neither intentional nor thought to be so by the parish. I suspect a more complicated approach would likely result in additional costs and through this agreement I strongly believe it can be avoided by this agreed upon settlement.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

We are continuing our DEI program to bring more awareness and understanding to the beautiful tapestry that are our differences and how we may develop strategies to strengthen our participation as individuals in a community.

This work is being led by the Director of Human Resources Michelle Parent and we are encouraging each department to facilitate discussions around the five minute or less videos released weekly to staff to consider. <https://youtu.be/nwAYpLVyeFU> is the latest in the series and speaks volumes as to how we can all benefit by the ripple effect of a single act of kindness and how it may come back to us with an interest dividend.

I hope this program will continue to expand and inform all of us in the importance of how we treat others and how we can become better people as a whole. Thank you!

As always thank you for your support and patience, I already know for certain I will miss working in this wonderful community!

Respectfully submitted,

Michael J. Sullivan

(Soon to be ex) Town Administrator, South Hadley