



April 15, 2015

Honorable Selectboard;

Please accept this as an abridged accounting of recent activities of the Town Administrator on your behalf and related to various projects and initiatives.

Performance Based Evaluations; Administrative attention has swung from preparing the FY 16 Budget to preparing the Town Meeting Warrants and now to performance based evaluations. This past week and for several weeks to follow I will be meeting with department heads to review what progress they have made over the past nine months and what goals we mutually agree need to be the areas of focus for the next year.

This process is invaluable for me as Town Administrator beyond the significant add workload at a particularly busy time. It in many instances allows me to see first-hand the hard work being done in many departments. I am not suggesting there is not a lot of ground or room for improvement to cover, but building enthusiasm and excitement is part of the effort. Competency in areas of weakness is also a focus of this undertaking.

Preparation for Bonding; David Eisenthal, Treasurer Baldini, Accountant Sutton and I gathered this week to strategize for our upcoming bond anticipation note issuance. We will likely be asking the Selectboard to address the issuance at the May 19 meeting. It will be likely be the final borrowing for the Plains School.

The "rolling debt" issuance will not be until July, as required by the language approved by TM and prescribed by bond counsel cannot be floated until after the start of the fiscal year. It is all very exciting and I look forward to numerous projects being started in rapid fire.

Professional Development Day; The topic for this quarter's Professional Development Day was safety and security. Emergency Management Director Sharon Hart coordinated an excellent panel of speakers, including State Trooper James Carmichael who discuss municipal building safety and the various threats the world presents and how we may thwart some of those concerns while we keep employees safe.

There was also examples presented on how we may recognize someone who is carrying a weapon and how we might best protect ourselves in such a situation. The review included some of the mistakes law enforcement learned through some famous and tragic events over the last decade plus from Columbine to Newtown. The lesson is no place is immune, it is always the place where "nothing like this ever happens around here", then it does.

Chief Labrie spoke how speaking in a low voice and signaling a co-worker to contact the police. Staying calm, empathizing and not displaying undue stress. The Chief also lead the group in some distraction exercises where everyone had the opportunity to throw foam rubber balls at the Chief to demonstrate a diversion technique. The foam rubber application may become a regular activity.

South Hadley Town Hall also had first in a long-time fire drill. Through the help of District 1 Lieutenant Jay Houle we realized some defects in our protocols, but also saw some sincere cooperation. All of this is part of the on-going effort to make Town Hall safer

Appropriations Committee; On Thursday April 16 the Appropriations Committee conducted a public hearing regarding the financial articles on the Annual and Special Town Warrants for May 9, 2015. There was some interesting questions asked and some differing views presented. The hearing was well attended with about forty six people in the auditorium.

The most controversial article related to the Capital Planning recommendation and seemed to center around the resurfacing of the football/soccer/lacrosse field. Capital Planning Chair Ted Boulais did a good job of articulating the review and oversight which has been given to the requests.

Capital Planning members Ira Brezinsky, Joan Rosner and John Kelly lent their perspective to the plan as constructed. Recreation Director Andy Rogers spoke to the need for a field which can serve a growing program offering in terms of the schools and the town.

Chairman Terry and the Appropriations members in attendance seemed to indicate the proceedings went fairly smoothly and look forward to making their recommendations. Both these committees should be commended for their work. I appreciate the attendance and support of the Selectboard at this important hearing.

Canal Park Update; Spring has brought the waters of the north crashing over South Hadley Falls. I am reminded often that it was referred to as South Hadley Falls nearly a century before a dam was set in place. Recently I went up to the Riverfront Park in anticipation of an upcoming meeting I have with HG&E management to discuss progress on completing the punch list set in place by DEP late last fall.



On the day I visited it would have been hard to tell the park has not officially open yet, there were at least twenty five people in the park, walking dogs, I suspect skipping school and generally wandering about enjoying the majesty and power of nature.

This park is destined to become a recreational amenity for the region. One which will draw people from far and wide. It was unfortunate I saw evidence of vandalism already, names carved into railings, broken bottles and bent fencing. I hope there is an effort by all citizens to recognize the investment and a realization how abusing the facility will lead to a blight which will likely be related to the community, even if the perpetrators are from afar.

All of those South Hadley residents who did so much to make this happen, I commend you for your civic efforts.

Capital Plan FY 16 Recommendations; The Capital Planning Committee conducted a rigorous five and a half month review of the capital items proposed for FY 16 on the 5 Year Capital Plan. There were a few additions to the five year plan one of which was promoted to be done immediately (security upgrade at MES). Many of the projects have been discussed for years. I cannot say enough about how Chairperson Ted Boulais and the entire committee approach their task with professionalism and diligence.

The most controversial request seemed to be the resurfacing of the high school athletic fields. The debate could be distilled down the traditional approach or a more aggressive approach utilizing a artificial surface technology. I can say the committee allowed a robust discussion, listened to experts, including self-proclaimed experts and rendered a decision based on the highest and best use in respect to recreation.

By-Law Review Committee; The By-Law Review Committee met April 8, Town Counsel Ed Ryan, Chair Charles Sabourin, Members Mary Herschel and Michael Wozniak. Chief David Labrie and I were also in attendance. There was thorough discussion in regards to all the articles which spoke to by-law changes.

The suggestions for the “Nuisance“ warrant article in respect to length of grass and increasing it to six inches was accepted unanimously. There was concern from Town Counsel about the process for shrinking the size of Town Meeting and the committee had misgivings similar to those expressed by the Selectboard, so within the parameters and consistent with you vote the article was removed and will be stay with the By-Law Review Committee for further study.

After thoughtful discussion all the remaining Town Meeting Articles were supported the remaining article (reducing Town Meeting) with that body for further study. Their review was both productive

Western Massachusetts Economic Development Planning Committee; As a member of this group I attended the most recent meeting in Springfield. Westfield presented their community and spoke to the various activities and projects which are unfolding in that community. They have particularly robust aeronautics industry growing and are doing a number of things as a community to facilitate the continued expansion.

I have asked Planning Director Harris to be my guest at the next meeting. I do think this regional interaction will provide opportunities for South Hadley in the future, if no more than seeing best practices and being aware of grant programs. The contacts which may be made are a bonus.



Thank you for your support,

Respectfully submitted,

Michael J. Sullivan
Town Administrator, South Hadley