



July 7, 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.

Buttery Brook Park Western Mass News; Some of you may have caught the news story about the Buttery Brooks lack of a modified swing and a fading crosswalk. It should be stated I feel the story was an honest attempt to show South Hadley as uncaring or at least unresponsive by the media outlet.

They were aware the DPW Superintendent was on vacation and as both the Town of South Hadley DPW Superintendent and ADA Coordinator he could ably reply to some of the questions being demanded. Yet they were inclined to report the story as if lives were in immediate peril, with the end result of casting an ill light on a very caring community.

The issue was reported via email about the crosswalk only on June 4th, the Superintendent responded on June 5th that he would look into it and get back to the family. He told them he would be going on vacation, while on vacation June 22 he was sent another email asking for an update, I heard two days later the family had engaged the media bully, was working with a lawyer and added the "swing" to the inquiry.

I received a call on June 26 (a day off for me). I returned the call promptly when I returned on June 29, I received a call back from Jennifer Martinez of Western Mass News. She asked me some pointed questions about accessibility and invited me to appear on camera. I stated I would ask, she wait one more day for the Superintendent to return so we could have accurate facts. Yes is this was "emergency" I could contact the Superintendent, this in my eyes would not be resolved to any great degree by interrupting the DPW Superintendent's vacation.

Upon his return I placed a call and we discussed our mutual concerns about continuing a "mid-stream" crosswalk in a heavily traveled area. This is recognized by road experts of at all levels to be one of the most dangerous situations. The ill-advised crosswalk which has a faint outline remaining, was installed presumably to accommodate the State Swimming Pool which has long since been filled in. There are sufficient and demonstrably safer cross walks at Abbey and Willamansett and at the entrance to the Big Y Plaza and we encourage citizens to use those access points.

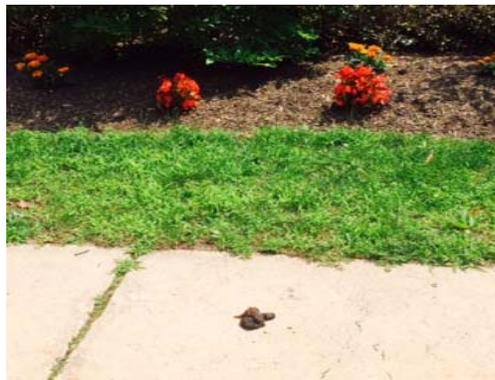
As far as the adaptive swing we identified there was a modified swing being removed from the play area at the new Plains School. The playscape was scheduled to be removed which made this swing available. We will use as many other parts from the Plains as possible, but some will be out of compliance with the ever changing regulations for playground equipment. It should be noted the playground was never

meant to be returned to Plains School, as they have accommodated the need in the plan and in a more modern age appropriate way

As a Friday **addition** to this story, there was a very complementary story from Western Mass News this morning about how quickly South Hadley reacted to the request. While the gesture from them is appreciated, I believe it would have been easier to report when all the facts were in, instead of sensationalizing it. That aside I appreciate the per say retraction. It was always our intent and remains, to do what we can when we can.

Town Hall Issues; We are recovering from a recent leak in a pipe in Town Hall. It would be an overstatement to say it “flooded”, but there was a good half inch of standing water in the records room for the Treasurer/Collectors Office. There were several damages boxes which we did our best to salvage and we have incurred some expense stopping the leak and will have more to come when we try to identify where the leak is and how it will be remedied. Presently we are limping by with some faucets working and other bypassed by the short term leak repair.

A significant amount of the ceiling will need to be opened up to facilitate the repair. This is a well-built lath and plaster over a steel mesh screen ceiling. This will be grueling and relatively expensive work. The maintenance contractor is working on a longer term solution for administration to consider. I am hoping we will be able to fashion a bypass for the water to get to the first floor bathrooms.



I also would encourage you to enjoy the beautiful landscaping provided and coordinated by the DPW-Parks Division at Town Hall. I would however be careful where you walk, as some citizens are not as respectful of the property. I am getting increasing number of calls from people in different areas of SoHa in respect to people not cleaning up after their dogs and in at least one case their pig. Beyond the civility of either taking responsibility for these little presents or making sure they are delivered to your own property, I would ask pet owners to be more responsible. While I am now armed with a new shovel to take care of Town Hall, I would ask that you not add to the load already being placed upon the municipality.

We also have installed a trash corral in the rear of Town Hall. It will hopefully help control some of the trash being blown around, increase the number of parking spaces and add to the professional look of the municipal center of government. The new “Operations Center” is in full use and the area is secured with key fob passes for access.

Appropriations Committee End of Year Transfers; On July 9 at 8 AM a quorum of the Appropriations Committee arrived bright eyed to discuss Reserve Fund Transfers and End of Year Intra Transfers. The

transfers included moneys from the reserve fund to satisfy unexpected shortfalls in the Selectboard, Town Hall and Town Counsel accounts. The major causes of the shortfalls for the Selectboard unexpected costs associated with the 8 Graves Street title taking and resulting eviction/cleanout, for Town Hall having a pipe burst on June 30 did not help things and Town Counsel was slightly over the \$40,000 budgeted due to expenses associated with bills from Kopelman and Paige regarding a development project.

There was also another number of intra-budget transfers approved by Appropriations to satisfy the need to balance the various accounts. The total amount of transfers is less than \$54,000 on a \$41.5 million budget.

MassWorks Grant; The Selectboard Chair, Town Planner and I recently participated in a “lunch and learn” webinar provided by the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development. The session was very informative and will allow us to submit a more competitive grant. The grants are primarily given to communities or multiple jurisdictions (which is looked upon favorably) to enhance job creation, home production with a focus on affordable workforce housing.

My approach to this year is to build a foundation for future grant applications under this and the Commonwealth Compact. If we are successful in getting a project approved then all the better, the hope though is to build momentum for a stronger application for next year. I appreciate the assistance from the Planner and the Selectboard Chair, the circle of may expand as we proceed.

PDD; The quarterly Professional Development Day is scheduled for Friday July 10, it will be held at the Library which is somewhat of a departure. Town Hall will be closed at noon as per usual for these trainings.

The subject matter will largely have to do with how we treat each other as employees and the need understand that we must support responsible parties and assent to their knowledge and professional accountability. The title of the seminar is “Staying Off the Crazy Train”, unfortunately it is so easy to get tickets we struggle.

Bond Anticipation Note; There has been a few process hiccups in issuing this note which I believe at this writing are under control. The BAN unfortunate will not be sold until Thursday, there is no vote required for the Selectboard, but once the documents come in I will need to collect three or more signatures. I will notify you as soon as the paperwork arrives. This should not interrupt the availability of the funds which we expect by the end of the following week.

T/C Office; The Treasurer/Collector’s Office has been affected by some staffing adjustments. It is my hope the inconvenience to the citizens will be slight, but there will be some adjustment to hours. We will continue to encourage residents to use the drop box service at the rear of the Police Station, Invoice Cloud payment services (see website). Also general inquiries to the T/C Office via email make for expedient and accurate replies, keeping people from trudging in for information. We people need to make a direct transaction we ask that they attempt to come between 9 AM and noon or 1 PM to 4 PM, as we are keeping the office staffed during those hours. Lunch time when we can it will remain open, we encourage people to call ahead otherwise.

The staff is here some additional time, but we are dedicating those hours to improving accuracy as part of a multi-prong strategy to improve process which reaches beyond this one department.

There are some office which are short staffed for various reasons and we want the public to know calling ahead just before you leave may save you some level of frustration. As we shrink staffing to control costs and look for more ways citizens can access information or services remotely we ask for all parties to be understanding. It does take a village, maybe even a whole town to make this work fluidly.

We are genuinely grateful for all those citizens who understand and accept the changes we are completed to make in these times. We will continue to make these changes less impactful on the whole of the community.

Thank you for your continued support a input, please note our next scheduled meeting is on August 11. I look forward to seeing everyone at FallsFest.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael J. Sullivan

Town Administrator, South Hadley