



October 30, 2015

Honorable Selectboard;

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

**SHELD/TOWN;** I am sure you have all heard something about the issues at SHELD. I wanted to make sure the role of the "Town" was clarified. The day to day operations are being served by the SHELD Board through the Chairperson. Sullivan, Hayes and Quinn's municipal labor services have been extended to the board on matters related to the suit filed and will continue to offer advice on how to proceed to investigate claims related to the litigant claims. I am not or should be privy to all those client/lawyer privilege actions or conversations.

Through discussions between the Chairs of SHELD and the Selectboard it was agreed the "Town" would provide human resource support services to the SHELD employees. It stands to reason the workplace so altered by events beyond the norm cause some trepidation amongst the hard working remaining employees. It is reasonable to think that the organization will get through this rough patch and will become a stronger organization in the end. I would encourage calm as the review is professionally carries on. ATA/Human Resource Director Jennifer Wolowicz will be meeting with the staff at SHELD to cover the services we can and will provide to employees.

**FY 17 Budget;** I have now developed a timeline and the annual budget memo. The memo will guide department heads as to parameters associated with both process and the limits to the requests from managers. There is no surprises at this point with the FY 16 budget on either the revenue or expense side. The closings are proceeding on the recently auctioned properties and those proceeds (\$160K in all) will return to the General Fund and impact the FY 17 Unreserved Free Cash.

We have already seen where the Medex 2 rates will rise and it is likely we will see an increase in our Health Insurance costs, if we see something similar to last year's increases from HCHIT, I will not panic. If it is larger it may have a dramatic effect on the budget. We continue to reduce staff and attempt to create a flexible workforce. Recently we had a resignation in the Town Clerk's Office and Laura Krutzler has done a commendable job in filling in while the Clerk is otherwise unavailable.

There will be an effect on the budget in respect to the debt exclude bonds and some slight increases on the municipal side for wage increases. The school budget is being constructed already for FY 17, I do not anticipate reduction in education costs for the SHPS as cost in number of areas continue to challenge public education.

**Records Retention Project/ King Information:** This initiative continues to move along. We recently moved nearly ton and half of records and other unnecessary material out of the Town Hall basement. The project is being coordinated by Town Clerk Carlene Hamlin with great support from all departments.

DPW Superintendent Jim Reidy coordinated the removal with the help of the Community Service Group from Sherriff Garvey's Office depicted below. This project will make record retrieval easier and make the building safer from fire.



There will be a brief break in the action for this project for two weeks and then King Info will be back for a couple of more weeks. It is our intent to come forward with a "Phase II" for the project and a maintenance appropriation to have them come in annually and remove the necessary records.

**RDA Advisory Committee Meeting:** I was pleased to be invited to the recent RDA Advisory Committee meeting held at the South Hadley Public Library. It was well attended and the presentation from Kathy McCabe of McCabe Associates was both interesting and innovative.

One of the most appealing new concepts was to create a recreation walk along Buttery Brook in the Falls area. Exposing this hidden treasure would not be simple by any means, but the potential benefit is substantial. This public input exercise was valuable to hear comments and suggestions which may be incorporated into the final RDA plan to be considered by the Selectboard and then Town Meeting.

It is somewhat difficult to plan for future needs, especially in an environment where the "present" is changing swiftly, but one need which was a prominent part of both proposed scenarios and seems timeless was in relationship to expanding housing, not only in terms of production, but also in types of dwellings. Smaller foot prints, lower cost, renewable material, energy efficiency, zero energy, communal space shared parking, multi-dwelling and more is all part of the new world of housing design. It was wonderful to hear the presenters recognize and have the experience to deal with the rapid changes.

**STM November 18;** The warrants have been mailed via the US Postal Service we will also send the material electronically. There will also be a portal on the Town Meeting page of the website, where people will be able to click on and see all the material which has been I sent so far and anything which gets sent in the future related to the STM. If any Town Meeting Member has any questions I encourage them to email, call me and I will do my best to answer the questions.

Hopefully we can answer most of the questions before the Special Town Meeting November 18<sup>th</sup>, less than three weeks from this writing.

**GO Bond;** I am happy to report we were successful in retain our bond rating Aa2 from Moody's and has resulted in the issuance of the \$2.9 million bond being sold at 2.49 to Baird. I am particularly pleased at the following comment from the analysts "*Management's conservative budgeting has led to stable reserve levels despite budgetary pressure from increased fixed costs*". Congratulations to Treasurer Baldini and Town Accountant Sutton for their oversight of the process which led to a result which is to the tax payer benefit.

This borrowing will end any borrowing on the Library project and may complete the Plains School project as well, although we have not closed out that project completely from a borrowing view.

**IT Roundtable;** I have begun to assemble a meeting of the technology practitioners under the town seal. This is an idea which came out of discussions with SHELd Chairperson Anne Awad and I about how we could move staff closer together in various town departments.

The idea would be to have regularly scheduled meetings with "IT" coordinators from Town Hall, Cable Studios, Schools (Superintendent Young is very supportive) and SHELd. The concept is to keep this informal without interference from outside sources (including yours truly) with the intent of having a discussion about what they are doing, how their platforms may be expanded or integrated, what resources could be shared, basically how we/they can use shared knowledge to expand out tech capacity while lowering our cost.

Technology will become more and more important as we continue try to provide the services our public deserves. I am confident if all parties support this idea and work towards a common goal we will all benefit.

**Landfill Closure;** We continue to near the axiomatic "hand-off" of the landfill. I know, axiomatic? But it was always self-evident the Town would no longer rely on its operator. DPW Superintendent has done a great job getting through a complex process, with his main goal of protecting the town to the fullest extent possible.

It is getting very close to the time when MassDEP issues a Closure Certification for the landfill. The staff at DEP has been very cooperative and responsive to the needs of South Hadley. I also would like to commend Superintendent Reidy for his diligence in regards to this monumental task.

The Superintendent and I met with Dave Rattell the Advance Disposal (soon to be former operator) representative at the encouragement of DEP to work out some final details on the closure. To complicate the matters further there are a number of tasks which need to be reviewed in the spring as part of the vegetation plan which will unfortunately will only be visible after the DEP Closure Certification will be issued

In order to protect the towns interests we are requiring a "final" inspection, an immediate cutting both on the landfill and berms and in order to ensure the town is not left with the costs associated with these final tasks we are seeking a performance bond or letter of performance credit. It is unreasonable to think the town will be left with no exposure to risk, but we are doing are best to blunt and such issue.

The town will contract the monitoring of all required measures including, but not limited to, ground water testing, leachate releases, flare operation and future vegetative control. We will meet all requirements set forth by DEP going forward.

This is a very important environmental protection project to the Selectboard and the greater public should know we are taking all reasonable steps to avoid risk in respect to this project.

Thank you for your support and guidance on matters related to the town.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael J. Sullivan

Town Administrator, South Hadley