



July 28, 2016

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.

Valley Bike Share,

Canal Park; I recently had the pleasure of meeting with the Canal Park Committee and other interested parties at Upper Canal–Bicentennial-Outlook-across from Hubert Place Park (the place would be well served to have one name). Ellie Klepacki a longtime supporter and advocate for South Hadley’s historic canal district, along with Jack Fleming, Bill Bacis, Mitch Resnick and Aaron Haesaert were all there enjoying the 90 degree plus weather.

The breeze and the conversation was extremely positive and spoke to the issue of how to reclaim the vista and catch up on some of the deferred maintenance. They understood the difficulty in doing everything at once and there was unanimity in regard whatever was done there must be some level of annual investment in various professional services.

The decking on the “lookout” did well, due mainly to through the efforts of volunteers who over the years have made repairs, added paint, picked up trash weeded/planted and cared for the area in a passionate manner. Despite this dedicated determination, the time has come to invest some level municipal resources.



The Selectboard and Town Meeting was very supportive over a year ago of finding and appropriate way to honor the legacy of community commitment made by Ted Belsky, particularly heralding the historic importance of the Canal Park District. This may be just the right opportunity to restore a town treasurer in the name of someone who the town treasured. It also will allow South Hadley to attach a name, a real name to the look-out.



The basics of the plan which is still being developed, include a pruning plan which will trim branches and remove saplings and none native species along the embankment which will also protect the banks of the river from erosion. This all would be done in cooperation and within guidelines from ConsCom, DEP, FERC, ACO, HG&E and the rest of the alphabet of agencies by a professional who has the proper equipment to work on this difficult terrain. The pruning plan will include an annual professionally executed trim and removal plan, so the

approved vistas are part of future use of the outlook. This need is simply beyond the scope of the municipality and would be unsafe for us to expect our crews to do the work without substantial costly training and equipment.

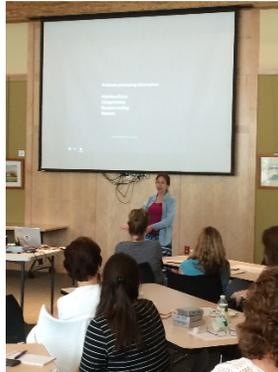
Other necessary issues to be addressed in the proposal and agreed upon by the Canal Park Committee is to re-deck the outlook platform, reset the concrete sidewalks, replace chain link fencing, re-install lighting, install a bike rack and add some safety features near the handicap parking space. We are gathering estimates on component parts of this initiative, try to track down the ornamental lighting which was removed and hope to have a more settled number as to the cost by September. We did discuss numerous other upgrades and bringing in a design firm or using UMass or another source to create a design. I feel both would significantly increase the overall cost, even if the cost of the design was mitigated by using a collegiate alternative it is likely the design would increase the overall cost, it is the nature of that process.

The project rehab of the lookout including the decking and being brought up to code for safety reasons would be in the \$25K range, the sidewalks and other cement work would be around \$20K, fencing \$12K, the initial pruning could be around \$6K, and the bike rack, handicap improvements, reinstallation of lighting and other smaller tasks would be around \$4-5K, so a quick back of the match pack suggests it would be around \$75 to \$80K altogether. Annual cost going forward would include the trim and prune program, light maintenance and the additional lighting at an approximately of \$2,500. Given they park has held up well for thirty five years with only little investment and you should get at least that from these improvements would have an annualized cost of \$4,700 a year.

There are some signage and trail development/marking which is on the mind of the Canal Park Committee and will need to be addressed, but hopefully some of that can be sought through grants, donations or volunteer efforts over time. In my personal and professional opinion this would be a good investment and if the plan continues to develop I would ask for your support to place it before Town Meeting in the autumn.

Professional Development Day; As we prepare for more decluttering of Town Hall our recent Professional Development Day was dedicated to “Municipal Hoarding”, a collective affliction which has deep roots in the individual psyche. We all have some level of trauma when we try to let go of objects, files or even ways we do things. Everyone got some of this out of the gene pool. I would especially like to thank Selectboard Members Forcier and DeToma for attending the support of the Selectboard has been generous and continuous on these important trainings.

There was also additional presentations from Eric Wortel of Valley Green Shredding, Rick Staropoli from General Code and Chris Chartrand from King Info. Each is an important component part of improving our records system and preparing for the changes in the public information laws.



Pioneer Valley Planning Roundtable, Public Records; Town Clerk Carlene Hamlin and I attended a forum in Springfield hosted by PVPC and lead by Bob Ritchie former AG Office ace. Bob and two other legal minds who sat on the legislative committee which made adjustments to the original proposal. Thankfully they assisted in making some dynamic changes.

Most of the law will go into place January 1, 2017. Between now and then I will be working with the Clerk to create a protocol and appoint Records Access Officers (RAO), as required by law. The RAO will be responsible to coordinate any request made to their assigned division and to report the request and material to the Town Clerk. The time limits for response will change, the amount we can charge has been reduced and there has been some harsh penalties put in place for non-compliance.

Part of our approach will be to provide some training to all RAOs and to familiarize everyone with the protocols necessary to keep us from being assessed any fines. This is a substantial departure and I appreciate the Clerk's efforts to be prepared for the more changes.

September Symposium; Selectboard Member Etelman has been diligent in her planning work in respect to this forum. At the upcoming Selectboard meeting it will be an agenda item and with a suggested date of September 24.

The brainstorming sessions have been very interesting, as we have tried to work our way through the complexities of having people enter the discussion after checking as much of their preconceived ideas at the door. As we have discussed the goal is to find a clear path to human understanding, one where a majority of people can see the path, whether they take it may be another forum.

Bartholomew/Trust Investments; Treasurer Baldini, Town Accountant Sutton and I met with representatives met with Bartholomew and Company. I am very happy to report our portfolio is moving forward in a very healthy way. The funds we hold as a trust increased by \$620,962 for an ending balance of \$14,412,631. The OPEB had much smaller gains of \$4,795 for an ending balance of \$194,831. The good news is both performed well and above the industry mean.

The full report is in my office for your review and we are awaiting an electronic copy. I appreciate the Treasurer and Accountants attention to these investments and I am happy we are comparatively speaking earning at rate higher than the mean for the first time in at least a generation.

Land of Low Value, The Treasurer's Office and the Assistant Assessor continue to work on these small properties located throughout town to see if we can find some which may be made available for sale. This is tedious and frustrating work, I cannot thank Missy Couture, Joan Germain and Deb Baldini for sticking with the effort. Between trusts, unbuildable lots, paper streets and owner unknown, lesser employees would throw their hands up in the air and would have gone to lunch ...permanently. Thank you all!

Lithia Springs; I recently met with Dennis Rochon (resident), Peter Michaels (DCR), Chief Parentela and Superintendent Reidy. To discuss the situation at Lithia Springs and the entrances to the open space and reservoir. I appreciate this was an extremely respectful meeting rising above everyone's frustration.

The situation becomes difficult particularly on weekends when large numbers of people gather and recreate, one of the prime reasons why the state purchased the land was to allow access. The friction is when the residents in the area feel the visitors to their neighborhood are less than respectful. The police have been diligent in their patrols, the DCR is doing everything they can and the DPW is back re-installing the signs which continue to get ripped out.

The question has been raise again about the whole of Lithia Springs Road being posted "No Parking/Tow Zone", we now have about 75% of the street posted, and I truly do not think that will have the desired effect. We have created the 116 parking through the cooperation of District 2, but people claim it is too far to walk ...to go on a walk. DCR is opening the reservoir to "Swim at your own risk", as they simply do not have the staffing or receive the cooperation from visitors to stop people from swimming. While I understand their predicament, I remain concerned about safety issues with swimming at Lithia.

View Inspect; Our new on-site module which will allow health and building personnel to do inspections on site and eventually remotely print permits. You may recall we received a grant through Jamie Doolittle's efforts from the state to implement the program and to purchase some equipment for the field. Again ...change is hard, but Jamie and Jennifer are going to make this happen.

COA Update, Leslie Hennessey is working out extremely well at the COA and we continue to hear positives from staff and participants. We will be soon moving forward on the project planning, but I thought it was important to give the Director some time to feel comfortable with the surroundings.

MassWorks Grant, Town Planner Richard Harris has been working attentively on submitting our application. This year will be quite like last years and the focus of improving bike and pedestrian traffic in the Falls and to the rail platform over the bridge in Holyoke remains the focus. We feel this is an important way to address the Governor's goals of increasing housing opportunities and expanding job access.

Thank you for your continued support, stay cool!

Respectfully submitted,

Michael J Sullivan

Town Administrator, South Hadley

