



December 30, 2016

Honorable Selectboard,

Please accept this as an abridged account of initiatives and activities performed by myself and town hall staff since my last report. It seems nearly impossible, but this is the last TA report I will file for 2016. As much as I have enjoyed serving South Hadley in the last year, I look forward to 2017 to see numerous projects grow under your direction. Thank you for your support and guidance!

Town Hall Fire Alarm System, I met with representatives from both the contractor and design firm this week, as well as Lt Jay Houle and Chief Robert Authier in respect to the final design plans for Town Halls Fire Detection and Safety System.

We all toured the Town Hall and inspected every room in the building (including the rarely seen former coal storage room) to determine the proper equipment to use throughout. The system will add horns with a higher decibel system, as it was reported that some School Department employees were not hearing the alarm, strobes for those who may be hearing impaired and relocating of several pull stations.

We are hopeful the work will begin in February, but will still need a fire watch for the January 11 Special Town Meeting. Fire District staff and Chief Authier have been very helpful in respect to reviewing the plans and conversing with the contractor to ensure we have system which will best serve the building by keeping visitors and employees safe.

Winter Storm Communication, There was a concerted effort by myself and other key players to address the requests made by the Selectboard and constituents in regards to how we can better communicate information surrounding winter storms to the public.

I fully accept the fact we performed far below expectation for the previous parking ban. We listened and we heard some points repeated in several conversations. Make the call with plenty of notice, preferably early in the day before the storm was by far the most sought after.

Residents sensibly expressed this allows them to plan, some said they may park their second vehicle (or third, or fourth) somewhere else. The ideas were seemingly endless and ranged from simple to the sublime in their garage, at a parking lot which they have permission, at work, at friends who has a big driveway, one person even mentioned a parking deck near their work in NoHo and then they were taking the bus home. The vast majority of citizens really want us to do a better job cleaning up after a storm and fully understand the benefits of having as many cars off every street helps a great deal.

We also heard make the “switch over times a little later”, we are still working on that one. It makes sense moving your car by ten is a lot better than shoveling it out at 7AM to move it for 8 AM, but there is also a logistical component to scheduling plows. Again we heard the suggestion and we are working at it.

We also appreciate your assistance in identifying sidewalks which are not getting cleared with in the forty eight hours of the “end of storm” which pretty much equals end of parking ban. So if a sidewalk is not cleared by Monday January 2nd in respect to this storm, then giving us the address and we will see if we can get it cleared by the owners or at least investigate the reason it is not cleared, knowing about it is helpful.

The most predominant suggestion was to get the information out as many ways as possible, including those popular (sarcasm) robo calls, website for more detailed information, FaceBook, television (which we were told that anyone under 30 never watches TV), we also reminded people to go to the CivicReady button at the bottom of any page on the town website and sign up, so you can get the information on the device or platform which works best for all. If we learn nothing more from the calls we receive it is the fact there is more than seventeen thousand variations or opinions out there on how we should communicate. At this point we are focusing on trying to do four or five ways well. Thank you for your cooperation and input.

Town Meeting Prep, There is much work continuing on the January 11 STM and the January 4 TA Review of Articles. The “Review” will be held concurrent with Appropriation Committees hearing on financial articles beginning at 6 PM in the Selectboard Meeting Room. The articles outside the scope of the Appropriation Committee will proceed immediately following review of the financial articles.

The “review” will be televised, we encourage residents (particularly Town Meeting members) to send question before, during and after the review to msullivan@southhadleyma.gov and I will do my best to answer them or gather the information, so you will be informed as TMM and ready to vote on January 11 in the Town Hall Auditorium. This is key to expediting the process in a thoughtful manner.

Some have expressed concerns about holding the review in the Selectboard Meeting Room, as it only accommodates about fifty people. There was a couple of factors which led me to make the decision. The AC normally adjourns to another space to deliberate, we have some new equipment in the SB room which makes presentations more robust and the simple fact most TMM do not attend this venue, but choose to watch it in the comfort of their own home. Which for any of you who have attended a winter forum in the Town Hall Auditorium would attest to the fact drafty is the best way to describe the setting. We encourage every TMM to attend the review and I will publicly admit it was a bad idea, if all 120 show on January 4.

On January 11 we will make an effort to warm the old hall up, but I would not suggest shorts and sandals. Think of it as just two New England traditions colliding, winter and Town Meetings. To all the TMMs who have already sought information, it is greatly appreciated.

FY 18 Budget, The process continues I have met with all departments with the exception of the School Department, which I anticipate will occur in the next few weeks. I know they have been working on the internal figures for FY 18 and understandably it is a large and complex task.

The only “significant changes” or in some cases “concerns” is some creative ways the Library Director and I have been considering to make his staffing more flexible (within the CBA), accommodating the GML in anticipation of a vote at the STM, the Chief and I have been discussing some additional training for the PD. Also the COA Director and I have been discussing some expanded or in some cases growing services and how that would affect staffing. We also continue to see growing health insurance cost (likely 10%) and request for Veteran Benefits.

On the revenue side we seem pretty steady as a community, the picture at the state level does not seem as positive. With some suggesting there may be 9C cuts in FY 17, either way it does not sound like it will be strong for the Commonwealth in FY 18. I will likely be suggesting we add to OPEB and possibly Stabilization, but I can further explain as the appropriate time nears.

Public Records Law, Just as a reminder on our January 13 Professional Development Day we will addressing this issue. There has been a few surrounding communities who have asked if they can attend and we certainly will try to accommodate.

While this is a major change in the law, I and the Town Clerk are doing our level best to stay ahead of the curve. The Town Clerk has already posted on her web page the list of South Hadley’s Records Access Officers (RAO). Both The Town Clerk and the Town Administrator will remain Primary RAOs. We have put a protocol in place and will be fine tuning policy and procedure in the coming weeks.

There are many facets to this new CMR (980/32), but on we have been focused on as of late, is to drive information to the website. One big project we have started is to have all contracts, vendors, CBAs, individual (like mine) and agency agreements all reside on the website once signed. I am sure there are other communities who have done this, but it has been an organic idea for us. This will be another step towards real transparency something the SB has always encouraged.

Internet Connectivity to Ledges, I am hoping to ask the SB for the ATM for a PEG warrant article to spend about \$15,000 to bring a direct high speed line to the Ledges. It was previously priced at \$58,000 but through conversations with Comcast the price has been drastically reduced (by about \$46K). Discussion with SHELD continues about how they might serve our needs. There are benefits on both sides, so until we get enough facts about the right decision for South Hadley (Town of) we will just be happy it is much more reasonable than originally thought and far better (and dependable) than bouncing beams of towers.

I hope to have more about this in the next several weeks, as we try to wrap up our telecom consultant project. Obviously the phones will play a significant role in the determination for this project. No the future of the golf course the building will remain viable and will undoubtedly be used for something and whatever that is will likely need dependable internet.

Thank you and Happy New Year!

Respectfully submitted,

Michael J. Sullivan

Town Administrator, South Hadley