



March 31, 2017

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.

Land and Water Conservation Grant; I had the opportunity to meet with Melissa Cryan from the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs to give her a guided tour of the two site we have applied for in respect to this grant. One grant would be directed at Phase III of the River to Range Initiative which would construct a bridge over Bachelor Brook at the northern of the Phase I "Accessible Loop Trail". The other grant was proposed for renovations of Fred Smith Park as designed by the Conway School of Design for the South Hadley Redevelopment Authority.

These two projects total about \$477,000 and are 50% reimbursable from this grant. We do also have a Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP) grant application in through the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission to address the bridge project. The cost to the taxpayer would be less with the FLAP grant which could be decided by Fall of 2017.

There will be two articles on the May 10 warrant, as required by the state for this grant. It is likely no "appropriation and/or borrowing" would need to happen until 2018 if we were to receive either grant. However I have included the Phase II River to Range in the warrant. I am hopeful the Capital Planning will move the needed painting project for the OFHM forward this spring, this would tie in nicely to any grant we may receive or work we can do internally at Smith Park. Town Planner Richard Harris has been working diligently on these applications, his efforts are greatly appreciated.

It is not uncommon to apply for multiple grants for a project in hopes of getting the one with the largest gift, however we never are sure we will get any and there is rarely a grant in these times which does not have a substantial "match" required.

Rabbit Brewery; The Town Planner Richard Harris assembled all the various entities from the districts and the municipality to discuss the possibilities and requirements of the New Ludlow Road brewery project with the principle owners. Bill Osley on of the partners expressed to me how excited he was about the project.

It will be housed in the older of the two former Presstek buildings, it is in a lower density area and adjacent to mostly industrial or commercial properties. This will bring additional jobs to South Hadley, increase the property value of the parcels and add another "place to visit" in SoHa.

PVTA Advisory Board; The most recent PVTA Advisory Board Meeting in Springfield had the alternate representative driving the bus for South Hadley, as the usual first team representative former Selectboard Member Marilyn Ishler has been sidelined with an injury. I know we all wish her a speedy recovery.

It is a very important time for the PVTA as Director Mary MacInnes has announced she will step down at the end of April. There is a number of exciting projects which a starting (new Cottage Street in Springfield Headquarters) or finishing (Westfield Transportation Pavilion, Union Station). PVTA is also continuing to be an innovator when it comes to public transportation, with more conveniences, more accessibility and best practices being employed all the time.

One very interesting factoid was how public transportation has declined by about 8% in the PVTA area, but also in the Northeast region from Albany to Amesbury. It is still early in the trend, but Josh Rickman the Director of Operations cited, Uber, lower gas prices, e-z car loans (predatory, but easy) and other transportation opportunities are all playing a part in the decline. However, making busses more reliable, more environmentally friendly, more attractive, are the ways PVTA is planning on making it all work for their riders.

MPIC; It is that time of the year when we start to reflect on the work of the past year, project successes, progress made and the Master Plan Implementation Committee offers positive assistance in that reflection process.

Chairperson Judy Gooch, Ann Eaton and Margret Jodoin were gracious enough to visit for ninety minutes or so recently and discuss what they see for project and what they see left to do. We did discuss the fact that South Hadley is on the cusp of needing a full update of the Master Plan. Much of the information the present plan is relying on eight to nine years old, a lot has changed in the world in those years.

In my humble opinion the active members should be charged with facilitating an update, if they are willing to accept the task. I have been informed there was precursor committee to MPIC, even with that in mind, I feel this group has a knowledge basis of the material and an understanding of the organizational rhythm of the municipal complex which would be very valuable to the process. Perhaps as early as the 2018 ATM we should start to consider funding for such an update.

Town Hall Repairs: The fire notification system seems like it is almost ready to start, the drawings are completed, contractor has submitted all the paper work, Fire District 1 has given its blessing and I do not see any cost problems (yet). The elevator update is another kettle of fish entirely. It seems every time we get closer what it is going to cost the goal post moves by way of yet another code or requirement, I feel for all those developers who bemoan how hard it is to get anything done.

The second floor roof sprung some new leaks this week, we had Quenniville Roofing in doing patches before the rains came, so all we can do now is hope and check the pails. Early indications are that Capital Planning has moved it up the list of needs, it is greatly needed.

ATM/STM Draft Warrant; I was hoping by the end of business today I would be able to deliver to the Selectboard and Town Meeting a “draft” of the articles for the May 10 ATM/STM, unfortunately other issues precluded my attention being fully devoted to the task.

However I will do my level best to get those draft documents to the Selectboard and Town Meeting by Tuesday's meeting of the Selectboard if not sooner.

There is some General Code cleanup I hope to have ready, I have mentioned before that the GML is in a separate article from the General Fund budget. I felt it was similar approach taken when we introduced the RDA. I am aware there is some discussions brewing and I would hate to have the hard work and even harder discussions which went the General Fund budget be cast asunder by the debate.

FY 18 Budget; As of this writing the FY 18 budget is balanced, will provide nearly the same level of service as the FY 17. The only municipal department which saw a significant change was the Police Department and much of that increase was in much needed funds for training, which will run the full gambit from tactical to sensitivity. Of course the increase which really made the budget a challenge was health insurance it was up 9.8% and we are looking at another 10% next year if there are not plan design changes to the present plan at HCHIT.

At the last Selectboard Meeting I stated publicly how much I appreciated the cooperation of the School Superintendent and School Committee in making some very difficult reductions in their request. I can commiserate with anyone who would like to get more done, but lacks the financial means to do so, it is an age old problem. The Superintendent made some cuts which I am sure will challenge the district going forward, they still are getting a small increase and he understands most of the health insurance increase will pay for costs related to School Department increasing benefits. Any way you look at it does not make the job easier.

The updated budget is on the Appropriations and Selectboard web pages. At this point I do not expect many changes and really see this as a best picture budget. We were unable to make the additions to Capital Stabilization and Stabilization I had hoped, we did manage to put more into OPEB and there is about \$170K or so of non-bondable Capital Planning items coming out of Unreserved Free Cash.

I would encourage all Town Meeting Members to start to familiarize themselves with the budget and certainly call me if there is any questions, the earlier in the process the better.

Frank DeToma; I would be remiss not to thank Selectboard Member Frank DeToma. I have never seen in any community I have served someone who is more dedicated to his community. He never for one minute thinks that he is not just on the verge of fixing the world, if not South Hadley....I for one do not doubt he is on the threshold of success in all his endeavors. He is a gentleman of the highest order, a brilliant thinker, an unafraid doer and most important genuine human being. Thank you Frank, I know I will not miss you, because we already agreed you have more work to do for this great town!

Thank you for all your attention to the aforementioned matters and to your guidance in respect to the budget and a host of other South Hadley issues.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael J Sullivan

South Hadley, Administrator