



May 11, 2017

Honorable Selectboard,

Please accept this abridged accounting of activities and initiatives which have been occupying my time and the time of other public employees during the past weeks. Thank you in advance for your attention and interest.

Annual Town Meeting, by most measures the May 10 Annual town Meeting was a rousing success. A majority of Town Meeting Members (TMM) suggested they were pleased by the outcomes and the proceedings. There was some important issues raised and perhaps most importantly the debate was civil and informed.

The FY 18 Operating Budget passed without a great deal of rancor or distress, I am certain central to the successful prosecution of Article 8 was due to the early effort and numerous opportunities to express opinion or make inquiries publicly or electronically about the budget. As a Selectboard you were prepared to recite the FY 18 budget and the cost drivers like acts from a Shakespeare play. I am sure the SB is relieved to hear we will not have to discuss the FY 19 budget six or seven more meetings. We may however have to revisit the FY 17 budget perhaps for some end of year transfers.

Many TMM's immersed themselves and really formed an understanding of the cost centers which were effecting the FY 18 budget, principal among them health insurance, police training, retirement and schools. Although the SHPS increase was modest this year, we likely cannot depend on to be so meager in the future.

The BOH composition and appointment proposed changes were a topic of healthy discussion with a great amendment from Town Meeting Member Barbara Merchant to separate the questions on composition and process. The economics of plastic bags, the carbon foot print of bags and more generated lengthy and interesting. The conversation ranged from the loss of right to choose plastic or paper to a seven mile island of plastic bags to the thickness of what will be allowed to be reused all woven into an important debate. I know I will never wash my Spandex again and not just because I enjoy eating fish!

Congratulations to all who had a part in making the business of the town go smoothly!

Siemens Project/Beth Greenblatt, like so many projects there are few which never seem to go away. We are finally looking at closing out the energy reduction project and move to the monitoring/review phase of the agreement, we already know from data this has been a very successful energy reduction mission. The project continues to be about ten percentage points above the baseline predicted.

Fortunately or unfortunately this raises the bar when we consider joining Mass Green Communities, as none (maybe just a little realized at the end of 2015) of the reductions will count towards our required 20% reduction for DOER. We can look at this two ways, we can decry this as unfair or take on the challenge. I think we can do it, we still have some reductions at the WWTP and if we recently upgraded the elevators, both of which may contribute. I also am hoping the SB will continue to support using Beacon Integrated Systems as our consultant, Beth Greenblatt has an extensive understanding of our use and systems, and she also has some great ideas to reach the 20%. I am sure we will be discussing this more in the coming months.

Canal Bicentennial Park, the project has started with the replacement of the decking at the park. It is truly exciting to see the lookout start to be revitalized. The decking is going to be fully replaced, however the piers and underlying structural beams had little or no signs of aging or demonstrate a need to be replaced. This should be good news as we are doing this on a shoe string.

The vista trimming will be ongoing, with more control trimming being performed over the next few months. Citizens should be cautious as there is a fair amount of poison ivy below the decking. We are working to see how we may get it treated, as it is in close proximity to a water source. In case you had not noticed.



The DPW staff will be utilized for the excavation process for the project and has agreed to work weekends on overtime. This is not how we have traditionally approached such a public venture in recent history. We will be measuring the time on task, quality of work and cost effectiveness in comparison contracting out of this work. The DPW staff will be asked to give input as part of the calculus on how to make this concept good for all parties.

The the “circle” will be removed and handicap parking will be relocated, as part of the project. We are working off in-house conceptual drawings and the original plans which is not always the easiest course, but it does save substantial money. The paving, cement, curbing and finish work will be done by a contractor. DPW Superintendent’s assistance on this project has been vital, thank you Jim!

Gaylord Library Staffing; the vetting process for the three positions will begin May 17th. As per personnel policy, qualified candidates will be initially selected by Human Resources Director Jennifer Wolowicz from the 50 plus applicants for the three positions. The selected applicants will be vetted by a panel which will include the HR Director, the Library Director Joe Rodio and one other municipal employee (unrelated to the Library).

Once a person or persons are chosen to be recommended to the Town Administrator for appointment, there may be a subsequent interview (this has only happened twice in three years) if recommended by the panel or if I decide it is necessary. I remain blind to the candidates and applications (or resumes) until the panel has completed its work. This process has served us very well in selecting excellent candidates through various departments.

Our intent is to have the very best staff serving the Gaylord Branch by July 1, 2017 as spelled out in the MOA. It is clear there are many who prefer a more politicized process, but in the long run a formalized process conducted by professionals in a professional manner will produce the best outcome.

Stationary/Card Logo, I never thought it would be so difficult to standardize and integrate existing branding into a logo which we could use for various applications, or maybe I did know it was incredibly complex, as I have participated in such an exercise before. More likely I tried to ignore the expected challenges.

ATA Wolowicz, IT Coordinator Doolittle and P&B Coordinator Iskander all have been extremely involved in the process, however I decided to ask for professional help. No not that kind of “professional help”... a graphic designer, as we want a logo which elicits “Town of South Hadley” branding. A logo which has the underlying technology (Adobe Publisher) to be easily adapted, with appropriate adjustable resolutions for stationary, business cards, banners, signage or other branding opportunities which may present themselves.

I apologize as it has slowed the process of printing business cards, but we should be ready to go in a few weeks. It will be hard for the “seal” to become a less prominent part of the South Hadley “brand”, but in 2017 it just does not set us apart from the pack. As soon as we have some “concepts” I will get them to the SB members for review.

Neighbors Help Neighbors, Rich Rubin the recently hired Executive Director of NHN and I met to discuss the need and my perspective on this South Hadley based Food Pantry which serves SoHa and Granby. We discussed how the municipality might be able to help with their mission. I explained the municipality as an organization and the SB as the governing body is very supportive of the work, NHN does for the people in need from South Hadley and Granby. However I made it clear we need to be careful not to exhaust our staff with calls for volunteerism or financial support to non-profits, as the demands are many.

We discussed the idea of doing a September 11th food drive, certainly nothing like the annual MLK drive, but one to fill in the calendar. I am not sure what it will look like, but I assure you it will not be something which is offensive to staff or places participation demands on them as individuals. Low key, voluntary and driven by caring, will be the principal prevailing thought in participation, if we decided we can do it.

River Roll and Stroll, congratulations to Mariann Millard and Sean Condon co-chairs of this inaugural event on the bridge. It was one of the best organized “pop up” events I have ever witnessed. The level of detail and planning was awe inspiring, the music was as eclectic as it gets and there was just the right number of vendors.

MassDOT despite their initial apprehension, became thoroughly convinced this was all possible and have already started to refer this as an “annual” event. It is this person’s hope if that is their wish they become more deeply involved in the execution of the event. This could greatly reduce the red tape and orange fencing.

Again, congratulations to all parties who lent a hand leading up to the day or on May 7th. It was a shining example of what can be accomplished when two communities commune, there was such power even the weather was afraid to act up!

Industrial Power Group, although they have not been able to start their project to harness the methane at the landfill, mostly due to the mating season of the Pine Barren Moth, we still are receiving our monthly payment as agreed upon.

Beyond the appreciated remittance we all look forward to the methane becoming a useful source of renewable energy. While the \$60K a year (or more when the start generating) does not make up for the losses from the closure of the landfill, it is helpful.

As a conservative measure we have not infused the receipts into the revenue budget. It should be noted by Mass DOR regulations the proceeds must go into the General Fund and cannot be used to offset the enterprise fund costs associate with trash or recycling. Last year and for next year (FY18) the payments will circulate to Unreserved Free Cash, until this project is settled I would caution against making this an annual revenue source as part of the budget.

Tree Planting/Representative Scibak, there will be a tree planting at 11 AM at the Senior Center on Dayton Street in honor of all the work Representative Scibak has done for community reforestation. The recognition is being bestowed upon him by Massachusetts Association of Landscape and Nursery Professionals.

The Association President Henry Gillet will be in attendance at the ceremony, as will other dignitaries. The tree was donated by Hadley Gardens Route 9 in Hadley and was chosen in cooperation with Tree Warden Chris Ryan. The tree will be directly across from the front entrance of the Center and will have a marker telling about the tree species and inscribed with Representative Scibak's name. Congratulation John on this distinguished honor!

Planning/Conservation Renovations, there are so many projects going on throughout the municipal buildings and with more to come in the near future, it is hard to keep up with it all. The elevator upgrade, the fire notification system, a new stairs at the rear of Ledges Clubhouse, Canal-Bicentennial Park upgrades, trees at the Senior Center (I am sure I am forgetting something), it is not surprising the extensive changes being made in the Planning Department seem to almost go unnoticed.

However, I must thank Planner Richard Harris his help for overseeing the execution of these renovations and for ATA Jennifer Wolowicz managing the process and the emotions related to the project. Also the cooperation of the Planning/ConsCom staff has made this possible. The goal is to professionalize the space, make it more adaptable and functional for the staff and the public.

There was a significant amount files and maps which were unnecessary removed, the remaining files are being organized and we have created another professional meeting space, by consolidating offices. This has been a large project and I encourage you to stop up and see what has taken place in the space.

The upcoming year will see the hallways addressed from information such a fliers and pamphlets better displayed, directional signage updated, walls painted, carpet replaced and hopefully the installation of a self-service kiosk which we hope will allow people to more while they visit town hall. It will include filling out electronic applications for permits, jobs, licenses, pay bills with a credit card, seek information about services or search on-line records. There is still internal conversations taking place, but we should be ready to more fully describe this project by January 2018.

Thank you to the Selectboard, again for your leadership and execution at Town Meeting!

Respectfully submitted,

Michael J. Sullivan

South Hadley, Town Administrator