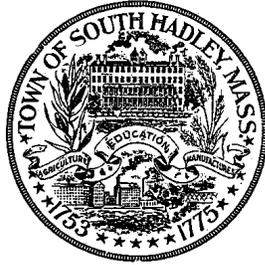


TOWN OF SOUTH HADLEY

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April 30, 2013

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.

Master Plan Implementation Committee; I met in the Selectboard Office for the second time in as many weeks with the Master Plan Implementation Committee to review task and objectives assigned to the Town Administrator in the “Master Plan”. I believe that three out of four members in attendance regard my perspectives and efforts thus far, in appositive light. It was a good opportunity to speak about how we can help the public to develop a realistic expectation of the municipal capacity to direct, facilitate or institute change or new initiatives, as well to inform the public that a “Master Plan” cannot be rigid, but must be adaptable to changing needs and ideas.. As I have suggested to others, making the distinction between the municipality and the “Town” is critically important to internalize. The “Town” can do anything, but the municipality cannot do everything. I assured the members we have ideas and strategies to do more for the residents of South Hadley, but clearly there are areas where only the citizens can or should direct, facilitate, support and institute change.

There was significant discourse about how we can use existing communication platforms and resources to better connect with the public. I feel strongly that I and the Assistant Town Administrator are making progress towards improving internal and external communication. As we look at our website, BlackBoard Connect, the cable access channel, communications with news outlets or seek to understand social media, we are both mindful we will need to be in a state of constant improvement.

We also discussed the “customer service” training and I spoke of our planning for a Professional Development (PD) Day and how citizen relations could be one of the topics and if not this quarter then certainly the next quarter we would be attacking that issue. I would like to say that from my vantage the “customer service” in Town Hall seems to be high quality, but we can always improve. We hope to announce a date for the “PD Day”, possibly June 21st. On the date finally chosen Town Hall will close for business at noon and the development will begin!

The “committee” gave me some good feedback on some of the new software we are considering and/or about to implementation. The majority seemed pleased that progress was already being made in many areas.

SHELD Manager Wayne Doerpholtz Tour/Meeting; It was a pleasure to be provided a tour of the SHELD operation, by Manager Wayne Doerpholtz. There are some very exciting initiatives being launched at the “Electric Light”. I found the manager to be excited and engaged about the projects ...he was not ...static. (could not resist, sorry)

We went to the Stony Brook Data Facility, this “in-progress” project will allow SHELD to tap into the information storage business and provide a competitive, highly secure data storage to businesses and institutions. The manager has a clear market in mind and some real strategies to provide other offerings as SHELD builds out the high speed network and increases their capacity to provide service for such a system. “High speed” will not only be for business, as they hope to roll out a residential offering for data transmission in a beta area in the not too distant future.

We also visited the Pine Shed Electric Transfer Station. This facility is impressive and all the more so, due to the fact that much of the engineering and was nearly completely installed by in-house staff from SHELD. It was clear to see the pride that Manager Doerpholtz has in his operation and facilities. The low note was discussing the diminishing electric load that municipal light operations are facing in New England. This is primarily due to loss of major users from manufacturing to other businesses, even when a grocery store closes it represents the equivalent of over 200 houses of consumption lost. As markets and industries get more competitive it is reasonable they want to lower their overhead and energy is one of the first places they look in New England ...then all too often they look in the Carolinas. SHELD wants to be part of the effort afoot to restore New England to an industrial player and assist the greater community in that effort.

Department Manager’s Meeting; A meeting of Department Managers was held on May 2nd to discuss ideas, concepts and initiatives which are being contemplated or implemented by administration which will in variably require “buy in” and support from all the various departments. This meeting also gave the staff an opportunity to start to know my style of management.

It was well attended, there were even uninvited guests who in the past were invited, but I did not see as department managers. I clarified that all are welcome, but we will streamline these meetings in the future to allow any manager who is unrelated to the agenda topics the opportunity to stay working.

There has been requests to consider, like many other communities for closing on Fridays. I brought this up as an issue I would be willing to present as a trial to the Selectboard under the following conditions; that other boards (i.e. BOH, Assessors, Planning) endorse the idea in writing, that all effected bargaining units agree to the adjustment, that there is no reduction of hours and all offices stay open late, fully staffed to serve the public, in addition the Selectboard would make the final determination as to any plan for adjusted hours.

Conceptually the Town Hall will be open for business 8 AM until 6:00 PM Monday through Thursday, all staff would stagger lunch breaks and be reduced to one half hour, Thirty five hour a week employees would work three 9 hour and one eight hour day and forty hour a week employees would work four tens. The advantage would be allowing citizens additional business hour access, lower energy costs (window air conditioners are a killer) and a boost in moral (I would hope). In the meeting I stressed that I would not present this to the Selectboard formally unless there was clear plan and unanimity, furthermore I stated that I would only suggest it for July 2013, four Fridays (July 5, 12, 19 and 26, the fifth of July is a real saver as we would essentially cooling down the offices for one day). It was stated emphatically that this would be just a test, if approved, and would not affect satellite offices (i.e. Library, COA, DPW), but I would encourage those managers to work with their staff to allow them some similar and amenable situation. Unfortunately the later would not be offset by any recognized savings.

The schools stated that they would have to keep their offices open, I said if in fact that is true, I will not recommend the idea to the Selectboard, Town Hall has to be shut or it just does not make any sense. To

be closed for one floor only would only serve to confuse the public and impact the savings greatly, more to come.

Security was another topic of discussion. We discussed ideas about centralizing the entrance for night meetings thereby reducing the points of security risk. It seemed that the entrance nearest the PD was the most appealing, as there is a higher feeling of safety amongst employees as they leave that door due to the proximity to the PD. We also will be revisiting the protocol for locking up and making it part of long term planning effort.

Other topics were performance evaluations, building maintenance (including the new janitorial service), long term planning for Town Hall and Administration taking on additional responsibilities.

Municipal Real Estate; The Town Planner, Collector, DPW Superintendent, ATA and myself met to discuss strategies to consider and move forward in monetizing available town own parcels. We will be soliciting the assistance of the South Hadley Tax Title Attorney Peter Brown in moving these properties. I believe we will be discussing this at the upcoming meeting, but the properties we are concentrating on are commonly referred to as the Black Stevens Property, Toth Property, 351 East Street , Abbey Street , Lamb and Bridge, Future Former Library, 50-52 School Street and "land of no value properties". Some of these will be more expedient for auction others may be RFPs, each presents advantages as a tool. The common goal will be to get them back on the tax rolls and maximize the sale. We will also strongly consider the effects on the neighborhoods a sale may have for the town.

I look forward to your input.

CEDC Meeting; A meeting of the Community Economic Development Committee was held in the Selectboard Office recently. Chairman Jeff Labreque gave me an opportunity to speak about what I have seen in South Hadley and how I am taking steps to attract development to the community. The group was very interested and provided good background for me as I learn more about South Hadley.

Like many similar committees they are frustrated by the speed of change.

They are a committee amongst a sea of committees that are struggling to find a clear path to that revolution, revitalization or rediscovery of South Hadley Falls in particular and presented several keen observations, particularly in the area of housing market diversification.

I see the CEDC as a very important tool for the Rise of the Falls and will do my best to provide the members support in their quest for resurrection by the river.

Labor Counsel Attorney Timothy Norris; The ATA and I met with Attorney Norris and he made us aware of pending bargaining and litigation. We also spoke about the need for Atty. Norris to assist us in some of our training needs, particularly in the area of work place interaction, managing union members and other related HR issues. The ATA will be directing those efforts, including updating policies, organizing seminars and looking for ways to make South Hadley a great place to work hard.

There will be updates on bargaining/personnel in a future executive session on May 21.

Cable Studio Visit; Bob Smith invited me to view the high school base facility, it happened to be voting day so there was plenty of open parking. Bob and Studio assistant Dan Pease have a number of ideas of how he will be able to do more with the equipment he presently has and significantly increase involvement with the equipment he hopes to acquire in FY 14. I am very proud to say that Bob informed me I was the first TA to visit the studio that he is aware of, so he offered me my own show and I quickly declined.

We did discuss the idea of having a ‘Chairman’s Forum’ hosted by the SB Chair. The idea would be to have other Chairpersons, department managers or interesting people in once a month to discuss topics of the day. I leave it to you Mr. Chair ...the next Mike Wallace, please.

There will be some interesting considerations in the future as the media market is changing rapidly. Some of those changes are not friendly to the future revenues provided by cable, so it will be important to monitor the changes.

HCOG; Executive Director Todd Ford of the Hampshire Council of Governments (HCOG) Frank Mertes Municipal Services Director for HCOG and I met to discuss ways we may strengthen of relationship and enhance the return on investment South Hadley receives from its membership in this organization. We discussed a number of areas where we may have more interconnectivity.

They suggested that there may be some opportunities to create regional partnerships on the matter of solid waste, energy management, accounting services (which we do not need as I can tell you South Hadley has an outstanding Town Accountant) and centralized purchasing. It was my suggestion that we would be interested in any and all ways to lower the cost of government, share responsibilities, improve municipal services and breakdown boundaries.

The Director also mentioned that HCOG was exploring some “tourism” opportunities which may benefit South Hadley and the region, I expressed a strong willingness to learn more about that as it unfolds.

Facilities Dude; South Hadley is now part of “Dudeville” which is the community of municipalities across the nation using this tool to track energy, manage facilities and assist with centralizing purchases. There are about ten cities and towns in the Commonwealth using Facility Dude and a quite few more school districts using School Dude, all reporting good success.

This platform will give us a base to gather information on longevity, maintenance history and build a capital plan for facilities with a high level of confidence. Work order tracking, craftsperson assignment, costs of service, model numbers, inventories and much more can be part of the record in an easy and accessible format.

The cost for our first year is zero and is sponsored by Johnson Controls, with no strings attached. The second year would be less than \$7,000 and we have a 30 day quit clause. All the unlimited training is free, we can have as many licenses as we want, the program is expandable to the schools (which we are all for and the Superintendent is supportive), the data from the Siemens project can be downloaded into the record. This is cloud based system so no hardware or servers to add. The ATA and the Information Technology Specialist Jamie Doolittle participated in the webinar with me last week. Attorney Ryan reviewed the agreement and stated that it did not need a SB signature (no expenditure) and thought it was great idea.

We are hoping for a late May launch date, our platform is being built as you read this, and it should be available to every department by late June. Once we become reasonably proficient we will roll it out to the schools and then perhaps, even the public. It does have some pretty cool applications for the public if we work out the kinks first.

Canoe Portage Docks; On Friday April 26 I accompanied Richard Constant and other citizens on a tour of the first canal built in the United States. Particular attention was given to the canoe/kayak launch just off the Bicentennial Park. It was expressed that they would like to see if the launch could be moved to an area known as “El Campo” upstream, this property is also controlled by HG&E.

A request to meet and discuss with HG&E officials has been issued, I understand they have a major financial project that is requiring a great deal of their time and effort, but I hope to be on the short list for a conversation on both this matter, as well as others.

Clean Rite Janitorial Services; The new lower cost janitorial service has taken over and though it is early no major impact is anticipated, particularly in regards to the employee will remain the same as with the former service. Clean Rite will be providing us with a comparable service schedule at a lower cost. We have cooperated in agreeing to take some measures within the Town Hall to honor the savings by becoming more proactive in the partnership.

We will work to add some improved services, such as seasonal cleanings including window washing (which I am told has not happened in years) and rug cleaning to name a couple. There also may be a part for Clean Rite to play as we work towards developing a facilities management model.

“Know your Town” Landfill; I along with members of the SB attended this communal conversation about solid waste and the future of the landfill. It was well attended. There were numerous ideas considered, but the straw poll at the end would indicate that it would be complex and challenging obstacles ahead to continue operation (I am not saying could not be done) given that two members of the BOH showed strong support for closure.

I respect and have no envy for the difficult decisions facing Town Meeting and in particular the Selectboard. There are simply no easy answers, but some really creative solutions. All of the changes I have seen so far come with some increases at least initially, none I know have been a way to lower the cost to the consumer immediately. “Zero Waste” does suggest some long term savings, but the cultural and investment adjustments should not be dismissed. I am a believer in the “wisdom of crowds” and remain confident the best answer for South Hadley will come to be through consensus.

Collin’s Center Payroll Processing; Mary Aicardi from UMASS Boston was in to discuss the payroll processing and I made her aware of some of the ways I feel that we could streamline and homogenize the way payroll is processed. I have heard discussions that SH in the past had spent considerable money on equipment and software that may be the end of its useful life. If that is the fact we may start preparing to take a closer look at contracting all or part of the process.

It should be noted that it may be unwise to attempt any changes in this process until we have a clear picture of what will occur as the Treasurer-Clerk-Collector changes unfurl.

Thank you for your support and guidance and please let me know of any concerns or omissions you may find in this report. If you would like to hear more about any of the issues listed or others you feel I can clarify, please call me at your convenience.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael J. Sullivan
Town Administrator, South Hadley

