



September 30, 2013

Honorable Selectboard;

Please accept this as an abridged version of the work being performed in South Hadley Town Hall by myself and more often by other dedicated employees.

Thank you for your support and patience as we try to make government more functional and efficient.

**Hampshire County Health Insurance Trust Wellness Program;** Assistant Town Administrator Jennifer Wolowicz and I met with Christine Sass Wellness Coordinator for the "Trust" to develop a strategy to make our workforce healthier and therefore more productive. There is significant evidence that suggests the investment in strategies that make employees "healthier" returns dividends in the workplace.

Simply encouraging employees to get up from their desk after sixty minutes of sedentary work for three minutes has been shown to increase productivity, morale and health. This dividend manifests itself in less sick time and a better work environment. The "Fall Fitness Challenge" for South Hadley employees hosted by the Trust has already started, allowing each participant to engage in a more active life style ...yes I have signed up. We will be rolling out a number of other initiatives (i.e. screenings, group walks, healthy cooking demonstrations) to help with this goal.

The Health Trust has not produced the requested premium to claim analysis so as we can better determine whether or not we are receiving the appropriate rates. I had hoped to be in a better position to make a determination as to whether we should seek additional quotes or relationships. While my confidence in the "trust" continues to grow, I remain inquisitive as to whether there is a different fit for our health insurance needs. As the review continues, I am committed to improving our relationship, understanding and utilization of The Hampshire County Health Insurance Trust. This remains one of our most significant annual investments and expenditures.

**Professional Development Day II;** As you are aware we had our quarterly day on Friday (September 27<sup>th</sup>) dedicated to improving our understanding of South Hadley, its needs, projects and assets and how we, as employees, can deliver municipal services more effectively.

The Town Hall was closed for the afternoon, there was discussions on risk aversion and customer service. These valuable trainings were provided by MIAA and are part of their rewards program. You may remember that having participation in these trainings produce bonus reductions in our premiums for property and casualty. The program can produce as much as ten thousand dollars in savings annually, while improving employee performance.

**Reorganization Plan;** The plan has started to unfold as of October 1<sup>st</sup> as promised. Both Debbie Baldini and Carlene Hamlin have signed memorandum of agreements to allow these changes to unfold. I thank

them both for their cooperation and look forward to their assistance in working out the kinks in the plan. There has been and will be adjustments and I have received great ideas to deliver improved services in a cost effective from not only these two professionals, but from the staff, as well.

There initial changes, converting bank accounts, moving records, making staff accessible is already happening. If you are not seeing change or hearing about it, which means the transition is working. There will be bumps in the road, but through cooperation it will all work out. The physical needs are still being reviewed and we would like to avoid any movement of space, unless it is absolutely necessary.

The staff has been made aware in individual conversations (with those directly affected) and as whole (at PD Day) of the changes and the expectation that their cooperation is necessary and anticipated. Thus far, they have been up to the task. As matter of fact, they have even suggested some additional cost saving reductions. The full evolution will unfold over a nine month period.

I thank you for patience and the employees for their collective cooperation. These upgrades would not happen without both.

**PVTA;** It was my pleasure to attend the PVTA Board of Directors meeting recently, along with Selectboard Member Marilyn Ishler. It should be reassuring to the residents of South Hadley that they have an active and respected member of the PVTA Board advocating for the town. Selectboard Member Ishler serves on several key subcommittees, including finance, has an excellent relationship with Director McInnes and is regarded well by her board colleagues.

This important regional partner is increasing access to routes throughout the region and is reminded regularly about the need to better connect South Hadley to both the southern and northern PVTA hubs. They have recently started expanded access and additional runs on a number of regional routes. Nicole Rohan PVTA route wizard is aware of South Hadley's needs for greater access.

**Bonding;** Ms. Hamelin, Ms. Baldini and I met with David Isenthal our bond advisor on September 25<sup>th</sup>, as we continue to prepare for a November offering which will consolidate some bond anticipation notes and other approved borrowings. We are, at you behest, to develop some approaches to bonding that will lessen the immediate effect on the taxpayer and share the cost over a longer term.

The three areas of change from previous borrowings is using bank qualified bonds, level debt and lengthening terms. I am hopeful that Mr. Isenthal will have some projections runs which would depict the advantages and disadvantages of these borrowing mechanisms. We will be scheduling our bond review with Moody's in the next few weeks. They are encouraged by the improvement in the golf course operations and seeking a greater understanding in respect to Landfill operation and its impact on the tax/ratepayer.

**LEPC, Sheltering;** We are ramping up our attention to local emergency planning. We recently scheduled a Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC) meeting. The Acting Emergency Management Coordinator Forrest Price, our MEMA Regional Coordinator Robert Barry, as well as representatives from Mount Holyoke College and both Fire Districts. Internal attendees at the meeting were Commissioner Church, Director Hart, Chief Labrie, ATA Wolowicz, COA Director Trybus, Superintendent Reidy, Engineer Murphy and Assistant Superintendent Sweklow.

As part of the efforts to understand the needs related to emergencies the Health Director, the Acting EMD and I met with representatives from the regional shelter coordinators for Hampshire County,

American Red Cross representatives at both the high school and the middle school to review the assets and barriers for different sheltering situations on September 18th. The report will be available to us in about thirty days.

One of the primary task was to identify some defects in our operating plan, the need to update critical contact information and the necessity to exercise our local plan. This is another area where we will likely not be in an acceptable state of preparedness for another year. The good news is we had an enthusiastic start to the process.

I thank Mr. Price for the work he has done, but I do feel we will need to take some of the planning and execution functions of the plan in-house. Over the next several months I will be looking for your support to bring the management function under the auspices of the Health Director and seek a suitable way to keep the Acting Director engaged in the planning. It is my strong belief that emergency planning can no longer be a satellite operations for cities and towns.

**Youth Commission/Adult Task Force;** This past Thursday I meet again with individuals from the Adult Task Force to introduce them to the new facilitator Danielle Stelma. She is presently the Assistant Recreation Director, I am adding the facilitator role for the Youth Commission and Adult Task Force to her duties and responsibilities. As Assistant Director in the Recreation Danielle has demonstrated a high level of competency, hard work and has great potential for the future of South Hadley as an organization.

The members of the "task Force" seem to be comfortable in this pathway and it is cost effective for the town. It is my belief it will also strengthen the Youth Commissions relationship and access to resources with in Town Hall. This at the end of the day is a win-win situation.

**Potpourri of Project Updates;** *Texon*, you may have noticed it is still there, the ACOE has sent the MOU over to Massachusetts Historical Society for their review and approval. I have been reaching out to that organization through the Secretary of State's Office to see if there is any way we can expedite this perfunctory approval. Once signed by Mass Historical, it will go back to ACOE for their signature, then to the Selectboard for your signature. Literally and figuratively the only thing holding up the *Texon* Building is "red tape".

*FibreMark's* hazardous material abatement continues to progress. We will need to have an article at STM to declare the building surplus and available for sale. The crafting of an RFP to require demolition in return for an option to develop the land within the zoning regulations is ongoing

*Bardwell Street Library* RFP has not gotten a great deal of attention or at least what I had hoped, from the development community. We have reached out to PVPC, Western Mass Development, private developers, local property owners and some organizations throughout the state, the response has been unexcited. It is a small property, old building in a residential neighborhood. When developers are honest about this building we hear, concerns about historic compliance challenges, neighborhood concerns, size and scale, zoning and unknown costs, all reasonable and legitimate concerns for developers. The individual concerns are not insurmountable, but collectively they are an annoyance that developers are not anxious to take on in a marginal project.

*FY 15 Budget* internally conversations have begun, included in those discussions is how we will start to meet more of the capital investments needed and what strides we have made towards those needs in

FY 14. I also have started to look at how staffing a health care costs in particular drive the increases and I am looking for ways to creatively avert as must swelling as possible.

*Ipads, Ipads Ipads*, my pad has been taken hostage and it to be used as a test machine to find a way to remove the locks and keep the products which the “town” is licensed. We then will concentrate a more functional method for the SB to receive agendas, correspondence and other related material. We may even be able to solve the wifi mystery. Once we have those issues worked out we will schedule some trainings. I suspect the trainings are less and less necessary as each of you have cross trained and become more comfortable with the devices.

*Harper’s Payroll Service* has started their construction of our payroll system. The ATA and I met with critical personnel in respect to payroll from the Accounting, Treasurer’s and School Departments to avoid issues and to have the Harper’s people understand the nuances of South Hadley. As suggested in the meeting with over 40% of the communities across the Commonwealth using this system, there was not one nuance that they have not seen before. We are not as different as we suspect, and there is no embarrassment in coveting best practices.

Again I apologize for getting this to you late and thank you for your attention.

Respectfully,

Michael J Sullivan  
South Hadley Town Administrator