



February 27, 2014

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.



Texon Demolition: Thank you to Library Director Joe Rodio for keeping a close eye on the library project, but also what the neighbors are doing. Joe took a couple of photos. It is hard to see, but even with the severe weather over the last few weeks there are large sections of the building already razed.

The hold up at the Fibermark is with the Verizon trunk line that is inside the building. We have followed all the Verizon instructions and have spoken with parties from Springfield to Taunton. Last week Karen Nunes from the Taunton engineering office assured me once they received our check, which has been expedited the work will commence closely thereafter. JayMor Industries is ready and anxious to move in on that property as soon as possible.

Incredibly as it may seem the demolition given the weather seems to be on track for both properties. As you know we are working with PVPC to earn a grant for the demo of 50-52 School Street and is that does not come through I would suggest that the SB and TM consider reassigning the balance in last year's article resulting from the lower Fibermark price to remove that blighted property, as we consider the rehousing options associated with the property.

Removing these two blighted properties are key steps in the revitalization of the Falls. It is hard for the public to understand the complexities of getting this far and for some it seems like it should not take a decade, but that is the reality. Time waits for no one, but bureaucracy.

Visitor's-Code of Conduct; There has been a recent uptick in frustration amongst employees in respect to being berated or subjected to written insults. Recently we have received vulgarity laced e-mails and written messages, along with in-person customers displaying significant animus towards employees.

There is responsibility of management to protect employees in the work place and it has become a heightened priority due to the increased number of incidents. The SB will be presented with a copy of

the Town of Acton's "Visitors Code of Conduct" at your meeting. I urge you to consider and adopt this policy quickly.

While I hope to avoid a protracted discussion about what a reasonable person would consider "lewd or offensive behavior" and readily understand the enforcement limitations which exist, a "code" would give employees some level of confidence that management and the SB support and are willing to protect their rights. I do consider acceptance of a code of conduct will send a message. It will also give management a document to point to outlining the expectations of public interaction. Please note that these cases are the exception and not the rule and we all agree citizens are entitled to the best service we can provide, we are engaged and working to give our employees the skill sets to provide the highest level of service.

Employees, should not receive demeaning, threatening, vulgar or divisive messages in writing or orally. I would further ask that the SB to consider that any unsigned documents not be accepted or considered as they cannot be fairly responded to, investigated or evaluated. I also feel that any document that is associated with an individual be made public, I ask this in the name of civility and fairness.

Work Connection HMC; The ATA/HR Director Jen Wolowicz, Benefits Specialist Julie Gentile, DPW Superintendent Reidy, Chief Labrie and I met with staff from the Holyoke Medical Center Work Connection. This service of the center is critical in getting people back to work when they are suffering from a job related injury. The DPW continues to use the service, but the PD has not been using Work Connection due to service problems they had in the past.

We made it clear that our primary goal was to get people back to work as soon as possible, confident that they are healthy to perform all of the required tasks of the assigned position. We agreed that the ATA and the Chief would tour the facilities and review the processing of employees at the Work Connection. There is no cost advantage to the town or employees beyond getting people the right treatment so they can return to work.

We also have had conversations with HMC about helping to underwrite some initiatives in town. The new management team at HMC has been very responsive in that regard.

Workforce Training; Christina Grass from the HCC/STCC joint venture on work force training met with the HR Director Jen Wolowicz, Benefits Specialist Julie Gentile and I to discuss a range of training needs we have and solutions they may affordably provide.

As the SB is aware and has been very supportive in developing strategies to solve the problem, we have some training gaps. Those gaps are in the areas of communications, technology, interpersonal skills and other basic skills. We also are being called on to have more certifications in various departments. It is our intention between MIAA Rewards Trainings, PD Days, partnerships with Training centers like STCC/HCC and other efforts to gradually close those gaps and in doing so transform the services we provide.

Capital Planning Chair: Ted Boulais and I had the first of the budget season meetings to strategize over capital cost, attainment strategies and future planning. We agreed I would attempt to get a capital budget together in the next week to ten days for their review.

He suggested that the Capital Planning Committee meet separately with the School Committee, I thought that would work well, with the caveat that ultimately I will submit the capital budget, as required by the enabling legislation.

PVTA: Flex Bus schedule; Wednesday Selectboard member Ishler and I spent the greater part of the day at the PVTA. I believe that it was time well spent, as the contemplated elimination of the “R25” will have a direct effect on South Hadley. It is understandable as there is little ridership (less than six people a day, four distinct trips). The R29 will return and be known as the R29E this will be every two hours down 116 providing service from Amherst to Holyoke Mall. The route will become one of the bus rapid transit or BRT routes which will incorporate new technology allowing smart phone notification and other rider conveniences.

The X90 a and X90B will come down James Street from Chicopee to Main in South Hadley and then go on to the Holyoke Transportation Center for transfers to any location in the PVTA system. There will also be a new experimental service and South Hadley will be one of the test communities. It will be a flexible transit system which will allow customers to be picked up closer to where they are (this is not a door to door service, but close). Many of the details are being worked out.

The last item was Marilyn lobbying to make sure a public hearing is held in South Hadley, this is somewhat uncommon as these hearings are usually exclusively held in Springfield, Holyoke, Chicopee, Northampton and Amherst. Once these changes are digested we need to make sure as a community promote the bus as a viable transportation option. This will be an important economic catalyst in the future, it will be easier to work to keep it then try and get it back later.

KYT; It seemed like KYT went well, people were engaged and asked great questions. It was quite apparent people were interested in the Falls whether they were residents of the Falls or not. It was representative of the support citizens of SoHa show for their community on a regular basis.

It seems there is some great things ahead for SoHa Falls, I thank you the SB for allowing me to be part of those exciting changes.

Budget: You will be receiving the use and source sheets, along with my budget recommendations. The good news the imbalance in the budget would appear to be in the positive. Before we get to giddy, I would caution the GF Capital and the Enterprise Capital budgets will be articulated separately at you next meeting. The bottom line is that those costs are far greater than \$270K. I am sure you are all well aware of that fact. As you all have suggested at different times, we have to become more aware of the perils of deferred maintenance

Financial Software, Softright; I assembled representatives from accounting, the ATA, Treasurer/Collectors, IT as the primary users of MUNIS on Thursday to meet with a representative from Softright to start a discussion about less expensive software platform options. I believe we need to look at these opportunities and not be held hostage by spiraling costs from one vendor.

This was just the first step towards understanding options.

Medical Marijuana; Thursday I was invited to address the regional STAM (small town managers association, smaller than SoHa) in Hadley. The subject was Medical Marijuana, I learned as much as I enlightened, perhaps more. The issue of “home grown” licenses is on each communities mind. This

where a person may apply for a home license to the state if there is not a dispensary in a 30 mile area. The concern is what this will cause for monitoring in a tiny community. As this continues to evolve it helps to get out there and hear other people's concerns. I thank you for allowing me to do so.

Thank you for your support and assistance on the progress we are making on several fronts here in South Hadley without you it would not happen

Respectfully submitted

Michael J. Sullivan

Town Administrator, South Hadley