



May 2, 2014

Honorable Selectboard;

Well it is May already, does it seem the year is moving at hyper-speed. This is a three week report as there was an extra week sandwiched in between the last Selectboard (not that it seemed it) meeting in April and the May 6th meeting, as per usual here is an abridged accounting of the activities during the final weeks of April and the first days of May.

Municipal Lighting Plant Municipal Efficiency Grant; It is with great enthusiasm, I report to you that we completed the forms, inquiries, sign-ups and other various tasks in regard to this application. As you recall the SHELD manager attended a recent SB meeting to introduce the grant with Sandra Annis and Kim Boas from MMWEC who are assisting SHELD in the application process. With guidance from Ms. Annis the municipal portion of the application was completed.

I still have not heard from the SHELD manager on how the town can expect the cost of streetlights to be lowered. LED Street lighting traditionally produce a 30% reduction in consumption and if the number of lights can be further reduced, it is only fair that the municipal bill will be lowered. We need to keep in mind the cost of this public service is paid for by the town, with the grant augmenting the project, it is fair that we would share in the savings.

Attorney General's Receivership Program; Known as the Abandon Housing Initiative (AHI) within AG's Office brings a successful model of Housing Court, lenders, property owners and municipalities coming together to solve the problems faced by communities related to abandonment and blight.

Town Treasurer, Acting Building Commissioner, Health Director, the Aide to the Health Department and myself met with Judy Datres from the Springfield Office and Jason Piques of the Boston Office of the AG to discuss some strategies which have been successful in other jurisdictions. The conversation was very informative and we will continue to have conversations with the AG's Office about this "free to us" program.

The Health Director has been instrumental to doing the research and organizing this meeting, I thank her for her efforts. The next step is for us to compile a list of properties. They must be residential and cannot be owned by the town and are in derelict condition. Julie will return in

the next couple of week's tour the properties and then decide the best approach for us to get these house back on track.

103 College and 36 Bridge will make the list in case any of you were wondering. This will be discussed at the May 17 Rental Forum.

Rental Forum; Do you like the segue? Invitations are going out this week from the Health Director about the forum. The concentration will be on landlords, property owner, property managers, realtors and potential rental property owners. The intent is to try and convey the importance of rental properties and how using best practices can avert disaster and be profitable.

Filling up vacant space in the Falls are in particularly important to the economic success of the Falls. Study after study proves that people spend money close to their homes, so we would like to make South Hadley Falls your home. The forum will be Saturday May 17 from 9:30 until 11, I will act as the moderator. There will be representatives from HAP, DHCD, AG's Office as well as from the Building, Health and Fire Districts of South Hadley.

Medical Marijuana; I participated in a statewide conference call for cities and towns who have been chosen to host a licensee on Tuesday April 28. While Patriot Care seems to still be considered the cream of the crop, the DPH Medical Marijuana Division is making sure they know everything they can about the "provisional" licensees.

They are doing in-depth background checks on all the principles. Looking at funding, relationships, to say Karen Van Unen at DPH are being thorough would be a gross understatement. I asked about the timeline, the reply was they are moving as quickly as possible, but they will refrain from making any statements as to how long their work will take.

Loomis Chamber Event; I was honored to be part of panel of presenters hosted by the South Hadley-Granby Chamber recently at Loomis Village. Presentations about BATTERY Brook, Plains School, Falls Library, the high tension wire bike trail and other electrifying projects in South Hadley. It was an occasion for Bob Mayerson from Patriot Care to speak on the economic impact his operation will have in South Hadley. Local workers, local taxes, local craftsmen and a window into a new industry. He also spoke of the security plan for the property and the cooperation he has received from the Town of South Hadley.

It was well attended and I learned a lot ...and found out I have a lot to learn.

SEC; I recently met with Dan Whitford about progress in regards to sustainability and discussions with SHELD. My sense is while he is frustrated by the slow progress being made in respect to becoming a Green Community, he is heartened by the displays of tenacity and courage starting to be shown on the board level.

Dan is a very well-meaning, respectful and dedicated advocate for South Hadley and I will encourage him to continue to be involved and lend voice to the needed changes.

SHELD Pilot Meeting; On Wednesday April 16th there was meeting in my office with the SHELD Manager, the SHELD Auditor, Tom Scanlon (Town Auditor), the Town Accountant, the Assistant assessor and myself to discuss the PILOT agreement between SHELD and the municipality. It was cordial and professional. I believe it was productive, I do not feel as though, nor did I expect all questions were answered in one visit.

It could be said that it should not take so many experts to install the proverbial light bulb. If it requires two CPAs to explain it to the municipal participants as to how the program works, it may be an oracle of what complications may arise for a general explanation.

The main items were that the PILOT would remain the same for FY 15, we encouraged the manger to ask the SHELD Board to separate the recovered costs (Health Insurance, Retirement etc.) from the payment in lieu of taxes, and to consider bringing in a third party expert to look at the NBV, as the enabling law suggests. It was clear as to how it has been done, that it may not be the only way and a new approach may be more equitable for all still needs to be answered.

CEDC; The CEDC met Thursday April 17 to discuss progress on a number of projects and to review where the RDA was in terms of their function. There seem to be a high positive in regards to the progress at Texon, Fibermark, zoning proposals and overall movement in town. There was a discussion about Gaylord Street, as well.

Mount Holyoke College Anthropology Presentations; I joined the MCIP and Selectboard Member DeToma to hear some of the outcomes of the semester long studios on social and economic issues in South Hadley. The work product and observations were impressive. There were 36 students' involved in 15 different anthropological studies which included *The Politics of Neighborhoods, Public Transportation, Historical Preservation and Its Uses* and other topical issues.

The reoccurring theme throughout many of the studies were relationships, primarily between the Falls and The Village Center and secondarily with Mount Holyoke itself. The research students looked at everything from space to food, both quality and price. El Guanaco received high praise from a few different panels and there was some suggestions that if the Falls were more accessible from a transportation perspective students would likely become a greater part of the Falls economy.

The reports are available through the Community Relationship and Outreach Office at the College (Allan Bloomgarden). From my view it was fair and well done, nothing more can be asked of social research.

South Hadley Employee Health Benefits Fair; Friday May 2nd, there is a benefits fair for employees in the Town Hall Auditorium from 8 until 4. This forum is from the hard work of Julie Gentile, Jennifer Wolowicz and Gloria Congram (Benefits Consultant). This new initiative was

designed to lessen the continuous flow of providers seeking to meet with employees (often during work time) to sell them products. Most of the providers being featured the Town does not contribute to, but we manage the deductions, reporting and collect the premiums.

There was great deal of time spent to sort through the long list of products, many which were redundant, to find those who provided the best service, lowest fees and for compensation plans the greatest return from the safest investments for employees. After review by the HR Department it was recommended that we eliminate some of the redundant plans, I reviewed and endorsed their findings. This allows our internal operation to reduce steps and in doing so lower the exposure to error.

At the fair we had the Hampshire County Health Insurance Trust, Delta Dental, Aflac, Boston Mutual, Great Western (Mass SMART Plan) and Cafeteria Advisors (flexible health spending plan). In past years these and others all had different enrollment periods so there was a continual need to meet with employees. We have a coordinated enrollment period as of July 1. The method of rolling enrollment from one plan to the next was inefficient and costly to the town in various ways. I am confident once we work the bugs out this approach will be very helpful and efficient for the municipality.

CNG Cornerstone; On April 16th Town Engineer Dan Murphy, Superintendent Reidy and I met with Cornerstone Group about a reuse of landfill methane which they have been successful in implementing in some communities. The basic premise is to purify methane to a reliable fuel for vehicles.

The science is good and there are grants (competitive and only for a portion of costs), the challenge of upfront cost for retrofitting the fleet will be expensive. The return may be as short as five years in an aggressive model, but there remains issues about the front end and back end technology and whether we are well suited to take on the task with our present skill sets.

It is important to note that we continue to seek viable alternative uses for the excess methane. It has been reported to me that the post closure is proceeding without much fanfare, it is my hope that continues.

Buttery Brook & Streets and Sidewalks; A number of projects under the direction of the DPW and guidance of Superintendent Reidy and Engineer Murphy are taking shape. Here are few pictures from Taylor Street and BATTERY BROOK. These projects do not happen on their own, it takes support from the SB, funding from the taxpayers and oversight from the appropriate department. Congratulations to all parties ...it is happening.



Fibermark; Is the bane of my existence, earlier this week with the building down and the property being remediated an underground tank of unknown use or origin was uncovered below a concrete sub-floor. Everything came to a screeching halt, the DEP, Fire District, Town Engineer, an environmental assessment company and I am sure others were immediately called. The DEP representative was great, he quickly conferred with the engineer and others and it was determined that there was no hazardous substance inside, but was filled with water.

The 500 gallon tank was removed with little additional cost to the project and the remediation was restarted the next day, until the excavator quit ...thankfully that is not my problem. I believe the property will be clean and ready in another week. I will begin the process of creating divestment strategy for the property as directed by Town Meeting and the Selectboard. There will be section of land retained to ensure preservation of sight distance at the corner.

Town Meeting Member Packets; All Town Meeting Members were mailed a packet on April 2 to the address on file with the Town Clerk. Included in the packet beyond the warrant, was various letters related to the budget in particular and instructions as to how you could get more information. We have had three requests as of this writing from the 120 member body for expanded information. There will be additional copies available on May 7 and May 10 of the packet.

There has been some unexpected questions raised by Town Meeting members as to procedure and bylaws, but I am confident that we will work through those challenges and do what we must. The Town Moderator is addressing the inquiries and we should have clear picture at the beginning of the week. I would particularly like to thank Bill Sutton, Jen Picard, and Laura Krutzler for their efforts in getting material and information out to Town Meeting.

Presstek; You have economic development incentive program (EDIP) letter in your packet, a formal application to Mass Office of Business Development (MBOD) has not been submitted as of this date. I have had conversations with Jean Bartman the owner's consultant and Mike Vedovelli MBOD, once we have a complete application and understanding of their request it will have to first go to Town Meeting (maybe June 4) then to MBOD for approval. The property

owner is anxious, but unfortunately this will take until at least September (if we get to the June STM) to complete the approval process.

We will continue to work with the consultant and/or the owner to make their expansion in South Hadley beneficial for all. I have spoken with the Planning Director and have supplied him with a copy of the letter for his review.

Thank you for your patience and support. I feel very positive about the imperfect changes we are making, it is important we all see the importance of seeking new approaches to old problems, just the same. Stay positive!

Respectfully submitted,

Michael J. Sullivan

Town Administrator, South Hadley