

Andrea Miles, Chair
Jeff Cyr, Vice-Chair
Christopher Geraghty, Clerk
Sarah Etelman
Bruce Forcier

Michael J. Sullivan
Town Administrator

May 31, 2019

Honorable Selectboard,

Please accept this abbreviated accounting of the activities we have been engaged in on the Town of South Hadley's behalf over the recent weeks.

As you may be aware some of the staff is using up vacation time prior to the end of the fiscal year. This may cause some minor interruptions in response of service, please let me know if your constituents need some expedited attention on any issues. I will do my best to accommodate, thank you.

Route 116 Mass DOT Project; Superintendent Jim Reidy and I recently met to have an initial discussion about the Mass DOT Route 116 rebuild. Keith Lincoln from Chappell Engineering (working for Mass DOT) and Mass DOT D2 Chief Engineer Boa Lang were present as well. The project will address the road from the edge of the northerly Route 202 entrance to Kendrick Street.

The project intends to repair, rebuild and install sidewalks, roads, access ramps, bike lanes and signalization (Newton/Lyman). We will host a public hearing on Wednesday June 19 at 6 PM in the Selectboard Meeting Room in Town Hall. The public is encouraged to attend to find out more in a detailed manner about the project which is scheduled to begin in late 2020 or early 2021. Mass DOT will be seeking bids and have plans finalized June of 2020.

This project will include some crosswalk safety devices or improve existing ones in the area of the high school, addition or improvement of other crosswalks and bike lanes throughout. The traffic signal device at Newton/Lyman will be bike and pedestrian friendly. There will not be a "green box" for cyclists due to space constraints at the intersection.

We discussed how the "Woodlawn" area, including the intersection may be lining up for some substantial changes based on the whispers of investment for adjacent and surrounding properties. We have committed to both parties to keep them updated as we receive more information about contemplated development and/or plans which may affect traffic flow.

It is important going forward to have open lines of communication and to channel public input. The public hearing will be the first step, but anyone who has concerns or ideas they would like communicated to Mass DOT please send me an email or call. As a side note Greenfield Coop Bank has received approval for their branch at the former Bank of America location at the edge of the Woodlawn Plaza. We look forward adding them to the South Hadley business community.

Upcoming Borrowing; Treasurer/Collector Donna Whitely, Town Accountant William Sutton and I recently met with Bond Advisor David Eisenthal to discuss the upcoming fiscal year borrowing needs. This includes the Senior Center approval by Town Meeting to allow the Selectboard to borrow \$9.8 million and the capital borrowing needs announced at Town Meeting.

The present strategy is to ask the SB to approve borrowing \$1.49 million in short term debt (likely Statehouse notes) and to consider a larger \$6,000,000 in bond anticipation notes in December 2019.

116 MAIN STREET, SUITE 109, SOUTH HADLEY, MASSACHUSETTS 01075-2896

This strategy is based on cash flow needs with input from the Treasurer/Collector and accountant, as well information obtained through Colliers (Senior Center Owners Project Manager) by Mr. Eisenthal.

As you are aware we work very closely with David Eisenthal to make do our best to time borrowing to avoid cash flow issues and to the greatest extent time the market to get the best interest rates. He has, as have been others very pleasantly surprised that borrowing rates remain stable and even have dip slightly lower in the last few months, especially with medium term offerings. He feel there will be significant interest in these issuances and will have a final recommendation for the SB by July 9 for the short term bonds.

End of Year Transfers: I have reached out to the Chair of the Appropriations Committee and to the Town Accountant to schedule a hearing on the “End of Year Transfers” for various department shortfalls.

While most of these adjustments will be covered by transfers within the department (i.e. personal services to other expenses or vice versa). There may be one or two which require intra-departmental transfers. It is my expectation is these adjustments will be less than 1% of the total General Fund budget and while some may bristle or question as to why these were not accounted for in the ensuing budget process (18 months ago), I would offer it is far better to have a municipal budget marginally short at the end of the year as opposed to have lots of money left. I can say most department budgets are finishing up at a very reasonable place from a fiscal perspective.

I believe these transfer requests will be before the Selectboard for a joint meeting by July 9, the Appropriations Chair is working to have his members in attendance. I will get you more information over the month of June and leading up to the meeting on the needs.

Connecticut River Conservancy; I recently met with the Director of the Connecticut River Conservancy (CRC) Andy Fisk and a board member from that organization Tony Judge (RDA Member, South Hadley resident) about how we might partner ...and where we may depart on issues concerning protection of the Connecticut River.

It was a refreshing conversation and I found the Director to be knowledgeable and politically astute in his understanding of our challenges. He was excited about our nitrogen reduction initiative at the WWTP and was complementary to Melissa Labonte our WWTP Manager (well-deserved accolades).

I asked for more support from their “River Ranger” program to develop educational programs and discussions with the Viet Nam Veterans Bridge “fisherman” about the importance of their conduct on the bridge in regards to conservancy. Having plastic wrappers and six pack rings thrown into the mighty Connecticut is troublesome and an agency like CRC can play an important role in education, developing consistent policies and enforcement protocols for both sides of the bridge. This is very much in line with their mission to “defend” the river. I have committed to the Director we understand and support the importance of their work and will help where appropriate and where we can be of help.

South Hadley Dog Park; There seems to be steady progress on the dog park initiative. The Friends of the South Hadley Dog Park are very engaged and diligent in raising money. Berkshire Design is working on the design and will be in attendance at the SB Meeting to discuss the project on Tuesday.

A number of you have share your concern about the price tag, first and foremost the cost creep and the “in-kind” the “City” may be tasked to absorb. I share your concerns, we are capping this project at what Stanton has agreed to and what has been appropriated by TM. We also have heard from those who have suggested we should be considering issues of grimalkin or parakeet equity.

A healthy discussion is expected and I anticipate we will find a solution. However, before we apply for the Stanton Grant construction portion the SB must be comfortable with the project overall. I am confident you each appreciate the delicate balance any project faces both present and future, as you perform your diligence. I do believe the dog park conceptually has an appreciable value for the community and is worthy of consideration. On balance it does have a recreational value which is not provided elsewhere in town, may alleviate some of the disregarding of the by-laws in other parks, will get more citizens on to a public property. The key is will there be sustained use and commitment.

Mass Works Grant; This part of my report is largely a rehash of the memo in your packet, but I believe important to his the high points for the public who may not have seen the memo.

The “Newton/Lyman Mass Works Grant Application” is very similar to last year’s Mass Works application. However it will require some updating of the technical requirements (Fuss and O’Neill) as part of the process.

The application calls for upgrades effecting Lyman, Newton, Fulton and Dayton Streets. This includes surface, subsurface and traffic infrastructure. Last year’s application was not funded (\$2.8 million) by Mass DOT. We are hopeful with the amount of private and public investment contemplated for this area South Hadley’s grant application will rise to the top for consideration by the Commonwealth. It is not uncommon for a grant to be disregarded in the first one or two submittals.

The Town of South Hadley recently received a \$350,000 Smart Growth Grant (already in the bank) which at the discretion of the Selectboard is to be used for capital infrastructure improvements, including design and engineering. The Planning Director and I are requesting the Selectboard allows us by SB vote to use up to \$4,500 for cost related to the technical requirement updates.

It should be acknowledged the application does commit \$250,000 of the Smart Growth Grant to be used as required in association with a Mass Works grant in the future. If the Mass Works Grant is awarded by the state I will seek an additional vote by the SB at a future meeting to allow that \$250,000 to be utilized as required for the project.

It is worth noting both the Mass Works application and in the Route 116 project improvements to the Lyman/Newton intersection are outlined. The Mass DOT project would take the lead on both the design and the implementation. All parties are aware of the situation, for us it is better to ask both state agency...belt and suspenders so to speak. We the developing in this area being considered it will be complex, but critical to the projects becoming gorgonized. I am confident it can be avoided.

PVTA Meeting; I filled in for our PVTA Representative at the May 22 PVTA Board Meeting. The PVTA Board voted on the FY 2020 budget. The organization continues zealous advocacy at the state level to find additional sources of funding.

They will be heavily investing over the coming years in all electric buses. The PVTA’s early experience has been very positive in respect to those vehicles. It also looks like PVTA will avoid any substantial changes to service routes. I did put my two cents in to Director Sandra Sheehan if there was routes restored I am hopeful there will be consideration given to routes which have been cut.

I also was told the PVTA has available some surplus vehicles, once I find out what they look like I will let you know if they can offset any capital needs or augment services we provided. As you know I am genetically opposed to “growing” the fleet, but if an opportunity presents itself I will try my best to exploit it.

Other Updates ; Here are few things to note:

- VBS Woodlawn Bike Station should be installed by the end of June. Thank you to People's Savings Bank and the Condo Association Partners for helping us make it happen!
- As our third party administrator for Workmen's Comp (Cook and Company) will be exiting that field we will be transitioning to Claim's Strategies of Providence, Rhode Island. They are used by SHELD and presented the most cost effective service. Thank you ATA Wolowicz for your guidance on this issue.
- Town Hall will likely be closed on Friday July 5th, although a final decision has not been made. Thank you to SHELD for your help with this year's fireworks!
- It is my understanding FallsFest will be held on July 27 (awaiting applications), I am working with the organizer and departments to make sure we understand our roles. I hope everyone will come out for this signature SoHa event!

Thank you as always for your support and leadership!

Respectfully submitted,

Michael J. Sullivan
Town Administrator, South Hadley