

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

Michael J. Sullivan
Town Administrator

June 14, 2019

Honorable Selectboard,

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

Again, 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 time. Please let me know if your constituents need some expedited attention on any issues. Thank you for your patience.

Fourth of July; The annual South Hadley fireworks display will be at the Michael E. Smith Middle School on July 3 with a rain date of July 5. We would like to thank all our sponsors for allowing this legendary community event to take place, especially Peoples Bank and Fibersonic (SHELD).

There is still time to show your support and make a donation. Simply visit the Town of South Hadley website, go to the Recreation Department page looking for "Independence Day Fireworks" under "Special Events," and [clicking where instructed at the bottom of that section.](#)

Town hall and senior center will be closed on Friday, July 5. We strongly encourage residents who plan on accessing services to plan schedule accordingly. We will be making additional public proclamations about the closing as it draws closer and will be directing staff to shut off as many devices a feasible during the four-day hiatus. Thank you for your understanding.

Website Refresh; While you are visiting the website to make a "fireworks" donation, please sign up for notifications about community events. It is an important feature for us to communicate to the public quickly. The Civic Plus notification can be accessed by [clicking the "Notify Me" button on the left side of the homepage.](#)

The website has been revamped and we would like you [check out the various features.](#) There is lots of great information and we appreciate your feedback. As I have stated prior, this is the digital front door for the Town of South Hadley. The "[New to South Hadley?](#)" feature is something we are developing geared toward new residents, but open to all to review.

I would also encourage all residents to check out the [Town of South Hadley FaceBook page](#) (www.facebook.com/SouthHadleyMA). Although, as a card-carrying troglodyte, I will reserve comment on that particular communication mode. Thank you Executive Assistant to Administration Kristin Maher for all your work on improving communications, with more improvements to come.

Town Hall Sidewalk Repairs; Initial preparation for the sidewalk repair around town hall has begun. The contractor has set up barrels on the Main Street side to gain access with heavy equipment. The work will include the new walkway around the Veterans' monuments, as well as a complete revamp of the handicap access area on the Pleasant Street side. The replacement will eliminate several hazards which have been of concern to many.



The work will be done through the Capital Improvement Debt and with the support of the Selectboard and the Capital Planning Committee. These exterior improvements are much needed and will allow us to continue to make progress toward maintaining the building in general.

The re-pointing of the building façade is part of a separate bid for which the request for proposal is being developed. We will be constructing the bid in a manner which will allow us to get as much of the necessary work done within the \$250K allocated, as that number originated from an estimate from four years ago may be slightly low. We all know where prices have gone - I am confident we will get all or a majority of the work within that budget.

Business West ; The Editor of Business West George O'Brien recently asked to publish a feature article on South Hadley. This is an opportunity for South Hadley to articulate how the business and development climate in particular is in town. It goes without saying the invitation comes at a very interesting time.

The focus of the article and the interviewer is on: the new management model at Ledges, the potential for commercial development along the Route 202 corridor from Route 33 up the Granby Common, the Master Plan update, and high speed internet.

The discussion was centered on a recent grant South Hadley received to study the corridor and how we continue to work with Granby to the benefit of both towns and how other regional efforts are unfolding.

Of course there was a lot of discussion around [Fibersonic](#). This SHELD development is creating a great deal of external and internal town interest as the first homes and businesses in the inaugural target areas are brought to life.

With more people working remotely this becomes another feature for selling South Hadley on the businesses or residential side of the equation. I encourage everyone to go to SHELD's website and check it out. It has become all about the connections in a whole new way!

Workmen's Comp; As you know, Cook and Company, our long time administrator for Workmen's Comp (WC) claims, is leaving the business July 1. Cook had served us well over the decade-plus of service. This change came as a bit of a surprise.

However, ATA Wolowicz and I had already been discussing and reviewing the present model. It allowed us to have somewhat of a jump on other cities and town in the Cook network which included over 100 Massachusetts communities.

On Thursday, June 14 the ATA and I met with Claims Strategies team to better understand the nuanced differences between how Cook handled WC claims and how Claims Strategies would improve on that model. While there will be some component of “we never did it that way before” discussions and reviews by our legal counsel, we will end up in a better place. I am excited to report we have a solid strategy in a very short time with more improvements and streamlining anticipated.

We have already engaged MIAA for the Police Injured on Duty (IOD). The IOD has very similar features for police, however it also has some important and distinct differences. We continue to carry stop loss insurance through Metras and Midwest. Thank you to Jennifer Wolowicz for the quick turnaround on this issue, as we avert a potential disaster.

Summer Concerts at Marina; Building Commissioner Dave Gardner, Planner Richard Harris, Chief Jennifer Gundersen, Detective Jesse Camp and I recently met at the Boathouse to review plans for concerts at Brunelle’s Marina on July 6 and July 18 (starting at 5 PM) with the promoters.

We very much appreciate the promoters getting us involved early for this exciting project. It was comforting to know this event will be overseen by a group with a long history of safely executing large gathering events throughout Western Mass.

The Selectboard will be hearing more about this at the Tuesday (June 18) meeting as part of their application for a “One Day All Alcohol License” for the outdoor event. I believe all of the municipal partners in attendance were duly impressed with the planning and careful thought which went into the blueprint for the event. The DPW will be posting Alvord Street prior to the event to remind the public there is no on-street parking in that area at the Chief’s request.

Chapter 32B Section 21-22 Payouts; We will be distributing the \$38,233 to the eligible employees (approximately 295) in the second pay period in July as agreed upon by the PEC and funded by Town Meeting. All employees will also be issued a new BS/BS ID card.

We do have some variant in the way the money will be distributed to the various units - police will receive a premium deduction and the others will receive a simple lump sum payment averaging about \$129 per eligible employee.

Chamber Legislative Breakfast; The Chamber Breakfast seemed to go well. It was great to hear from Representative Carey about his efforts on our behalf in Boston, as well as hearing from our Granby neighbors about their priorities.

Chief Scott Brady was also at the dais discussing District 2 efforts and priorities. I compliment Michelle Theroux and Steve Laplante on their Herculean efforts to revitalize the South Hadley/Granby Chamber of Commerce.

As always, when the “question and answer” period came around topics which were avoided intentionally or unintentionally came to the surface. Chief among the inquiries were about consolidation of the districts.

Chief Brady spoke about the complexities of a merger and potential loss of fidelity in regard to service. I would agree it is complex. I do not agree a well-constructed merger would suffer any service loss. I do agree that initially it may be seemingly more costly. However, my personal opinion is the districts should subsume into the municipality.

As stated I believe it will be complex and initially seem more expensive. Long term I would suggest it would be less expensive and a much more cohesive model than presently exists. The question is always, then why does it not happen? I would suggest while there is a measure of support to merge or consolidate it is not at a point to sustain a prolonged or successful political debate on the subject, but it can be done.

ConsCom Chair Meeting; I recently had the opportunity to meet with Conservation Commission Chair Bill Deluca and Administrator Anne Capra to review Chapter 40 section 8C of Massachusetts General Law in terms of Conservation Commission powers and responsibilities.

It was pleasure to meet with the Chair. His dedication to the responsibilities of commission and his deep abiding commitment to the Town of South Hadley is exemplary. He also has a pragmatic view about the municipal capacity and other responsibilities.

Much of our conversation revolved around working toward a plan to invest in proper care, maintenance and stewardship of the parcels under the control of the Conservation Commission throughout the town. All parties were in agreement Chapter 40 section 8C clearly states that is one of the responsibilities of the commission and by association the municipality.

The ConsCom will be working on a plan to present at future Selectboard meeting and subsequently at the next special or annual Town Meeting. It was a very encouraging conversation and very positive vibe in respect to protect critical spaces in South Hadley.

“Green Communities ” Discussion ; After many fits and starts Kristin Maher and I were able to meet with Mark Buzzell from Siemens and our energy consultant Beth Greenblatt (phoned in). We first discussed whether the data was now properly in the Mass Energy Insight (MEI) platform ...it has been determined (so far) the information is correct.

The next point of discussion with Siemens was to ask them to review present data, various reports (i.e. 2017 Building Study, MESMS provided by SEC), previous notes from the original energy reduction project and the previously mentioned MEI data to determine a feasible way to reach the 20% savings requirement to become a “Green Community.

It may be the case after two rounds of reduction the Town of South Hadley will be “green” beyond anyone’s imagination. Thank you to the SEC, particularly John Howard, for their suggestions and support of efforts to attaining the Green Communities designation.

Thank you for your support and guidance,

Respectfully submitted,
Michael J. Sullivan
South Hadley, Town Administrator

