

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

Michael J. Sullivan  
Town Administrator

July 2, 2019

Honorable Selectboard,

Please accept this report as a condensed version of the issues and projects we in town hall have been involved in over the last few weeks. The Town Hall is experiencing a high vacation absence, training and conference rate, but there is still much being accomplished thanks to the dedicated staff.

Please note town hall will be closed Friday, July 5. I do not anticipate any major issues as we have been advertising the closure for nearly one month.

Thank you for your patience and understanding, it sincerely means a great deal to all of us in town hall.

**Town Hall Sidewalk Project;**

There has been substantial progress to improve the sidewalks around town hall. We are on time and on budget at this point in the process. The improvements so far include moving the benches to poured pads and the assembly area for the monuments dedicated to South Hadley veterans who have served this country in every war fought by Americans, including the Revolutionary War.



The Pleasant Street side will have improved handicap van access with significant changes altering the half-moon area, which will reduce the maintenance and increase the accessibility to the elevator.

We have also incorporated into the project areas which allow snow to be stored more effectively and the reseeded grass has already commenced. The mailboxes had to be moved temporarily.



**Route 116 Mass DOT Public Hearing;** Both I and Selectboard

Member Bruce Forcier were in attendance at the Route 116 presentation hosted by Chappell Engineering and Mass DOT. District 2 Chief Engineer Rick Masse and others were on hand from MassDOT and Keith Lincoln from Chappell.

There were about a dozen or more interested residents, Planning Board Member Diane Mulvaney and Conservation Commissioner Bill Bacis. It seemed to me that most of the public's questions were answered sufficiently. Residents expressed interest in the lane improvements and signal light upgrades being added. There were some inquiries about how the "green" bike lane will improve safety.

Engineer Lincoln explained how using a dotted lane with green paint signifying a protected area for cyclists and other narrowing would organize and calm traffic at the intersection. Some of the attendees suggested similar strategies should be employed at the Mosier/Newton intersection. While all agreed it would be a good candidate for such improvements it is beyond the area that this project is addressing.

Mariann Millard and other Bike/Walk Members were on hand and gave input and asked questions about bike and pedestrian improvements. There will be bike lanes, improvements to the sidewalks and cyclist recognition at traffic lights. The Bike/Walk Committee continues to give important input and advocacy to projects of this nature.

**Park @ Woodlawn Presentation;** Wayfinders (Michele McAdaragh) and the Woodlawn Plaza developers (Yee family, Rocco Falcone) presented some initial thoughts on their plans for a development of the property, focusing on the 72 units of housing which is part of the plan. The presentation was held in the community room of the library.

There were not many surprises other than the size of the crowd. If you were not there at the library and strictly went by news reports about the evening you would come away with a

perspective of South Hadley being an unreasonable community which is unwilling to accept any development.

It appeared to me the vast majority were there to learn more, ask reasonable questions concerning them personally, but are willing to continue to give input about how the project could be enhanced. Of course there were those who came angry with their minds made up, replete with misinformation. Those attendees would have you believe this project would be the ruination of the town. Thankfully the number of reasonable and thoughtful people vastly outnumbered the angry. Granted they were not as loud, but more organized with their thoughts and certainly more polite. It is a credit to South Hadley to have residents willing to work to understand the greater need for investment instead of spewing misinformation about increased taxes and threats to education.

The meeting was cut short when Ms. McArdagh was told by Fire District 1 personnel the room would have to be cleared due to overcrowding concerns. While I agree the room was overcrowded and the fire district should have asked the attendees to evacuate, I thought it was unfortunate the district fire personnel were reluctant to make the announcement to the crowd as fire officials.

I am sure you have noticed that the Newton and Lyman corner look is already changing with the clearing of several buildings. Northampton/Greenfield Coop will also start their renovations at



the former Bank of America location across the street and the Woodlawn Station (Valley Bike Share) should be up and running in the next two weeks. Lot of action over the next two years in this area. We continue to work with all parties to keep them informed of project progress. Hopefully this will avoid to the greatest extent possible project clumsiness resulting in prolonged inconvenience for residents.

### **Health and Safety/Facilities**

**Coordinator;** Human Resources has received a number of promising applicants for the position and will begin the prescribed vetting process next week. The three-person panel reviewing and interviewing the qualified applicants will be directed by Deputy Town Administrator Jennifer Wolowicz with the Building Commissioner Gardner and South Hadley Public Schools Business Manager Angela Wang (selected by the superintendent) serving on the panel, as well. They hope to have a recommendation made to administration by mid to late August.

The Deputy Administrator and I will attend another day-long training on work related OSHA safety in October. It is my expectation the incumbent candidate will also attend this day-long training.

**PVPC Health and Safety Roundtable;** Assistant DPW Superintendent Vivian Price and I attended a recent PVPC Roundtable where state officials from the Department of Labor went over the new regulations. While many communities are just starting to think about this new mandate, I am happy to report South Hadley is farther along than most small communities and some of the larger cities and towns as well.

The hiring of the H&S/FC will go a long way in respect to South Hadley staying ahead of the mandate and in some cases exceeding the goals of creating a safe work environment for employees, our most valuable asset, and at the same time reduce WComp claims or adversely affect efficiency. I believe it will eventually increase our understanding of the needs for all public buildings in comprehensive manner. Thank you for supporting this project!

**Ledges Quarterly Meeting;** Steve Gano and Mike Fontaine from IGM recently met with Andy Rogers and I to discuss the golf season so far at Ledges.

I have to say there is a real positive vibe. Despite the terrible weather during the spring, revenues are up despite rounds being down slightly. IGM is working diligently to effectively promote the Ledges for their benefit as well as the Town of South Hadley.

While revenues at this juncture are above what was predicted, so are expenses. The important consideration is that the revenues are growing at a rate than the expense side of the ledger. We will continue to monitor and discuss the situation with IGM. There may be a need to make some adjustments in the future so we are not forced to close the course early this golf season or open late the following season.

Again, it has been positive, as long as expected revenue increases are growing at a rate greater than the expenses and we do not experience a serious failure of some necessary system (knock on wood, please). I have asked IGM to prepare brief report for the Selectboard to review and consider. We should have that by the next SB meeting.

**PVTA;** As you are aware longtime South Hadley PVTA Representative Marilyn Ishler has resigned. I served as the alternate and attended meetings when Marilyn could not, which was rare. Thank you, Marilyn, for your years of service.

Anne Capra (Associate Planner/Conservation Administrator) has agreed to be the alternate. Our focus will remain on how we can improve and innovate public transportation in South Hadley. There are a number of exciting and innovative strategies to tailor transportation, as well as integrating it with other systems (rail, VBS, other services) for the benefit of a town or region.

It was great to hear about the new Fare Free Tuesdays for anyone over 62 (see PVTA website for more details), however I did point out the need to get millennials onto the buses. I suggested a program where anyone under the age of 18 rides free on Sunday with the purchase of an adult

fare. Kind of a “BOGO” for families. I believe there is critical importance in getting young people, our future, on the bus!

**HCHIT;** HCOG has recently voted to allow the Health Insurance Trust to extricate the organization from the Hampshire Council of Government’s sphere of influence. This is of importance to South Hadley as I believe it significantly strengthens the Trust’s position and lessens its exposure to liability and future costs.

**COA Temporary Quarters;** COA Director Leslie Hennessey and I had a very successful meeting with Father Toomey, Pat Smith and Howie Resnick about allowing the town to use the facilities at Saint Theresa’s Church during the building of a new senior center.

To say they were sensitive to our needs, our budget and timetable would be a profound understatement. Their sedulous approach to the relationship was refreshing. The pastor expressed a sincere desire and has acted in that regard to be a greater part of the South Hadley community. There has been recent fundraising events for Mosier School and will be used for upcoming fundraiser for the COA at Saint Theresa’s.

While the details are still be ironed out the COA would have access to the gym, kitchen, office space and meeting space in the south wing of the facility, Monday through Friday 8-5 with few exceptions. They are also very much open to other times for events. We believe the cost would be very reasonable. We should have some final agreements before the SB at the August meeting for your consideration.

**Verizon GPS;** DPW Superintendent Jim Reidy, Deputy Town Administrator Jennifer Wolowicz, IT Coordinator James Doolittle and I recently had a video conference with Verizon representatives about installing GPS in DPW vehicles.

Beyond the obvious safety and security reasoning behind this initiative, I was particularly impressed with the overall cost of retrofitting vehicles (less than \$7,000 for the whole fleet). The resulting savings by having a more accurate vehicle service program which can reduce gas consumption is predicted to be as much as 19% for an average fleet.

It also will record speed, offer safety and user checklists which will keep vehicles in better condition and position them to last longer. I went in thinking this is a good idea, but if we exploit this tool to the fullest it could go way beyond anyone’s expectations in professionalizing our vehicle retention process.

We hope we will be able to complete the installation into DPW vehicles by no later than October 30 and begin using this tool immediately thereafter.

**Canal Park Trail;** After meeting with Canal Park Committee Chair Mitch Resnick I formally stepped in to close the Canal Park Trail which is north of the park and has a series of bridges which winds through some interesting forest and habitat along the Connecticut River.



While flood damage to the bridges and trails was a major contributing factor, there were other considerations such as the proliferation of poison ivy, oak and sumac and other aspects in making the decision to warn people away from using the trail. Neither the chair nor I wanted to take this step, but committing more financial resources at this time to abate the will of Mother Nature makes little sense.



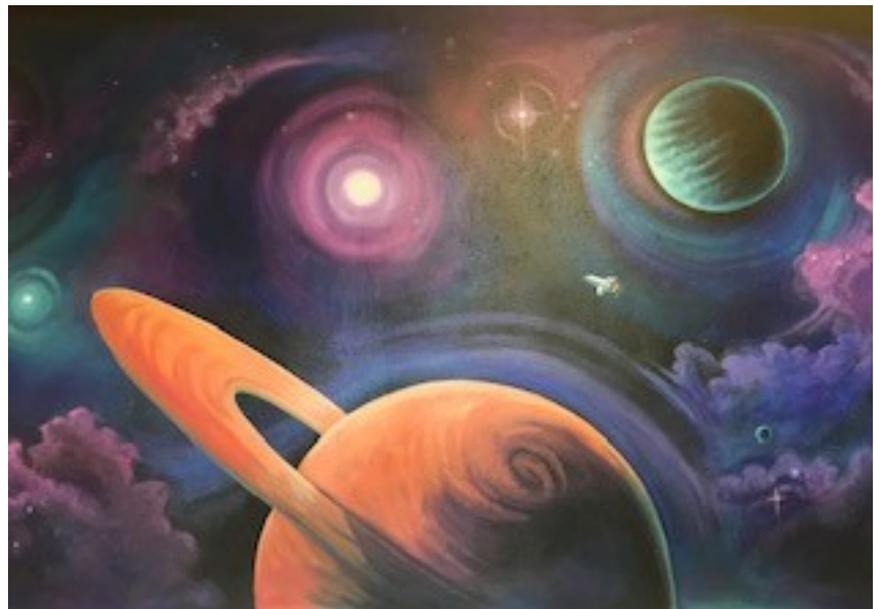
The Canal Park Committee, along with Chair Resnick, continue to be devoted to improving the park. We hope to have the vistas trimmed sooner than later and the refurbished benches reinstalled near the Kuzma Memorial on the park property.

I would also like to thank ConsCom Administrator Anne Capra for her assistance on Canal Park projects, as well as DPW Superintendent Jim Reidy and Parks Superintendent Bill Simard and their staff for their

involvement.

**Town Hall Murals;** Astronaut (and former South Hadley resident) Dan Barry would be proud of the new addition to town hall. Artist/Muralist (and present South Hadley resident) Sarah Miele has been commissioned to create two permanent works in the hallways in advance of the additional work to spruce up town hall.

Following the mural installations work will begin on repairing the ceilings and walls and eventually painting the same.



Hope you all have a Happy Fourth of July!

Respectfully submitted,

Michael J. Sullivan  
Town Administrator, South Hadley