



April 3, 2015

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.

Presstek Ribbon Cutting: On April 1, dignitaries and Presstek officials were on hand at the New Ludlow Road recently renovated facility to unveil a new era for the property and the company. CEO Jeff Beck spoke about some exciting ways the company will set itself apart in a crowded field of competition.



Presstek will feature their ecologically responsible products, nationwide service network and value added renovated printing equipment. Other products in their portfolio create a profitable niche in the growing (yes can you believe it) offset print industry. They have consolidated their other two locations into South Hadley, moved employees from Hudson New Hampshire, added new workers and have inspired the local economy by hiring contractors, electricians, machinists to be part of over two million dollars of investment in South Hadley.

The company has committed to be active in the community and proud promoter of their new world headquarters in our community. The Town of South Hadley greetings were brought by Selectboard Chair John Hine and Representative John Scibak. Vice-Chair Frank DeToma was in attendance to support and thank the company, as well. Congratulations to Chamber of Commerce President Bob Desnoyers and (especially) Executive Director Dale Johnston for coordinating this ribbon cutting.

Everbridge: IT Coordinator Jamie Doolittle and I had an extended phone conference this week to review the features we have not been using to the fullest and to discuss best practices other communities are using to attract more citizens to sign up for text and email messaging for non-emergency events. They

will be following up with us on those strategies, but the best way to get more people interested is to use the tool more often.

In the crowded world of communications we need to exercise all of our options. It seems every day there is yet another concept, portal or platform (this week I joined Yammer, next week I will figure out what it is), yet we still hear “I never heard that message”. To some extent, the “message field’ is getting so crowded, you cannot hear the forest through the trees. All of these new ways and word of mouth remains the most effective, but unfortunately the least accurate.

MUNIS vs. Softright: So at the most recent meeting of the SB I announced I was about to sign an agreement with Softright to migrate the financial software, I had the agreement all set to go the savings calculated (approximately \$4K), the introductions completed and MUNIS called to ask if we could have one more dance before the marriage. I thought there was not much which could be said to convince us to stay with the overpriced, little understood product.

It was not easy, because we have been hanging with Softright for a few months and they have been very, very attractive and I was looking forward to the honeymoon, but not so much the ceremony (aka conversion). But the old flame, who has never been easy to understand, often complicated and definitely expensive, did something I never thought possible, MUNIS dropped their price from \$52K to \$37,488 (with 2 additional days of training). I was smitten and happy to avoid the ceremony.

Please know I am the kind of person who can forgive a lot for an over 10% discount. I remain convinced Softright could have well filled our needs and may be a better operating system, but we will not know for three years (the pre-nuptial locks us in for three year at the low price). When I informed Softright the wedding was off, I gave them the chance to rekindle our interest, I understand and respect they feel “left at the altar”, but ultimately this is a business and South Hadley got a substantial reduction in cost.

I truly appreciate the time and effort Jamie Doolittle, Bill Sutton, Deb Baldini, Lynn Roberts, Jennifer Picard, Missy Couture put forth in helping to get to right place, your patience is admirable.

Lower Level Break Room: As part of the continued effort to reinvigorate space within the Town Hall a room in the lower level has been taken from an underutilized storage room to a bright and engaging employee break room. You may recall when we renovated Room One on the same floor the intent was to use it as a combination training, meeting and break room. Well meeting and training has taken over that room for the greatest part of the day and into the night, employees were pushed out.



New counters, paint, flooring and some elbow grease made this space appealing. The project was inexpensive and will provide employees a space to take a minute out of their busy day to have lunch or a snack. Eventually it will be one of the first rooms to be entered by using your employee ID badge. The room directly above it on the middle floor, now housing the servers will be divided up and the copier

will be moved to the room and also will require an ID entry. Hopefully this will curb or at least give a better understanding why our paper use continues to grow. Thank you to Facilities Manager Wolowicz for continuing to oversee these upgrade projects throughout Town Hall.

Loomis Communities Dementia Symposium: Thank you to Carol Constant, Rachel Conway for assembling the participants at this inaugural meeting, there were representatives from business, the schools, both districts, police, COA and the faith community. It was extremely touching to see how dementia and other cognitive disabilities affect life and work. The stories and situations were somehow both heart-wrenching and heart-warming.

Many were impressed to hear the steps the Police Department under Chief Labrie's leadership has taken to be a more informed and sensitive police department in regards to persons with impairments. Spreading the word about the volunteer registry for citizens with cognitive disabilities and the training of the entire force on behavioral health, including Alzheimer's, dementia, autism, spectrum disorders and other emotional and brain function challenges remains a priority.

The direction this group will attempt to work, is to compile all the assets, assess the needs and march towards becoming a Dementia Friendly Community. This seems just another way South Hadley is and continues to become an attractive place for all to live.

IRB Discussion: I am happy (and thankful) to report one of the Collective Bargaining Units has agreed to meet with an expert on income replacement benefit plans (IRB) in the next few weeks and I am hopeful it may lead to a breakthrough on this issue with others. We have spoken often about how this could benefit both employees and the municipality. I realize it is the first step and I need to temper my excitement, but I excite easily on some of the strangest things.

8 Graves Street Progress: Thanks to Superintendent James Reidy and the Community Outreach Program from Hampshire County Sheriff's Office the clean out has begun at this property. The hope is it will be included in the May auction of town own property. There is great deal more to do on the list of properties and this particular property, but there is a light at the end of the tunnel.

I also must thank Building Commissioner Charlene Baiardi, Health Director Sharon Hart, District 1 Lt. Jay Houle, District 1 Chief Authier and Chief David Labrie for their role in this saga. It has been unpleasant at best to have to evict a person from their home, but the silver lining is the family reports the owner is doing well and is out of a dangerous situation.

School Superintendent Breakfast: There were about 20 Town Meeting members in attendance at the recent breakfast to discuss the school budget. The Superintendent covered how the schools expenses are being restrained and spoke to the growing cost centers facing the school.

Dr. Young also spoke of how the expenditures are trending and suggested to maintain a high-quality educational system in South Hadley there will be a need to consider an operational override in upcoming years to pay for those increases. He and his committee feel there is no fat left and future cuts will be muscle, weakening the system.

Engineering Service DPW: As we continue to find ways to innovatively cut cost, as you are aware, we recently had an RFP for Engineering Services. The ATA, DPW Superintendent and myself opened the bids

evaluated them as to the set forth criteria in the RFP. All of the firms were rated as “Highly Qualified”. The price proposals were open and the winning bid was Fuss and O’Neill.

Once the contract details are complete we will bring the contract to the Selectboard for final approval. I feel this is competent firm which will produce work more efficiently that we were previously accomplishing in-house and will exact a savings overall as well.

Anaerobic Digesting: There is a renewed interest in placing a digester at the former landfill. While this idea has had fits and starts before, I feel it is certainly worthy of consideration. The IPS project of piping the methane to the landfill in Granby continues to plod along and I have suggested to the interested parties about inquiring with Jim Malandrous at IPS (they have an MOU with SoHa) to explore partnerships. This is a marathon not a sprint and I think everyone gets that fact.

Appropriations Meeting: April 2 the Appropriations Committee met, first with the Schools (and the entire School Committee) and after with the Selectboard Chair and me, the meeting was congenial and there was only one Town Meeting member in attendance. The date for the Appropriation Committee hearing has not been set.

All financial articles were introduced including the budget article. There is concern about cost outpacing growth and the funding of Gaylord Library was brought up by some members. The process will continue as we await final numbers from the Commonwealth.

FY 16 Capital Plan: The Capital Planning Committee has made decision on what projects will move forward for recommendation this year and have decided on a funding, I believe the recommendation will come before you at your April 21st meeting so as the annual list can be disseminated to the public (by May 1) as well as Town Meeting.

The plan includes previously approved borrowing of \$2.5 million dollars and supplementing with \$313,400 from Capital Stabilization for a total of \$2,813,400. A half million will go to roads and sidewalks. The balance (\$2.3) will satisfy needs for projects as well as equipment.

Thank you very much and I apologize for being late with this report.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael J Sullivan

Town Administrator, South Hadley