



October 1, 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.



Town Hall Repairs; The above picture only looks like it is from the set of a prison movie, it actually is the Town Hall first floor ladies room. We are updating and repainting the space. We also are installing some additional accessibility requirements. ATA Jennifer Wolowicz has done an excellent job of overseeing the project and is getting quite adept at these rehabs. I expect a DIY show is in her future.

We also have received the bids for the boiler replacement (\$48K) and expect to sign an agreement with B&G Mechanical in the next few days. The intent is make sure it is in for the prime heating season, which unfortunately will be upon us.

The spring projects will center on the Selectboard, Accounting and Building Department space. We are still considering moving the Building Department into the room 109 and moving the SB Office into the present Building Department space, but no final decision has been arrived at.

We also continue to struggle with less than dependable service from our elevator. I fear this is on its last legs and will be a significant expense to rebuild and meet all the new codes associated with ADA and public safety. For now we will continue to use the expertise of Baystate Elevator and hope we do not have a serious failure.

“Bras for a Cause”; South Hadley as many of you know hosted our friends from Northampton, including the Honorable Mayor David Narkiewicz and most of their BOH, on the South Hadley side Selectboard Members Forcier and Etelman were there to show their support.

The event was held at the Pink Petal, where Donna Reed operates a shop dedicated to assisting breast cancer survivors with clothing and undergarments. There were survivors, medical professionals, law enforcement officials, court representatives, each acknowledging the importance of bringing light to the issues of domestic violence and breast cancer. October is both Breast Cancer Awareness and Domestic Violence Month, this is an opportunity to showcase both.

There are drop off boxes set up through N’Hampton and South Hadley which are intended to collect bras and women undergarments to be used for homeless shelters and others who are in dire need of these items.

It is interesting to note that often victims of domestic violence who sometimes leave with nothing more than the shirt on their back are in need of these essential items. We encourage everyone who has been touched by the tragedy of domestic violence or the challenges of breast cancer to take the opportunity to not burn their bra, but recycle it.

A special thanks goes to Sharon Hart our South Hadley Health Director for her work on this project and her counterpart Meredith O’Leary in NoHo. The team that collects the most bras wins a cup ...trophy.

Opioid Task Force; Again an initiative from the tireless Health Director Sharon Hart and others as part of the Substance Abuse Prevention Collaborative (of which South Hadley is a participant) there was a leadership meeting held in the Selectboard Office on September 17, Karen Pio SHPS, Sharon Hart, Heather Warner (Grant Coordinator), Chief Labrie, Cherry Sullivan (DA’s Office), Gail Gramorossa (DPH) and other interested parties attended.

The subject matter ranged from Narcan to drug/alcohol use in schools. Under Karen Pio and the task force there has been strides made in reducing some troublesome areas of concern. According to the survey, the number of students who have come to school drunk or high in the last 12 months has dropped both in the high school and middle school and remains below the state and county percentages. Unfortunately there is more work to do, especially in forming healthy relationships and ill-treatment of others in the schools.

I encourage residents to take notice of the “Task Force” campaign to highlight the positive effects of positive parenting. There will be a number of posters and banners popping up around town to drive home the message. Thank you Karen Pio for delivering a positive message with intent of jumpstarting social change by having people realize there is another ...better way.

Center Church; I had the pleasure of visiting Pastor Souder and her development team a week ago. This historic and iconic structure has some challenging structural defects, mostly involving the beautiful stained glass windows. We commiserated with each other about the lack of financial support for buildings which have community and historical significance.

Their hope was the municipality would be able to financially support some of the renovations, but beyond not having enough to care of our own buildings, it is illegal for the town to provide financial

assistance to private non-profits. They understand the dilemma and the strains we face in respect to maintaining buildings over a century old.

Representative Scibak is working with the State to find some funds to assist them and looking at historic tax credits, any path will be challenging as so many buildings are in need throughout the Commonwealth. It will not get any easier in regards to historical preservation. I know they have discussed the CPA funding of a church in Hadley. I also suggested they approach Mount Holyoke College.

Special Town Meeting November 18; Presently there are thirteen articles on the very “drafty” list of articles. They range from financial request, to by-law changes to transfers. I intend to have draft list to you for the October 6 SB meeting and we would have a final warrant for October 20. I suspect some articles will fall off after various discussions, it seems the CPA request to be on the ballot and the zoning by laws will be the most intricate.

Health Insurance; Payroll and Benefits Coordinator Julie Gentile and I attended the HCHIT Executive Committee meeting on September 16, the bulk of the discussion and concern is around the ever changing Affordable Care Act and the related regulations. This will be a topic of discussion at the Selectboard Meeting on Tuesday night and continues to be somewhat of a wild card for future costs to the town.

ATA Wolowicz, Ms. Gentile and I also met with Millennium and Gallagher Associates about the growing use of insurance “exchanges”. Conceptually these new vehicles (or paint job on an old vehicle) for providing employee health insurance lock in the employers contribution and gives the employee flexibility when purchasing various plans. The downside is no other communities in the state have ventured out in these newfangled “exchanges”. While I do not fear being a trendsetter, I would rather it be with the return of bellbottom pants than health insurance...for now I will stay away from both.

Bike/Walk Committee; I attended the September 23 meeting of the Bike/Walk Committee at the Library. I cannot say enough about their dedication and their sensibility around establishing a system for cyclists and pedestrian in South Hadley. I impressed upon them that the SB is very supportive of creating such system and will likely support efforts which are founded in solid planning and considers other pressing needs facing SoHa.

I spoke about some of the other trails already standing in front of any South Hadley project, trails which started planning and design as early as 1962, but have not yet been completed. The Bruce Freeman, with \$14 million approved, but yet to be appropriate, similarly the Blackstone, the Haverhill, the Winchendon, the Powwow River Walk and numerous others. I reached out to Rich Masse at District 2 MassDOT and asked if he could give me some assessment of western Massachusetts projects which have already been identified, but still not funded. He is still running the tape, I suspect it will be well over \$100 million. He said they use a loose calculation of one million dollars a mile when a rail bed exists, as we all know South Hadley has no rail bed readily available. So the cost may be slightly higher as negotiated rights are one of the advantages of a rail bed.

As gloomy as this message may have sounded to the committee they were not deterred and as I agreed, saw a lot of good movement and other low hanging fruit to get this project started in some form. We touched on their upcoming meeting with the Golf Commission, the MassWorks Grant inclusion of bike

lanes, linkage with other communities and identifying existing hiking trails. They were supportive of sidewalk improvements and our outreach to MassDOT to include bike lanes in all their projects.

It was a very helpful meeting for me to better understand their desires and concerns, Keith Davis was elected their new Chair. Like all his fellow members he is engaged and experienced, as good combination.

I also attended the PVPC Visioning Session held in the Town Hall Auditorium the week before, it was well attended by the public and all attendees provided valuable input into the planning process. It gave citizens a sterling opportunity for a hands on involvement.



Lt. Governor Polito Signs Community Compact With South Hadley; South Hadley had the distinct honor to have Lieutenant Governor Karen Polito pay us a visit. The occasion was to sign the Commonwealth Community Compact. The compact assures we are aligned with the goals of the State of Massachusetts on a number of different pressing issues, including economic development, housing and transportation.

The Compact also affords us a priority status when apply for grants and participating in programs. The LG was very supportive and gracious in her remarks to the audience and especially “Cousin Frank”. Shout out Timna Tarr and her work, as the LG was impressed and intrigued by her art work hanging in Town Hall. Thank you Lieutenant Governor Polito for visiting.

Beacon Integrated Systems; Beth Greenblatt has been brought back as our contractor related to the Solar RFP project. You may recall the fine work she did for us in coordinating the ESCO project with Siemens. While Siemens still has some outstanding tasks (and we have retained some of their payments) Ms. Greenblatt performed well in respect to her responsibilities.

She recently met with ATA Wolowicz, Golf Course Manager Doug Juhasz and I to discuss the challenges externally and internally in regards to moving solar forward in South Hadley. Beth has the advantage of knowing the infrastructure and knowing the organization. Beacon was chosen from the DOER list of approved vendors. I look forward to getting this moving.

We will beginning the FY 17 budget planning process very soon and will keep you informed as the process unfolds.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael J Sullivan

Town Administrator, South Hadley

