



November 24, 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.

**Hampshire/Franklin Opioid Coalition:** On November 23<sup>rd</sup> Chief Labrie, Health Director Hart and I attended an emergency meeting in Northampton with area law enforcement, health officials along with elected and appointed community leaders to discuss the sudden dramatic spike in heroin overdoses experienced in communities up and down the Pioneer Valley November 12<sup>th</sup> through the 15<sup>th</sup>.

The use of Narcan saved a number of lives, but fatalities were recorded in Hampden, Hampshire and Franklin counties. A powerful batch of the opioid came to market just prior to the twelfth of November. Every community the number of overdoses more than doubled the "norm" in South Hadley. While South Hadley's may see one or possibly two overdoses a month, there was four in a four day period during this regional spike.

District Attorney Sullivan has been an important leader in the fight to coordinate information on the law enforcement, community and the addict cluster. The messages are very complex and each crafted to audience (addict, public, public safety communities) and delivered in three significantly different ways.

The importance of heightened awareness for the public safety (police/responders/dispatchers) community allows them to recognize signs of an overdose due to a stronger product being on the street and to take aggressive and immediate action to save and revive the victims. Seeking additional information to identify the deadly drug by brand (yes, there are brands of heroin) or name in the case of pills/altered substances is also critical to saving lives, but also to recognizing trends so the appropriate constituencies can be given this applicable important information. This info saves a life in the immediate and may save more lives in the future.

This issue is robbing the economy of productive futures and we all need to work towards a solution. It was especially sad to hear from rehab center personnel at this meeting about addicts checking themselves out of facilities when word reached them that there was a powerful, perhaps deadly strain on the streets of the four western counties. The reach of this problem continues to spread.

**Bardwell Street Library;** As much as I had hoped the Town of South Hadley would no longer have to use resources, divert staff and generally spend time and money on the Bardwell Street Library by this point in time, the fact is we still are responsible for the property.

The approval process continues to move ever so slowly towards the construction start date, but has not moved as fast as I had anticipated and certainly not as I had hoped (or budgeted). I have decided to

have the building drained and winterized, the heating system did not answer the call today and the cost of restarting that aging system would be about as much as winterizing (approximately \$1,200). Dean Development our property manager has been instructed to have the water service shut off, get the pipes drained and filled with antifreeze and take reasonable steps necessary to close it up for the winter.

Superintendent Reidy, Dean Development, Library Director Joe Rodio and I toured the building (11/24) and discussed what steps we each would be taking in the Hibernation Plan for the library. Dean Development will blow out the lines and take the necessary steps to avoid freezing pipes and other such issues. The DPW will continue to maintain sidewalks and grounds through the winter. Director Rodio will assist in continuing to empty the contents (not much left) and I will just worry until it is in the hands of some other entity.

**Budget FY 17:** I have started the initial budget meetings with departments, the first meeting was with the always prepared Library Director Joe Rodio. We have discussed some control concepts and it initially looks like the Library will stay within the parameters set forth for the FY 17 Budget. Over the next two weeks I have another eight departments scheduled for their initial meetings and that number will likely grow as I write this report.

The goal is to have a budget growth of less than 1.5% including labor agreement increases, health care and retirement increase. The latter two items will certainly be the biggest challenge to meeting that goal. I am not including any “excluded” debt service the measure, as that is set by vote.

**Land of Low Value:** This tedious project is a companion program for the Tax Title and abandon housing initiatives. The work and effort of the Assistant assessor Melissa Couture and the Treasurer/Collector Deb Baldini has been and will be critical to move this forward.

In a nutshell, there are hundreds of properties across the Town map which is listed as “owner unknown”, owned by the Town of South Hadley (or said to be) which are not being used or invested in the full potential of the land. These properties range from acres to a few square feet. Each case is almost unique and in turn the approach tends to be quite tailored as well. We need interested parties or be confident the parcel will on its own create some interest.

There are situations where it will make sense to have abutters tie it to properties they already own and in some of those cases there are expedited ways to make that happen. In some cases we would have to do RFPs or go to auction, in some cases there may be open space sensibility or perhaps wetlands protection traits which make it reasonable to retain a parcel. It is critical to clean up the inventory and this is a start.

The bottom line is that each property needs to be researched and considered one by one for a recommendation. The hope is we will have a few properties ready mid-year 2016 to test some strategies. There are inevitably complications which cannot be reasonable expected as the next report will suggest.

**Attorney Brown/Auction Properties:** We have run into some unfortunate situations with the properties which were part of the September auction. It is readily apparent why this process is so complicated and consumes so much time and effort internally and externally. Unless you work on these regularly one cannot even imagine the twists and turns these sales take. Even the most experienced land attorneys shudder when they consider these prospects.

Lawrence Avenue has been sold, 8 Graves (sold) is being gutted and soon will start renovations. Granby Road is stalled as the fifth title search in the last three years revealed a defect from the early 1800s (yes 1800s) in a transfer. The property which has been researched by both town hired title examiners, private property contracted examiners and a cadre of attorneys (public and private) all missed the defect. At this point we believe it can be repaired and allow the sale to go forward.

351 East Street is not as hopeful of a tale. The high bidder has been hit by a familial bump in the road and will not go forward with the sale. The property as allowed by law can be offered to the next highest bidder, the auction house has reached out to the group with no response. We will, as we have the right to pursue damages to the extent of our costs associated with the sale from the high bidder.

**King Information/General Code:** Both these projects are moving along fairly well. General Code has been reviewed by-law by by-law (there is a mouthful) by our liaison at General Code, Town Counsel Ed Ryan and Town Clerk Charlene Hamlin. Their input and the Town Clerk's oversight is vital to the success of the project. However, they must get cooperation from various departments including Administration, Planning and Conservation. So far all have been trying to get through the mountain of review or submittal in a timely manner.

At the end of the rainbow for the codification we should see a substantial easing of effort put forth retrieving information. All by-laws will be accessible in a standard format which will be orderly and fairly intuitive for the public on the website. Internally it will be much easier for departments to cross reference information. Hopefully the SB and TM will support an expenditure to have annual maintenance of this system.

King Information has completed Phase 1 of the records retention project and the results are incredible. Several departments have made comment how easy it is to find records with the new system, saving time and effort. The records have been consolidated from seven different location down to one room. To implement the final part of the system it will be necessary to take over the space presently used (but not often) by the South Hadley Chamber of Commerce.

Similar to General Code, I will propose in the next budget an annual cost to have King Info come in and remove the records which cycle out annually and to make sure the system is being maintained.

**Civic Ready:** As we head to the "Winter Season" it is important for residents to update their information or actually enter their information on the web based notification system. The update is easily accessible from going on the website scrolling to the bottom and look for the icon (see below), then click and follow the instructions.



Much of the inclement weather warnings, schedule changes and other related information will be delivered through this system. The greater familiarity with the system the residents have now, the more likely they will be able to navigate when the snow flies. It also will give us an opportunity to make adjustments or get answers to unanticipated questions. Any advocacy to remind people to sign up would be appreciated.

**Special Town Meeting:** The recent Special Town Meeting received a number of endorsements in regards to increased dissemination of information. We also had a suggestion from a Town Meeting Member to put the agenda up on the screen as the articles are considered during the meeting. I have inquired about the possibility and while it is possible it would require a specialized projector which can project at long distances. This projector could be as much as \$8 K to purchase and install. Our tech people here in Town Hall have also suggested we look in to large screen monitors which may be placed around the room strategically and work off a computer to display information. These monitors would have more flexibility as they may be used in other rooms or even buildings if needed. I will continue to review the concept which I believe be very worthy of consideration.

The meeting went along well thanks to our skilled Moderator Edward Ryan. The discussions were respectful and professional, something which is not always the case in TM in other communities. The issues would well vetted, which is solemn tribute to the members coming prepared and well informed. Thank you to all Town Meeting Members for your earnest participation.

Thank you for your support and guidance in all matters and I wish you all a happy and healthy Thanksgiving!

Respectfully submitted,

Michael J. Sullivan  
South Hadley, Town Administrator