



December 10, 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.

Siemens/Lochinvar; I know far more about boilers and heating controls than I have ever intended and it should be noted I still know very little about either. However, in an attempt to expand the institutional knowledge we invited Siemens's Jim Weglinski, long time South Hadley Project Coordinator to meet with ATA/Facilities Manager, our property management contractor (Dean Development) and myself to discuss both the EcoBee smartstat (thermostat) and the Lochinvar boilers with a particular emphasis on how the two interact.

Mr. Weglinski will be working (has started) with Lochinvar to develop an integration strategy of the thermostat and the boiler. If we simply did not care about energy efficiency and the need to automate some functions we would greatly reduce the time on task and save countless brain cells for the Administrator. It is critically important to continue to reduce energy usage and to have the ability to remotely set, fully utilize and/or prescribe off-hour settings for the building. Our goal is to reduce consumption greater than the 20% goal originally set. Unfortunately with the price recently increasing for our contracted natural gas we will probably break even as to cost.

Another key part of the EcoBee is to access on-line real time information about energy related to heating. We continue to record our usage in Mass Insight, but this information is 30 days or more behind, having close to real time info will be a great asset.

FY 17 Budget; Initial budget conversations have taken place with nine (9) different departments thus far. All departments have been cooperative and fully understand both the restraints and caution which is necessary early in the process. As the quarterly report from the Town Accountant recently indicated revenues have been firm and they continue to be solid in October and November.

There are areas of change which will likely spur discussion. The Clerk's budget is likely to show a significant increase as the effects of the Presidential election, the substantial changes to the voting process will cause added expenditures and the changes to the composition of the office. Town Clerk Hamlin is still gathering information on the remote voting where just prior to the standard voting day she will be able to set up "remote voting" or off-site voting for the Presidential election. The other issue to be considered is the fact voters will be able to cast their ballot days in advance at Town Hall. The Clerk and Administration continue to discuss what that would look like and perhaps will include extended service hours on those days or days leading up to elections.

Given the newness of all these election innovations it is nearly impossible to calculate the impact. If we invest heavily in the changes and the cost for the standard voting days remain the same we will suffer a loss, but at this juncture we do not know the requirements from the state, never mind the effect. We will try to encourage more instant "absentee" voting leading up to the April 12 Annual Town Election. This where a voter can come in during normal office hours fill out their absentee on the spot and hand it over to be counted all in one visit, or take it home and mail it in (the first is better for the process).

Another change, more in presentation, than substance will be I will include the Gaylord Library request as part of the "Public Library" budget with a relatively small increase. This will not change the Gaylord's ability to use these funds to continue their public programing and access in any discernable manner, however it will allow the South Hadley Public Library some appropriate ability to ensure the public money is being spent for the public good. This should in no way be considered as an indictment on how tax dollars have been expended in past years, it is simply a structured control appropriate to municipal fiscal management.

This measure will help to reduce some of the financial concerns in regards to acting as a local granting agency. I understand there is trepidation amongst many about this change, but I do not see any marked difference. Those individuals who are suspicious of government, also should seek to have us, as a town, comply with the laws of the Commonwealth. This is strictly an attempt to move closer towards an appropriate and efficient use of tax dollars.

New Town Hall Property Issues; Recently Town Hall has been hit by some annoying issues. One is just age and the other is irresponsible disregard for directives. At one of the Main Street exits and two of the Pleasant Street exits from the building we have had moisture making its way in between the lath and plaster causing failures to the ceiling system.

Dean Development is addressing the issue and has a general suspicion of where each leak is penetrating the envelope of the building. We have kept up with the regular roof drain maintenance which was identified as the cause in prior leaks. Without fully addressing the repointing of the building these situations will continue and become more dangerous and frequent. It just makes sense if the water is eroding the mortar, it will eventually find it way to cracks and crevice below the brick on the exterior then come inside.



The other significant concern is related to the Pleasant Street elevator. Although we have made several pleas we continue to have individuals (delivery persons, staff, visitors) disregard our directives to not prop open the elevator exterior door, yet it continues. We will be adding signage to the actual door reinforcing this message. Last year we replaced the entire door structure at the cost of over \$500, this year due to someone forcing an object under the door to keep it open the metal jam is twisted and the

hinges no longer function properly. We have been forced to have the metal door manufacturer come back to make costly (no bill yet) adjustments. The metal door and the elevator companies have said while they understand why it was designed and installed where it was, exterior entry elevators of this type are often problematic.

In addition the elevator continues to have sporadic outages and the service provider continues to warn us that without a substantial overhaul, greater and more frequent outages are likely. We will continue to do our level best to keep the doors open and the machinery running as long term overall solutions are considered and discussed. It has been submitted to Capital Planning, but just recently.

We continue to move forward with general maintenance and scheduled office upgrades as the long term strategies and uses for this building are reviewed. I hope the SB continues to support the upgrades and renovations as I am fairly certain we will be here for another five to ten years as Town discussions ensue about the need.

Western Mass. EDP; I attended Thursday morning's monthly meeting on economic development presented by the Western Mass EDC. These meetings are very informative, particularly when there is numerous communities in the room. Springfield did a presentation on their FutureCity project which is being developed by Newmark, Grubb. This firm works closely with municipal and counties across the nation to coach those political subdivisions to better understand what site selectors are truly looking for when considering a region. While it is somewhat different for each region or city/town there are truths that remain self-evident. Some needs seem are evident, such as a trained workforce, a diverse offering of amenities, competitive utilities, reasonable taxes are all important. It was interesting to hear them say that incentives were not high on the list, I have heard this before at economic development meetings. They were referred to as "economic swag". In other words no one comes to a place because the incentives, if there is not distribution networks, trained workforce, customers, etc.

The City of Holyoke's Economic Development Director Marcos Marrero also presented on exciting projects in our neighbor across the river. I took particular note of their expansion of the Riverwalk toward the Willamansett Bridge, of course I think South Hadley would benefit and an investment made would appreciate more quickly if the project increased ped/bike access towards the Vietnam Veterans Bridge would have a great benefit to both communities, but I have no authority in Holyoke. Some say I never did. In considering the workforce needs of each community and the emphasis in the previous discussion working towards and with South Hadley makes a great deal of sense to partner.

PVPC LTA RHSO; That would, Planning Director Richard has submitted a Local Technical Assistance (LTA) grant application to the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC) to consider a Regional Housing Service Office (RHSO) strategy which would include some of the neighboring communities. We have suggested Hadley (13%), South Hadley (6%), Southampton (2%), Granby (6%), may be likely partners for a regional approach to meeting, or in the case of Hadley maintaining, the prescribed 10% inventory threshold for affordable housing each community must achieve, each communities subsidized housing index (SHI) is in parenthesis according to the Pioneer Valley Regional Housing Plan from PVPC.

This best practice has been common in other parts of the state, particularly in Sudbury. Where the communities of Acton, Concord, Burlington, Bedford, Lexington and Weston banded together with the host community of Sudbury to attack this mandate on a regional level.

This partnership coordinates SHI inventories for each town assists them in developing housing and zoning policies. The RHSO helps to prepare grants for housing. It also is significant training tool to have property owners better understand the advantages, requirements, pitfalls and opportunities of designating units as affordable. This has been a highly successful model in eastern Massachusetts, which is understandably a different market, but adapting the concept to this market will be helpful. I thank Planner Harris for taking the lead on this opportunity.

197 Granby Road; Finally ...through the hard work of Assistant Assessor Melissa Couture, the guidance of Atty. Peter Brown, the perseverance of Treasurer Deb Baldini and the cooperation of the buyer (and his attorney) we have perfected the deed and now can proceed in closing on the property. Through all parties hard work we have closed three of the four auctioned properties. It has brought in a seemingly paltry \$45k, but represents an investment side in these parcels which will benefit the Town into the future by way of added tax value.

The 351 East Street property has not gone as expected and will likely end up back in our portfolio. We may have two other properties ready to go to auction in the spring and if you agree I would suggest adding the East Street property to the mix. It should be noted we are looking, as the law allows to recover our costs from the parties who have negated on their bid. Their \$5,000 deposit will not be returned and we are seeking a similar sized amount to cover all costs. At the end of the day we cannot allow the town to lose money.

Street Lights; I am continuing to abide by the year old directive to control "Street Lighting" costs (\$107K budgeted FY 16, \$111 slated for FY 17) by not adding any lighting when at all possible and reasonable. If there is a safety or security issue involved I reach out to the Police and DPW. Recent requests have been satisfied by working with Ed Morrin cooperatively at SHELD to identify lights which have been regularly knocked out of service (usually hit by trucks) or have a level of redundancy which makes little sense.

We have adjusted lighting plus or minus on Richview, Newton, Willamansett and Stonegate. At Stonegate we turned a new one on and took one of line on Willamansett Street which had been struck by a truck several times and has been out of commission for an extended period (we still pay) on Richview and Newton we moved lights from where there were several to an area which was in need.

This exercise is time consuming and tedious, but the making sure we look at all opportunities before we flip the switch is necessary. It is important that property owners accept their share of responsibility in lighting private property, particularly rentals. I recently had a call from a resident (renter) about adding a light because of how dark it was at her front door. I went to her property and there were three street lights around her property and while I appreciated her need, I respectfully asked that she ask her landlord to repair the front porch light. I really do not think that is too much to ask.

This seems to me to be a ministerial function and one better worked out away from a committee, but certainly if the SB would like to go in another direction on this I am happy to comply. To this point with cooperation of SHELD I have been trying to work out the details with an eye to keep the costs under control.

Fuel Services Propane Vehicles; I had an interesting initial discussion with Jim Brown from South Hadley owns Fuel Services about the possibility of purchasing or converting some municipal vehicles to propane as opposed to gasoline or diesel.

We had explored some of this before and it was determined that in some cases of heavy power equipment (backhoes, front end loaders) there was reports of power loss from the conversion kits. We also had to cost account for the conversion kits for some vehicles. It seems to be widely demonstrated, propane is a cleaner fuel and the cost of maintenance likely would be reduced.

I will be asking the PD and DPW to ask for price quotes from their vehicle vendors about factory propane vehicles and the gap between gas and diesel to see if it makes sense. There is additional training for mechanics and we will have to look at reliability in communities who have already ventured into the field. The research seems to indicate a ten percent increase in the useful life of propane over fossil fuels.

The bottom line when we looked at this before it was not at the request of a local vendor. I feel it is incumbent upon us (me) to take a closer look given the substantial investment a faith shown by South Hadley Fuel Services in the town. I would encourage any input into this very early look into the possibility of harnessing propane as a fuel source.

US Gaylord Site: Recently I met with Richard Himmelwright and Dominic Angelini to continue discussion of the future of their site on Gaylord Street. I was on site as the crane swung the nearly \$1 million of HVAC systems into place continuing the investment being made by all parties.

The subject of locating public office at the administration building came up and my reply was basically, as you have heard before, anything is possible and anything should be considered. There are some communities which have successfully leased, condo-ized or purchased existing building to reno for use at a considerably lower price. Burlington (Town Offices), Franklin (Town Offices), Cambridge (Police Station) and South Hadley (Police Station over 20 years ago) are some of the Massachusetts communities which have had reasonable success.

All in all, it is worth considering, but there is far more information to gather at this point. If we did seek such an arrangement we would have to do so through an RFP process. Like I have said I plan on retiring from the building I presently have an office, unless there is an expedited plan I am not aware of.

As always, thank you for your support, please let me know if there is any additional information you need.

Respectfully submitted;

Michael J. Sullivan
Town Administrator, South Hadley