



March 15, 2017

Honorable Selectboard,

Please accept this abridged accounting of activities and initiatives which have been occupied my time and the time of other public employees during the past weeks. Thank you in advance for your attention and interest.

**Capital Planning,** On the eighth of March I attended the a meeting of the Capital Planning Committee, Jim Reidy DPW Superintendent was the first to report and reviewed the upcoming street construction schedule for the spring (FY 17) and the summer/fall (FY18) projects. Sections of Pearl and Brainerd are heading the street repair list and the sidewalk projects continue throughout the town.

We also reviewed the plan requests and re-aligned the schedule according to the committee's directive. There was a change to some of the equipment list for the DPW including moving up some heavy equipment including an eight wheel dump similar to the one recently purchased. There was renewed discussion about the barn at Alumni Field and a request made to seek input from the schools as to storage and use needs. I continued my pitch for replacement of the front section of the Town Hall roof and place the phone system on the bond, ultimately this is committee which deliberates fairly and makes very good decisions.

The new "draft" list is on the Capital Planning Committee web page and they will continue to consider the requests. I would respectfully suggest any interested Town Meeting member to review the projects which have been completed in the last few years contained in that document, it truly is impressive.

**16 Ludlow Street,** The neighbors in the Lower Ludlow Street area seem very appreciative in respect to the aggressive steps we have taken recently in regards to that property. It has not come without costs, both in labor hours and in contract cost. I would estimate the final all in costs to get this property ready for sale will be about \$8 to 10K. Our goal will be to make the municipality whole upon sale. Long term getting this back on to the tax rolls will benefit everyone.

Hampshire County Sheriff Maurice Egan served the necessary papers and allowed us entry at noon on March 8<sup>th</sup> consistent with the posted notice forty eight hours prior. There was a bonded mover on hand to remove anything of value which would have been stored at the expense of the owner (Town of South Hadley). Fortunately there was nothing of value, as determined by the Sheriff, unfortunately we have to pay for all this bureaucracy and in advance of a sale. It was over \$600 for the mover to move or store nothing. We also are responsible for all the utility cost since we took the property, even though the courts would not give us rights to entry until after March 6 and after these processes were completed.

There often is unfortunate circumstance surrounding these situations and the resulting conditions which have really played out over years. We take every step to make people know we are not heartless, but must do our jobs in a fair and equitable manner.



The DPW cleaned the exterior property where trash was strewn throughout. They also boarded and secured the windows. A clean out contractor was brought in on Monday and they made a five truck dent into the accumulated debris. They discovered some vermin and raccoons which have become squatters recently. We will work to evict them as well next week.

I also would like commend Treasurer/Collector Baldini, along with the Abandon Property Team (Kara Cunha AG's Office, Sharon Hart and Charlene Baiardi) for their participation in this and other properties. The time and effort a number of us have committed to this project must be part of the overall equation, not only how difficult it is to execute these cases, but the true cost involved. ATA Jennifer Wolowicz did an excellent job of coordinating the efforts.

**19 Ludlow Street**, Is another unsightly property right across the street. The owner recently received an engineers report which has stated the building with the exception of the foundation is a structurally unsound and beyond repair. The Health Director and Building Commissioner are working on a condemnation order and will likely order the owners to demolish the building immediately. They will be compelled to accept the costs related to the demo, this is a building we have been trying to work with the owners for over two years and we have run out patience.



This is a neighborhood where values have been depressed by the two properties, even the recently constructed duplexes have been devalued by the nearby blight. This neglect robs neighbors of dollars from owners when they go to sell or borrow to make improvements, it also stymies growth which results in a reduction of taxes for the municipality. I fully understand misfortune is not always sought, but we always ask citizens to reach out to us early so we can make sure all services are applied to assist in saving homes from blight.

**Jean Haertl Human Resource Consultant,** We have engaged a Ms. Haertl to do a review of training practices and employee relations in the Clerk's Office. As you are aware we have had a reoccurring exit of qualified individuals in that office which has become a serious concern. We are hoping this third party expert will be able to assist us in identifying weaknesses in our process and what strategies need to be executed to successfully at retaining competent staff.

Her process is thorough and has produced positive results in numerous municipalities. It includes reviewing exit interviews, making inquiries to both present and past staff and engaging the administration and the manager in a strategy for success. This is a growing and significant human resource issue which the HR Director has been fully engaged. I should point out this is a significant and continued investment of time in money to evolve management practices.

**Tim Eagles EDM,** In a previous TA Report I had reported we had decided on a consultant for the needs assessment, unfortunately we were not able to come to terms on a contract. So we went back out and interviewed EDM Consultants. Tim Eagles and his wife were very impressive and have already reviewed our standard contract and have stated there were no issues or changes needed. They also have been hired to oversee a new Senior Center project in Hadley.

They will start their needs assessment very soon which will include focus groups, site assessment a Dayton and a cursory look at other sites in town. I have decided spending a portion of the limited resources investigating sites which do not present the advantages of the present site makes little sense. We will certainly keep the other possibilities in mind as we go through the process, but for now the main question will be "Does Dayton Street work?"

We will be asking the Woodlawn Plaza developers to pitch a P3 or Public/Private Partnership, but that will take the pressure and cost off of us. If they can make a practical and economic argument for that site it will be considered in our final recommendation. The other sites each have significant acquisition and site development, none are more centrally located than these two locations. Given those issues to begin with I feel it is wise to concentrate our resources on the present site. Again, we are not forgetting the others, but will keep them in mind and circle back if necessary.

In a related issue it was relayed to me by the COA Director Leslie Hennessey a reoccurring myth has resurfaced suggesting that \$40K approved for Town Meeting was meant to be used exclusively for the Senior Center needs assessment, I have sent the motion from the May 2016 ATM which clearly outlines the use of those funds. We are continuing to use 25% of the appropriation for evaluating the conditions of Town Hall, Police Station, Senior Center, OFHM and the DPW Office/Garage. That evaluation is being done by a separate firm.

**Storm Stella,** We are still cleaning up some of the frozen debris throughout South Hadley as of this writing. I would like to commend our DPW Staff, Police Department and each Fire District as to how

they performed during and after the Stella. They responded to the needs of South Hadley residents with a few ambulance calls and few accidents. Most importantly I would like to express our municipal gratitude to the citizens of South Hadley for their cooperation.

It goes without saying we have pockets of discontent, where the worst in neighbors are brought out, thankfully that is outpaced a hundred times over by the acts of kindness displayed by so many more citizens. Thank you for those efforts!

**Elevator Project,** The project continues to be extremely frustrating it seems every time we get closer to finding a solid price as to what it will cost new “code” issues appear. This project is delayed again, but we will stay at it to bring some improvements to the equipment. Similar the fire notification system seems to be Jenga project, but is moving forward.

As always thank you for your support in the mentioned items and so much more. It is a pleasure to be working in South Hadley and I thank you and the citizens for the opportunity.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael J. Sullivan

Town Administrator, South Hadley