



October 18, 2013

Honorable Selectboard;

Please accept this as an abridged version of the work being performed in South Hadley Town Hall by myself and more often by other dedicated employees.

Health Insurance; This seems like the a week which should be entitled “Everything You Wanted to Know About South Hadley’s Health Insurance, But Were Scared to Ask”. On Tuesday the Assistant Town Administrator and I attended a seminar in Westborough presented by Blue Cross and Blue Shield, on Wednesday I attended the Hampshire County Health Insurance Trust meeting in Deerfield, Thursday we met with Art Bomengen from Millennium Company (they are the group overseeing our benefits) and on Friday the President of Holyoke Medical Center Spiros Haterias came to visit. He is interested in getting Holyoke Medical Center more involved in South Hadley, I suggested sponsoring an event or two in town would go a long way. Some ideas I put out there were FallsFest 14, the Library Grand Opening or creating another event centered in South Hadley to promote the HMC, in any event we are open to the idea.

Back to Health Insurance, we are still trying to find out what South Hadley actually pays for insurance. I had asked for a claims to premium report, which has become more difficult to acquire than I have experienced in the past with other trusts. The good news is that we have had consecutive years of “no increases”, but without those foundation numbers we will not really be sure what is the “South Hadley Share”. At the Trust meeting I also voiced opposition to having the retiree drug subsidy money go back to the trust, as opposed to back to the town. The motion to have the money go back to HCGIT was defeated and ultimately there was decision made not to raise the retirees premiums. In Westborough the news was really about new on-line tools that are being developed for employees and the fact that under the new state regulations BC/BS overall cost to consumer cannot increase more than 1.5% that does not mean that a group’s experience change cannot cause a spike. Again, this is why it is so important to get a handle on experience at a local level.

The most consistent message is a healthier group will produce a better premium, smoking cessation, exercise, healthy choices all are helpful to that end.

Mr. Bomengen will continue to analyze our claims and premium payments to ascertain what works. He is looking at the cost effectiveness of some changes to retirees plans (without affecting rates or co-pays) and our eligibility policies. I am confident that this will produce positive results for the taxpayers.

Texon; Someday you will get this report and say ...”what about Texon”? and hopefully I will be able to reply, Texon is gone forever. Selectboard member Ishler reminded me how long she has been hearing about that pile of bricks, and I felt a little better about my dismay.

We have the final document, it has been signed by Mass Historical, South Hadley Historical Chair, and South Hadley Selectboard Chair and will go back to the Holyoke Gas and Electric Monday. The HG&E will sign, then the Army Corp will sign, the demo contract will be awarded and the building will be razed.

I also have met with a delightful group which include Ted Belsky, Margaret Jodoin, Ellie Klepacki who are anxious for the Canal Park to actually be available to the public. These committed citizens are more than willing to put their respective shoulders to this work and to be future advocates for the park. I stated to them I am happy assist in their efforts in any way I can and expressed that the Selectboard is equally anxious and supportive of the Canal Park opening.

Special Town Meeting; A great deal of this week was swallowed up by preparing the “draft” STM warrant for the November 19 meeting. I believe we are in good shape to begin the public conversation and receive inquiries from Town Meeting Members and the public.

There are fair questions that may not be answered as well as expected, but most of that is due to adjustments and changes yet to be finalized. As way of example it is not entirely clear who will ultimately become 40 hour a week employees. Please note I will answer questions to the best of my ability without bargaining against the best interest of the taxpayers.

Pioneer Valley Planning Commission Municipal Roundtable; I was happy represent South Hadley at the PVPC Municipal Roundtable on October 10th in Springfield. There was discussion and explanation about the CIC Grant application that South Hadley has already written a letter of support], which would allow us to more fluidly share services with other communities and accept services from them if needed.

Jon Robertson from MMA was on hand to give some insight into the upcoming state budget season. As he explained nothing of any import would occur until most likely December 20 when the Legislative Joint Committee on Revenue meets with various analysis to start to sketch a profile for FY 15. Given that first quarter numbers are still coming in and there are few things still unclear for FY 14 at the state level, this is not the time to start to write in the cement.

Not unlike the local process the state should proceed with caution and start to prepare, but not be fooled that we have enough information to really predict the future. This is a time for awareness, but patience just the same.

Medical Marijuana; As you are aware we still have various groups who have approached South Hadley about local interest in this industry. I have been working with Town Planner Richard Harris to calculate what works for the town and what does not.

It should be said that this will produce jobs, stabilize industrial properties and provide community partnerships. These facilities will be highly regulated and there will state oversight which is at a significant level. It also is required to work with both the local Police Chief, State Police and the County Sherriff's Office to make sure there is a safety and security plan in place.

It has been indicated that the production side is not a concern, but for various reasons it is felt that South Hadley does not work well as a dispensary site. This message has been heard and the Planner is working on some articles to make sure that is part of the zoning.

Three different groups have expressed interest, all come with sound investment and business plans. Each group would provide complete full time positions with attractive benefit plans with 15 to 25 full

time positions which pay range averages \$75k. I will continue to keep you apprised of developments in regard to this new/old industry.

Automated Death Certification Process; Town Clerk Carlene Hamlin, Health Director Sharon Hart and I sat down to discuss next steps going forward for this new initiative. South Hadley will be one of the first communities to coordinate with funeral directors so that death and burial certificates can go paperless and be completed on-line.

I thank both these professionals for their foresight and cooperative approaches to this innovation. Once again South Hadley will be in forefront of this change. We look forward to more innovations.

Tag Sale; Thank you to the Selectboard for supporting me in hosting the South Hadley Falls Neighborhood Association Tag Sale. It was great success, we have gotten many recesses in Town Hall cleared out and we did not have to fill dumpsters. I was impressed with the town wide event and my gears are turning as to how we can improve upon the success.

Like most South Hadley events there was little coverage from television (who from what I can see are starved for good news). The local papers are quite generous and Selectboard member Etelman is certainly getting the message out on social media (three people came to buy army cots, but they did not want what was laying on it in the pictures on Facebook). We need to find ways for SoHa not be forgotten, as a great place to live, work and play.

It was a fun weekend for me in Town Hall, but I am still getting this to you late, sorry!

Respectfully submitted,

Mike Sullivan

South Hadley Town Administrator