



October 24, 2014

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.

Gaylord Street Commerce Park; There has been some recent positive developments at Gaylord Street. The property managers, the principal owners (Lakestar Development) and the mortgage holder have recently come to terms on crafting a new financing package. It will include major improvements to the property and most importantly allow more creative lease, condo or ownership offers to be allowed. Hopefully this will work towards extricating the property from the hands of the bankruptcy court which complicates every move.

Patriot Care has had their architects on site and there has been some exchanges of information between the property managers and the architectural firm. The build-out will follow relatively quickly and there should be an active operation by spring of next year.

I met with Dominic Angelini (property manager) last week and one of perspective tenants this week, so we have on-going and growing dialogue to stabilize this property. I did express the municipalities desire to address the Lamb Street (Mill 6) monster. I suggested if there are no uses and it is unlikely any will reasonably develop I would encourage them to raze and seek a suitable use for the property.

Election Worker Training; On Tuesday October 21st I was invited by the Town Clerk to address the poll workers, Chief Labrie was also in attendance to speak to some security issues which occurred at the primary. A representative was on hand from the Boston Office of the Secretary of State to give an overview of changes and procedures for elections. Town Clerk Hamlin organized this gathering and another component part in making sure the election is widely marketed and the process is as painless as possible for all participants. A trained staff will increase participation and instill confidence in the citizenry.

There continues to be a steady stream of absentee ballot requests, at this juncture the simplest method is to come in to the Clerk's Office, fill out the form and then complete the ballot. Vote right then and there. No mailing, return dates, your vote is cast, easy breezy!

Engineering Services; Prior to the Town Engineer tendering his resignation Comprehensive Engineering Incorporated requested a visit to highlight their expertise and to let us know they were interested in doing business in South Hadley. At the time I made the appointment it seemed unlikely we would have such a robust discussion. Superintendent Reidy, was present as well as, Mark Aiken from District 2 Water and Jeff Cyr from District 1 Water.

It was really enlightening as to how the districts work to avoid engineering services if at all possible and equally interesting as to how communities are reinventing on-call engineering contracts. Flat –rate contracts which demand areas of completion, reduced rates for additional work and added value through multiple disciplines are very much in vogue.

While we have not come to any decision immediately, going forward this type of conversation brings to light some innovative ways other communities are solving their needs in regards to engineering and other such services.

Emergency Preparedness; EMD Sharon Hart did a an outstanding job with the recent Shake –Out drill to make Town Hall employees aware of how to prepare for an earthquake. The cooperation and enthusiasm from staff was great, I was more afraid that I would not be able to be extricated from beneath my desk than what an earthquake might do, but this speaks to human nature being only aware of the dilemma in front of us, not the next to unfold.

As the initiative progressed I learned a couple of things, one we have an intercom system and two it does not work as well as it should, this captures the up and down nature of my world. The general directive was to take cover and resist running out of the building, as you are liable to be struck by a falling object.

There has been conversations about preparedness of another sort in light of the presence of Ebola in the media. I now even have an Ebola tie, presented to me by the Health Director. Hopefully it will be as close as any of us will get to the deadly strain. It does however provide an opportunity for all of us to revisit some basic protocols, hand washing, washing fruit and vegetables, getting vaccinations, sparing others from exposure when we are not feeling well and just using common sense. As we head towards the flu season these will pay dividends.

The District Fire Departments, Police Chief, the EMD and representatives from Mount Holyoke met on Tuesday last, to discuss shared assets and organizational approaches to the Ebola threat, as well as, other similar pandemics. Prior to this meeting on the same day the EMD was on a statewide conference call and met with Five College representatives about the same, suffice to say there is a great deal of strategy being discussed in the area of emergency preparedness. We still have work to do, but we are making progress. I believe the concept last year of folding the Emergency Management director position into the Health Director's responsibility was fortuitous and has created an improved communication models.

Mount Holyoke had a speaker from Liberia, Leymah Gbowee a Nobel Prize winner to speak on women in leadership. I can imagine there would be questions about conditions in her native land and she will certainly add an interesting perspective to the plight of Liberia. That speech was delivered October 23.

Ecumenical Council; Reverend Souder asked if I would attend a council meeting to discuss areas of concern for the faith community and how we may work together for the community at large to overcome those concerns.

There were about dozen church leaders from South Hadley area and I very much enjoyed their discussions. I was late for the bible session, but the topic was, neighbors getting along, what could a better entrée for me as Town Administrator. It was not quite clear to me what I could add to the conversation, as much of it was theology based and I am not well versed. Both the town and the church

is engaged in helping people get along with each other was clear to me. I presented some ideas on how they might help lessening conflict within our boundaries, as you know I am never want for ideas.

We discussed looking at a mediation project which the churches may have volunteers trained to intercede in neighbor disputes. There has been some successes in communities with this approach and may be a resource particularly for police and/or the schools. This would not be an attempt to proselytize but to add a tool deal with situations on a voluntary participatory situation. Just another tool to help people live in harmony ...or as close as we can reasonably hope to harmony, let just say lower the discord.

Health Insurance: I have given permission to Blue Cross Blue Shield to release our health insurance experience to MIIA. Julie Gentile under my direction asked to get the most recent trend data for our group directly and was told BC/BS would not provide it to us. I strongly feel this is an unhealthy approach to South Hadley determining the health insurance alternatives and the best price on the same plan.

Once a quote is in hand I will discuss it with the Chair of the Selectboard and ask that he instruct me as to whether it should be brought to the full board. As you may suspect this issue could be very disruptive, though it is not intended to be anything more than a best business practice. The employees and the taxpayers need to know the nearly \$4 million budgeted annually is being spent in the most prudent manner. As I have stressed before, if a change was to be made, the plan would remain the same, the only difference would be what organization acts as our trust, but there are a number of questions which need to be asked going forward.

Town Meeting; The warrant is ready, the Planning Board "report" is complete and the warrants were mailed on October 23rd. I am looking forward to the hearing before the appropriations and then the discussion to follow on the balance of articles.

The hearing will begin at 6 PM in Town Hall Auditorium on Monday November 3rd and the discussion will immediately follow. The Selectboard will advise as to posting a meeting for that evening to cover administrative actions or low intensity items (not there is such a thing).

Mohawk Paper; This swiftly moving issue is the way of the Economic Development world. As companies are courted by communities to locate, as in most cases there are far too many suitors and not enough brides. It is hard to blame businesses in today's highly competitive marketplace, especially when we discuss manufacturing in the Northeast, for leveraging their success in looking for the "best deal".

Mohawk is looking to occupy over 100,000 square feet of space at the former Intelicoat Property at 28 Gaylord Street. As there are two other tenants either with an agreement (Patriot Care) or a letter of intent on file with the owners, if all things go well, this would stabilize this property. There will still be the issue of Mill #6 and some other buildings, I have been told by the property managers those issues will be addressed and they are willing to work with the town on concepts.

Mohawk is family owned, family managed business with a sterling reputation in their industry, is headquartered in Cohoes, New York and operates plants in several other states. This operation would primarily focus on their specialty envelope business.

They have submitted applications for the Economic Development Incentive Program with the Massachusetts Office of Business Development for both South Hadley and Chicopee. There are some obvious and unavoidable advantages which Chicopee has, but I still feel South Hadley is better fit with several advantages of its own. The biggest being South Hadley is a greater value long term. A final decision in the next few weeks will be made.

The property owners and Mohawk Paper will be looking for a "Special Tax Agreement" (STA) under Chapter 23A section 3E (see subsection (b) (I, II, III, IV, V)). This would forgive property taxes for the first full year, and I would recommend under this statute we offer, 75, 50 and 25% discounts in each subsequent year (the minimum forgiveness under the statute). The PILOT agreement with Patriot would not be affected by an STA so we will still garner the PILOT and the other revenue benefits from the host community agreement (approximately \$37K year one). It also will not affect the tax status of the several other parcels which are part of this complex and owned by US Gaylord.

The 2014 taxes on this specific parcel is \$71,293 with \$170,408.78 taxes paid in total on all parcels held by US Gaylord and another \$50,350 paid in sewer utility for all properties. There will be about thirty jobs created and substantial improvements will be made to the property. These improvements will help local tradesmen and will increase the value, thereby increase the amount of taxes paid ...eventually. I believe strongly we will be made whole by year five or sooner and have an improved asset.

I will be asking the Selectboard to call an additional Town Meeting for November 12 to have the STA considered, as it is a required to get approval from both the Selectboard and Town Meeting. I would ask anyone who has any questions to please call my office. I wish there was more time for discussion, but again this is the way of the development world.

Loomis Communities; Loomis Communities asked that I speak on Thursday October 23. This discussion hopefully helps explain the balancing act municipal government must be, it is no different from any other business in respect every action has a reaction. I touched on the issues of Ebola, projects in the South Hadley and the importance of voting.

These very astute citizens were concerned about three areas, the Ledges, SHELD and how the town can work to bring the Commons and Falls closer together. There was about forty people on hand to hear my remarks and I found the group to be incredibly engaged. I did bring the greetings of the Selectboard and encourage them to call or write anytime they had a question or concern.

Professional Development Day; We recently had our professional development day on October 10. We had Patrick Smith from General Code and Terry French from the Secretary of State's Office give an overview of record keeping requirements.

We also discussed the changes to the personnel policy with particular attention to the reduction in sick leave and how we are building more flexibility into the work place. It was well attended and received good reviews, as far as PD Days go.

Records Retention; Along the same lines on record keeping October 15, I met once again with Chris Chartrand from King Systems. You may recall they are a contractor who specialize in physical record retention and implementing uniformed systems to file, document and store documents. They are versed in what documents are required retention, the procedures for getting rid of documents through

the Secretary of State's Office and installing hardware, software, racks, and training staff to understand a universal system of filing.

They will be on site for a full analysis of our needs including a records inventory statutory requirements, a review of file methods, feasibility of updating or expanding of systems in place, are among the areas the analysis will touch upon. King will present us with a formal strategy going forward for implementation for your review. The team would be made up of four to six individuals who are experienced in identifying defects or opportunities in our present record keeping and retention methods. The cost of the analysis will be \$4,500 and is essential to make this work.

In the event of a consensus I would like to move forward on this action item in FY 16 and include it in the budget funds to implement the strategy. This would include physical systems, as well as, training...lots of training. The assessment will certainly lend some idea as to what the cost may be to complete the project. I would like to start the assessment the first full week of December 2014.

Columbus Day Tag Sale/SHFNA; It was a nice day for a tag sale on the Monday holiday. The attendance was fairly steady and there were some interesting items to say the least. Selectboard member Etelman was at Town Hall most of the day as was yours truly. This is nice event for South Hadley and continues to go forward at a steady pace.

I thank you for your attention and patience on these matters and all of your support.

Respectfully submitted;

Michael J Sullivan

Town Administrator, South Hadley