**Town Manager Update**

*May 10, 2021*

I was sworn in just last Monday, and registered to vote at the same time. That evening, I attended a Town Meeting that must have set a record for brevity, and I thank the Town for its support of the proposed budget. Of course I’ve been talking a lot with Sandy, who has been invaluable as a guide to the complexities of current events, and I’m sure I’ll be relying on her heavily for quite some time.

I have had numerous and substantive meetings with many Department heads, including the Town Clerk; the Treasurer, the Buildings and Grounds manager, the Health Agent; the Emergency Management Director, who is of course also the chair of the Traffic Commission and who briefed me on Walker Brook flooding; the Police Chief, and a brief initial meeting with the Highway Superintendent. Of course Judy Wagner has been a great help in getting me settled in and oriented.

I also met with the Chair of the Finance Committee regarding capital expenses and a number of other matters. I’ve asked for a meeting regarding the position of Town Planner with the chair of the Planning Board and John Boyle in his capacity as chair of the Development/Industrial Committee and member of the Redevelopment Authority. In the meantime I’ve asked Judy to contact the original applicants; one of the three most qualified has unfortunately for us taken the position of Town Administrator in Williamsburg, so it might be best to reach out for additional candidates.

I am aware of a number of projects that need to move forward, including phone replacement and in a related matter, and perhaps most importantly, the need for asbestos abatement on the third floor of Town Hall, through which many of our IT wires run. Bill Drosehn and I will be meeting with the Buildings and Grounds Superintendent tomorrow, and Christine Simeone is tracking down recent files regarding the matter, which I hope yield some initial quotes; Bill is initially in favor of complete removal of all third floor asbestos; Pat is suggesting a less costly option of containment, noting that in order for the third floor to be usable as anything other than storage, it would need additional upgrades. I’ve reached out separately to see if we can get recent quotes soon so we can include an abatement item on the capital STM—the re-wiring borrowing is written too narrowly to include that as a purpose.

I understand there is a need for Human Resources updates, including updated job descriptions and classifications, along with an updated compensation plan. Staff salaries will always be an issue, but it is proving difficult to hire staff for municipal work across the Commonwealth, and that is easy to see in Dalton as well.

In contract news, I’m also aware that we need a new contract with Regional Resource Group, Inc. for next year’s assessing assistance, and that FY 22 union contracts negotiations are coming up. It has also been brought to my attention that we do not have a contract with Spectrum. Negotiations could provide additional funds for community access television.

For items I plan to bring before the Board: First, I plan to bring forward a policy for the new Juneteenth holiday and options for managing the new holiday. I have become aware of the Town’s ownership 16 Gulf Road and plan to follow up on that soon. Finally, I saw from a list of past items still needing attention the creation of a social media policy and an update on street paving. I am planning to discuss a pavement management plan with the Superintendent and will work toward getting progress toward that on your agenda.

Of course I intend to convene department head and finance team meetings but have not yet got my feet under me enough to set dates for those.

In more general news:

The Town was reimbursed $9,820 from FEMA for COVID, thanks to Dan.

Dan Filiault has suggested a committee to oversee the implementation of the Open Space Plan and has some possible volunteers in mind. This would help in getting PARC grants and perhaps others. He has written to the State addressing some perceived deficiencies in the plan and is awaiting comments. We also discussed his current EMD work on emergency plans.

I must apologize to an applicant for a one-day liquor license, who did not identify herself, who I turned away because I was unaware of my ability to grant such requests. I am now aware of the system and will do better in the future. I was able to grant a one-day liquor license to American Legion 6/19 3-9 p.m. for a celebration of the life of Robert Waltz.

Colonial Power reports that The Dalton Community Choice Aggregation Program is now listed on the [Energy Switch Massachusetts website](https://www.energyswitchma.gov/#/).  The Program’s default product is displayed directly under the Basic Service Product, and optional products are listed and sorted based on the filters of price or renewable content.

Finally, the U.S. Treasury Department has just today issued highly anticipated guidance on the American Rescue Plan Act through an Interim Final Rule. Massachusetts stands to get about $385M dollars, with 38 cities earmarked for additional funds, including $34M for Pittsfield, and Berkshire County getting a further additional $24M.

Items not anticipated:

 Raise for Assessor

 Open Meeting Law complaint letter