**Town Manager Update**

*August 9, 2021*

The Planning Board has voted unanimously to re-appoint its officers, including Andy Perenick as Chair, Zack McCain as Vice-Chair, and Dan Esko as Clerk. It also voted to elect Caleb Darby as the Planning Board delegate to the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission.

Now that the new pedestrian lights are going in at River Run, we have received several complaints about the bollards used to protect the light poles. The complaint is that on the Post Office side, they take away from the turning area, and one caller said he had backed into one of them. Since the pedestrian crossing is a high priority due to a traffic fatality; since this is the only place near where that occurred that the state would allow it; and since the design spacing is what is mandated by the design code, it is my opinion that the installation is properly proceeding, and that cars in the Post Office lot will have to take the necessary care not to back into the bollards.

Regarding a complaint that a Greenridge Road sign is down, I understand that there are fifteen street or stop signs on back order, and Greenridge is one of them.

I met with Carolyn Valli, the head of the local Habitat for Humanity, who assures me that their lawyers are working on the title documents for the property they have agreed to buy.

In Board of Health news, they will soon be getting more recycling bins. A number of them are going to be distributed by haulers in town, but some will also be available to residents who use the transfer station, and more will be available later. Also, the Health Agent is working on short, medium, and long-term actions related to structural deficiencies at the Transfer Station. There are serious trip hazards and concrete decay that need immediate attention. The Highway Department is aware, and more work is needed. Finally, the Recycling Coordinator and Health Inspector has resigned as of August 21, taking a full-time job elsewhere, so we’ll be looking for someone to fill that 8-hour per week position.

Subject to possible upcoming COVID restrictions, Representative Paul Mark is scheduled to resume his office hours on September 14. As a member of the Local Government Advisory Commission and MMA Board, I am scheduled to be in Boston that day, but may not attend. Still, I hope others can welcome our Representative back to Town Hall.

The Library Director and I attended a Small Town Administrator webinar on a program from the Mass. Council on the Humanities that is bringing a Smithsonian exhibit on changing rural life to six towns around the Commonwealth. While we may not be part of that particular exhibit, it is part of a larger program we will keep our eyes on. I also passed on information about a related program for non-profits to the CRA, which was appreciated.

The Census figures are out, and it looks as though Dalton’s precincts can remain the same as they were, avoiding any confusion. The Town Clerk and I will bring this to the Board for a formal vote when the final figures are known.

I received and approved a request from a resident for the Town to participate in the “Turn the Towns Teal” Campaign to promote awareness of ovarian cancer. Volunteers will, with permission, tie ribbons in areas in area business and homes (including the Town Hall and Library) to provide information and provide symptoms cards. If any resident wishes to, they can tie a ribbon that they would provide around a tree or lamp post in their yard.

The Assessors expect to see a request for an abatement from Citizens’ Energy on behalf of the landowner for a solar energy project on the landfill. So far, Citizens’ Energy has not been willing to share their financial projections with us, which makes it very difficult for the Town to make an agreement to abate any or all of the accrued interest.

Regarding the new High School, the plan is to occupy the new building on the first day of the new school year. Not everything will be completed, though they have planned for this situation. Work will resume with the possibility of night and Saturday crews finishing up.  They say they have been fortunate to have on-time deliveries but note that the reality is that anything can be delayed due to the current global situation. Some aspects of the school may not be completed until Thanksgiving and/or Christmas breaks. But the sooner the new building is ready, the sooner the old school can be demolished, preferably during the fall to excavate the new baseball field for a first seeding in early spring.

I’d like to thank our Building Superintendent Pat Pettit, who stayed beyond his scheduled time on Friday, July 30 to help get a modem replaced. The modem was affected by a nearby lightning strike and was burned out. Spectrum originally proposed almost a week’s delay in repairing it, but Pat and Police Department Administrative Assistant Rebekah Whitaker persuaded them to make an emergency visit to get the computers up and running for last week.