**Town Manager Update**

*October 25, 2021*

On the Town’s APR land, I have been in touch with the Mass. Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR) and am working closely with KP Law on this. Our request is first, to lease all identifiable tillable land to a local farmer, pursuant to a long-term lease, and second, to manage the forested portion of the property as a Town Forest, according to a certified Forestry Plan, for habitat conservation, mature hardwood forest enhancement, invasive species control, and recreation.

In more real estate news, I attended a meeting between Town Counsel and the attorney for Habitat for Humanity concerning 16 Gulf Road. Almost all the pieces are in order but the final details are moving slowly. There was a question of removing a tree; I could not see a dead, dying, or damaged tree and reported, as I have heard from our Tree Warden, that the Town prefers not to take down healthy trees. I believe this request may have come from those who will be responsible for building the new units, but I noted that there is substantial access between the trees and the property line of the Hoose House.

Regarding the bank lease in preparation for Town Hall renovation, the owners have decided not to use the lease the Town provided, but I believe we are close to an agreement. Even though we can’t start working on the bat eviction till May, getting an early lease will allow staff to assess and prepare the space, and migrate into it over some time, making the job easier for the Highway crew, as the Superintendent has agreed to have his crew work on the move. Beyond this one-year lease, we might consider a longer-term lease or even purchase of the building, to allow more meeting space, accessible office space, and more office space (especially for permitting committees and boards but also for other committees as well). We expect more storage space to become available after the asbestos removal through the addition of at least a sub-floor in the current attic.

On the Town Hall renovation in general, our architect says that it would be best to plan current operations as mostly asbestos removal. This will include the installation of at least a sub-floor. We can then see how much money is left over for upgrading the current third-floor wiring, installing insulation, and shoring up the structural elements.

As part of the IT upgrade, we have completed the installation of fiber optic cable at the Town Hall. That said, we are experiencing a delay in getting the new phone system, which is overdue, probably due to the global supply chain and shipping problems. Phone numbers will remain the same, but extensions will change, and staff will have an opportunity for training in the new system.

I attended a meeting convened by the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission to discuss the Bump report and provide input on ideas for implementation and specific funding requests. These will be consistent with recommendations of the Rural Policy Advisory Committee and will form the basis for an advocacy effort for greater funding for the priorities laid out in the report.

I have been working with the Health Agent on a Community Compact grant to develop a waste management contract. She would like some additional work done to evaluate the physical state of the transfer station and provide a cost estimate for improvements; we have the funding available to do that through the Engineering account, so we’re going to go ahead and I’ll sign the quote and get those items done.

The Emergency Manager has been working with the National Weather Service and the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency on damage related to the 10/16 storm. Please e-mail any photos to EM@dalton-ma.gov. The National Weather Service estimates peak wind gusts were 90 miles per hour for two miles in a path 700 yards wide, but it was not a tornado. We are aware that the notification for the event was late; this was inevitable given the quick development of the storm.

We’re planning a kick-off meeting sometime in the next couple of weeks with GZA Geoenvironmental for the Walker Brook preliminary engineering project. With any luck we can have the engineering ready by the time the federal government makes any infrastructure funding available.

Finally, there was a public records request regarding rents and rent control at “manufactured housing communities,” or trailer parks. We dealt with it, but this is advance notice that the Select Board, as the trailer park rent control authority, may receive further questions.