**Town Manager Update**

*December 13, 2021*

**Committees**

I hope everyone has had a chance to see the amazing promotional video put out by the Dalton Redevelopment Authority. It’s available through the Town website, Dalton-ma.gov. Look for the headline “Town of Dalton Video.”

The new Open Space and Recreation Committee has convened and elected Taylor Staubach as Chair.

**Departments**

The Baker-Polito Administration announced that The Stationery Factory has been awarded $630K from the MassWorks Infrastructure Program. This grant will be used to make space for a new tenant, Lymphedivas, a medical equipment manufacturer. This state program is in its first year and The Stationery Factory was awarded the 4th highest amount.

Congratulations to the Finance Team for getting the Tax Rate Recap done; the FY22 tax rate is down $0.77, to $20.74. The average tax bill will still go up, as the tax rate is simply the value of real estate divided by Town Meeting expenses. Valuations went up more than spending, so the tax rate is decreasing. Since TM spending went up, though, tax bills will also go up.

On a question I got regarding plowing sidewalks, while the Town owns the snow blower that attaches to a plow unit, we rent the unit, from December through March. The Highway Superintendent is planning a capital request for the unit for next year’s budget.

I am pleased to report that the Highway Department received a grant of $1,632 from our insurance agent, MIIA, for Highway Chainsaw kits, which include helmets, chaps, gloves, a vest, and a duffle for storage.

We have begun making some changes to the website in order to make it more informative and easy to use. Please see dalton-ma.gov and let us know what you think. We do intend to keep tightening it up; I’d like to see more news items visible when the page comes up. Staff are becoming familiar with Word Press so that we can make most changes on our own. We’ll still need Mungy for some time for structural issues.

I have filed for a share of the Massachusetts state-wide settlement in two opioid suits, a program available through the Massachusetts Attorney General’s office. I am hoping to get some funds for the Police Department’s DARE program and other related efforts.

The Town Planner, Highway Superintendent and I met regarding possibilities for applying for Municipal Vulnerability Program grants and came up with two: first, an inventory and assessment of town culverts for flooding vulnerability. Once we have the culvert assessment, we can apply for mitigation grants. Second, we would consider applying for funds for the construction of a new drainage line along Orchard Street once that is engineered.

**Projects**

First, we continue to be aware of the requests that the volume of the locator tones on the pedestrian lights be reduced. We are just waiting for the project to receive its final completion status before we change the state of anything as installed.

On ARPA projects, first, the Water District has hired Tighe and Bond to do the engineering the Board voted to go forward with, and they in turn have hired a subcontractor who has been working in the Greenridge area for the past couple of weeks. On the Highway side, as I mentioned before, we’re getting engineering done for Orchard Street, which is somewhat problematic, as major drainage work should be done at the same time, re-routing part of a culvert down the street to avoid back-ups near Pease Avenue. Other engineering under ARPA includes plans for milling and paving Washington Mountain Road from Dalton Division to just above Yvonne Drive; John St; Sunset Drive; Edward Drive; Judith Drive, and Chamberlain Avenue.

Walker Brook: the engineers and Town representatives had a kick-off meeting and established a work schedule. Site work has started and the project is on track.

The classification and compensation study is almost done, with a report issued and just revised job descriptions to come. I will get the Select Board copies of the report very soon to prepare for a presentation by our consultant Carol Granfield on January 10. I expect to have a few amendments to propose, based on recent information.

Town Hall renovation: We are working with John Barry to re-design the first phase to focus on asbestos abatement, and fold all of the actual renovation into a new second phase. We’re still looking for people certified to evict bats in western Massachusetts, if anyone knows someone, please get us in contact.

Bardin land (APR/North Mountain): I am very pleased that the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources has accepted the Town’s plan for maintaining the property in its APR status, leasing the tillable land and maintaining the wooded land as recreational land.