**Town Manager Update**

*February 7, 2022*

Much of my work over the past two weeks has been in following through with the results of the personnel study, working with staff and folding the results into the negotiations for collective bargaining agreements we’ll be discussing in executive session. I will note again that lower-paid staff generally benefit more from the study than higher-paid staff, as the Town paid less than minimum wage for a number of positions, a situation that is now adequately addressed. Of course, some staff feel that the study did not adequately reflect their responsibilities, and I am dealing with those on an individual basis.

Work with the Transfer Station has shifted from seeking a broad look at various haulers to developing a more limited contract with Casella, at least for the next contract cycle, as we develop our capacity for running the operation. We may not be able to bring down users’ costs as quickly as we had hoped, but we still hope that we will be able to do so during FY 2023, and about three years after that, substantially lower the cost of using the Transfer Station, while providing more services, and not requiring additional Town investment through taxes.

Pat Pettit has been managing the preparation of the bank building for use. Staff have toured the facility and been assigned places, some of which have changed due to staff input. We are closing in on a contractor for bat eviction, and I am waiting for final contract approval for John Barry to re-design the renovation to focus on asbestos removal and do whatever else can be done with the funds available. We don’t know how much of the original scope will be able to be accomplished due to the responsible but more expensive decision to solve the asbestos problem permanently by removing all of the asbestos-containing plaster. I have also seen space available at the CRA building next door on Main Street and am waiting for a lease proposal from them for two office rooms which should provide office space for the third-floor employees—the Town Planner, the Board of Health, and the Building Inspector.

I had a kick-off meeting with the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission regarding their work through our Community Development Block Grant to complete a study based on the Americans with Disabilities Act, or ADA. This would include what’s called a “Self-Evaluation,” that is, an evaluation not done by the state, but in this case, by the BRPC, and an accompanying Transition Plan, which lays out the improvements to be made along with cost estimates. I’m very pleased that Alyssa Maschino, my assistant, has agreed to take on the role of ADA Coordinator for the Town and oversee the project. Successful completion of the project will allow the Town to apply for grants from the Massachusetts Office on Disabilities, or MOD. MOD grants are usually 60/40, meaning the state pays 60% of the cost, but this still means we can make improvements at less than half the usual cost.