**Town Manager Update**

*January 9, 2023*

The Council on Aging has been awarded a marketing grant the Director spoke to you about last month; $8,000 to make the Dalton Council on Aging “the Talk of the Town”.

We sent out on December 13 the ARPA mini-grant information and an application form to the individuals representing the Town departments with Health and Human Services or Culture and Recreation accounts. We included a deadline of Tuesday, January 17, a little over a month, for consideration at your January 23 meeting.

I have completed the most recent quarterly report for the Walker Brook project. Due to a delay in producing the required topographic survey, the final design is now expected by the end of February, 2023. This is still two months before the grant deadline, so overall, we are in good shape.

We received our most recent OPEB report. With a net liability of 4,351,580 and with 4,096,804 in assets, we should still put in $300,000 for FY24, with reductions in future years. Still, we should be fully funded, at least nominally, for the first time in FY 2024. I am working with the Treasurer on a policy for maintaining a healthy balance in the account for the future and hope to bring that to you and the Finance Committee over the coming year. I had hoped we would then be able to put more funds into less volatile financial instruments for safety, but projections are for health care costs to rise 8% per year, which we could not make with bonds.

The Board of Health and I are working through the final processes with a house at 77 High Street that is now slated for demolition. The homeowner’s brother has Power of Attorney and is working on arrangements for the house, and the resident is finally being housed elsewhere.

I am moving forward on the proposal from Citizens Energy for a solar array on the Warren landfill. We will need to negotiate a PILOT, which will take specialized legal knowledge, but are not at that point yet.

I am still gathering information on space needs assessment and feasibility studies but may now have a sufficient knowledge base to convene the group. One excellent example I found recently is from the town of Tisbury; this could serve as a template.

The DPW Superintendent and I are going to be submitting an Expression of Interest for the state’s One Stop grant program again this year for Orchard Street. We spoke with the program administrator after failing to get the grant last year and got some very good advice about how to tweak the application to make it more competitive.

The Central Berkshire Regional School Committee is preparing to continue bargaining with several of our employee units. They are asking for a representative from each of their member Towns to elect one person to represent the Towns during bargaining; the meeting for doing so will be February 9, at 6:30 p.m., at the Wahconah High School Learning Commons.