**Town Manager Update**

*February 6, 2023*

In Planning and Zoning news, I received two public records requests; one required considerable time. Aside from that, there is not much activity at this point for either the Planning Board or ZBA. Warren Solar Farms will present their application to the Planning Board on Feb. 15.

The Council on Aging would like to have a cheese and wine tasting. We will need a one-day insurance payment for that, not from MIIA but from a company they do business with for these purposes. We will also need a one-day liquor license.

Budget heads up: We will be asking for an increase in the EMD stipend, and probably some other, more minor increases. The stipend is proposed to go up about $6,000, based on the actual work load of maintaining the Continuity of Operations Plan, the Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan, and the Hazard Mitigation Plan; going to MEMA meetings; holding quarterly EM Advisory Council meetings; managing a web page and related social media (and CodeRED); keeping everybody appropriately trained; and starting a Community Emergency Response Team program (neighbors helping neighbors, which I’m very enthusiastic about). The $12k total would mean paying about $20/hr. based on the projected workload.

Since Dalton Division Road is on the TIP, we are required to submit a form on an annual basis to maintain its place. Thanks to a good team effort, Bud, Jessica, and I were able to get that done in plenty of time.

I have applied for technical assistance from the Massachusetts Broadband Coalition to draw up a “digital equity” plan. This will be a free service to identify populations potentially underserved in terms of internet access, IT literacy, and related issues. Following this, I expect to apply for a grant (details on the program have not been finalized) for addressing those needs. I anticipate that one underserved population might be the residents of housing managed by the Dalton Housing Authority and have reached out to Sue Gregory and Bob Merry to see whether they think that would be a good project. Since Pine Grove Manor is on the route of the coming fiber optic ring connecting Town offices, that seems a good candidate for exploring the possibilities. Pomeroy Manor would be more of a stretch but perhaps also fundable.

I am considering asking the Department of Revenue’s Division of Local Services to conduct a financial management review for the town. This is a free service that can identify where we are on the spectrum of best practices and provide advice on steps to take to have a more robust system.

The Police Department has requested consideration of another funding request from ARPA, for tasers. The tasers come with a five-year contract, which makes it a good candidate for ARPA, as having a contract more than three years becomes an additional item for Town Meeting consideration, together with its approval as a capital item.