**Town Manager Update**

*August 14/September 11, 2023*

All offices are back in the Town Hall. The Town Clerk moved back into Town Hall on August 3. Unfortunately, we were not able to have the offices painted, as there was not enough time to go through the procurement process and get everyone back into their offices. We were able to take of a month from our bank lease and so save $3,500. We may be requested to lease the parking lot in the future, though.

The Sonsini Animal Shelter that we currently use to house our stray animals closed on 8/31 and we will be using the Town Hal basement as a kennel while we look at our options. An outside kennel would of course cost money; we will be monitoring noise and odor and assessing the current situation as time goes by.

Based on the July Select Board meeting discussion, I forwarded the topic of parking at Pine Grove Park to the Traffic Commission.

Dalton Day was a great success, with many people attending and commenting favorably. I understand the Cultural Council would like to continue the event and will be considering various funding methods. The recent event was supported by an ARPA mini-grant at $6,500; options so far include another bridge year of ARPA funding; developing a proposal for the Town operating budget; producing a program with sponsored advertisements; and having other sponsored events.

I finally closed out the Walker Brook grant on July 26 and am working with the Town Planner and MEMA to prepare for a FEMA grant for Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities, or BRIC, which has taken the place of the old Pre-Disaster Mitigation grant program. We can start the bidding process for an engineering company to take care of the grant submission, the final engineering, construction bidding, and construction oversight.

We just received the plans for the Town Garage heat pumps this week and will seek quotes or go out to bid depending on the expected cost. We’re also expecting to hear soon about two grant proposals for Garage insulation.

The Healey/Driscoll Administration will be having a series of listening sessions on further possible modifications to state law, a kind of Municipal Modernization Act Part 3. We do not have dates for those yet, but I expect they will be in October and November, and possibly go on later.

There is an item on the Department of Public Utilities docket for revising the current system of community aggregation. Our provider, Colonial Power, is concerned and will be drafting a letter for input; the MMA seems somewhat less concerned but is also on top of the issue and providing comments, as they sponsor Constellation Energy as a municipal electricity aggregator.

We received two bids for sewer system rehabilitation. Tighe and Bond are assessing the bids and will provide a recommendation for awarding the bid perhaps this week. Depending on the winner, the construction will cost either about $470,000 or $526,000, both figures well short of the approximately $610,000 we have available after the engineering costs are subtracted. This means we could have an additional $84,000 to $140,000 to either not take from sewer stabilization or to re-allocate from ARPA funds (based on a decision earlier tonight on paving needs).

We also just received the engineering information for heat pumps at the Town Garage. We will look for quotes and hope to get it installed well before winter.

The Emergency Management Director hosted a meeting on Friday regarding the South Street bridge with MassDOT, the train carrier CSX, and Rep. Pignatelli (Sen. Mark’s office was unable to attend). The bridge has been struck about 26 times over the past four years. Both CSX and MassDOT agreed to gather information for the Town to help us decide how to move forward.