**Town Manager Update**

*September 25, 2023*

I have been working with the Emergency Management Director and Town Planner regarding the Town’s Hazard Mitigation Plan. An updated Plan is necessary to receive funding for FEMA- or MEMA-funded projects, such as Walker Brook reconstruction, and this update is possible due to a MEMA grant. The plan developers are a collaborative group based on a consultancy in Northampton. The consultants have requested that we gather a number of members for the planning committee, including asking whether a Select Board member could be involved, so that there was some prior knowledge of the process and content prior to the necessary Select Board vote to accept the plan.

Speaking of Walker Brook, I am in communication with MEMA regarding advertising for an engineering firm to apply for the grant, finalize the engineering, and oversee the construction project.

I’m pleased to say we have accepted the low bid for sewer rehabilitation, at $470,071, which, after the $30,000 already re-directed to paving, leaves $151,629 from that project available for other activities. As usual, I will recommend spending on infrastructure, whether paving, transfer station equipment, Pine Grove facilities, or other such needs. Together with other projects that come in under budget, we have $157,409 available in ARPA funds. These need to be committed by the end of 2024 and spent by the end of 2026. The DPW Superintendent is working on a list of potential projects and I’d like to bring those forward at an upcoming meeting.

The state has begun its right-of-first-refusal process for the Bardin Property to see whether they want to exercise that right. This has mainly to do with their assessment of the buyer’s ability to manage the APR as intended, including financial status and farming experience.

I introduced Jeff Burch to the Executive Director and Director of Maintenance for the Community Recreation Association. We had a good conversation and I will be working with them and others to improve Pine Grove Park, including additional security to help prevent vandalism.

Early indications are health insurance costs will rise substantially more than they did last year; perhaps as much as 9%. This is based largely on the numbers of procedures being performed, which is thought to be an artifact of the lower rate of procedures performed during the initial phase of the COVID pandemic, and is expected to peak and return to normal levels soon.

I have arranged for an audit of our cybersecurity through the State’s MassTech office, which performs this service for municipalities free of charge. There are several areas of focus; I have requested audits for both internal systems and external threats.

The Town Hall project is virtually finished; the Historic Commission’s things just got moved back to their room on Thursday. The final remaining item is the replacement of the glass top to the table in the Select Board room, which is in process. Jeff Burch did a great job coordinating the movers and solving various problems during the move. He’ll be working on some minor items going forward— the old phone lines need to be removed and some walls need an extra cleaning, but we’re all back to normal operations and almost all unpacked.