**Town Manager Update**

*October 23, 2023*

Rep. Pignatelli just published the Report of the Berkshire Housing and Food Insecurity Summit, a process which concluded on September 22. The results showed that the areas of “Insufficient Availability of Affordable Housing”and “Insufficient Wages to Meet Basic Needs Expenses” were viewed by participants as both the most foundational and most difficult-to-overcome issues.

Staff are currently interviewing for two positions, the Administrative Assistant to the Health Agent (16 hours per week) and the Administrative Assistant to the Executive Assistant (8 hrs. per week).

We’re finally moving forward with a study of how much of a load the Town Hall roof could bear if we were to install solar panels. The study had been put on hold for the asbestos abatement and related work.

I also have procurements to do for the garage roof and insulation; the climate change “roadmap,” the space needs study, and website development, which we’re in the process of developing the scope of work for. We’re opening the bids for the garage heat pumps on Thursday, and for the garage door replacement and Walker Brook engineering services on November 2.

I’ll be meeting with BRPC regarding the MBI contract which was finally signed for Municipal Digital Equity Planning in Dalton, a project we’ve been waiting for for months. We’ll be working with their Affordable Connectivity Program “Lead for “America Fellow, Bob Ireland. They’ve been gathering statistics on Dalton and hope to help us get a plan together with which we can apply for grant money.

There has been some concern recently about the gas stove here at the senior center; apparently one of the pilot lights is problematic. It has been repaired once, about a year ago, but is going out again. The Council on Aging Director has been looking into alternatives and has found an electric stove that could replace it but it is priced at about $20,000.

The BRPC had a little Direct Local Technical Assistance Program money left for Dalton, and I have asked them to write an options paper on developing the land adjacent to the Senior Center here, including options for affordable housing.

The Library has found out that because Dalton is a town with under 10,000 in population, we do not have to require our Library Director to have a Master’s degree in Library Science, only a Bachelor’s degree. The Directors hope that this will attract substantially more applicants than we have gotten so far, which is just a few, and they are re-advertising the position.

Dan Esco and I met with the Open Space and Recreation Committee and got their support for looking into the possibility of a skate park in town. We’ll be gathering parents and skaters together for their input and reporting back to the Committee as appropriate.

I’ll be out Thursday for a STAM meeting and will be going to a Mass Municipal Human Resources Association meeting on Friday, where they will be covering union negotiations, among other topics.