**Town Manager Update**

*November 13, 2023*

Financial staff are in the process of setting the FY24 tax rate. We had some issues last year we’re hoping to avoid. The Assessors are working with our contractor to make sure we get the values in on time, and the Accountant reports that she is finalizing the Estimated Receipts document, which she will send to some of the department heads for their input, as she plans to increase some of them a bit. She anticipates finishing the rest of the tax rate schedules this week and then will close out FY23.

I’ll be meeting with staff tomorrow to sort out the one remaining issue regarding the police detail fund. Shifting the locus of control to the Police Department certainly solved the major problem. I look forward to reporting the conclusion of the matter soon.

We’ve run into a snag on a Town Garage insulation project. We got approved for part of the proposal, but the proposal includes an item that the DPW Superintendent was not fully aware of, that the Town was responsible for moving pipes and wires off the walls, which will cost money he does not have in his budget. I’m working with the Center for EcoTechnology, who is assisting in funding the project through a Berkshire Gas program, to check on the deadline for completing the project, and with the DPW Superintendent on the probable cost, for possible alternate funding; we anticipate it being in the $5-8,000 range, though we have not gotten any quotes yet. We might request additional ARPA funding to fill that gap so that we can move forward sooner rather than later.

The owner of one of the hoarding cases in Town, on High Street, is moving forward with preparing the house for demolition or sale. The house has been cleared of debris and the oil tank was taken out last week. The garage still has items in it but we have not had any neighbor complaints. On a related note, I have come up with a starting document for discussing a clean-up fund for residents as suggested recently and will be happy to share that with the Board when it’s appropriate.

Our insurance association, MIIA, is assisting us in reinvigorating our Safety Committee, which helps us get the best rates possible. Our Buildings and Grounds Superintendent is the lead on that, and he is highly trained in OSHA, so it seems a good fit. We’ll have quarterly meetings and go over our activities and claims with MIIA to be sure we’re doing the best we can.

I expect to get a quote for buying an easement from L. P. Adams for land the Town installed drainage in, apparently with the promise that we would follow up with the purchase. Depending on the quote, I might ask for ARPA or reserve fund funding for that so we can bring the easement to Town Meeting in May, or we could just fund it at Town Meeting. I also have a running list of possible money and other articles for Town Meeting, which I can share at the Select Board’s pleasure, hopefully well before discussing the Town Meeting warrant as a whole this spring.

The Town is hosting a Volunteer Appreciation Brunch for those who work with the Town on its many areas of work as volunteers, including all board and committee members. It is scheduled for Sunday, December 10, at the Senior Center, from 11-1.