**Town Manager Update**

*November 27, 2023*

We received on Wednesday a letter from the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR) stating that they are exercising their right of first refusal for the Bardin property and have elected to purchase the premises for $150,000. There is a period in which the state will seek requests for statements of interest for an assignment of the right to purchase, that is a different qualified buyer. MDAR does not have the right to own land, however, so if the state cannot find anyone to close on the property, the Town will again have the right to sell it, without MDAR requiring a review of the farmer.

We have been trying for some time to have the bus shelter currently on Daly Avenue re-located to Main Street, where the new stop is. Unfortunately, we have not been able to contact the owner of the Shamrock Motel, nor is the owner of the former gas station willing to talk, as the property is currently for sale. The option of the Town buying the parcel is off the table for the moment, as the site could require the removal of underground storage tanks. We may seek a brownfields grant in the future to remove that, but at the moment, it stands as a barrier to being able to do anything with the lot.

I have been working with Alyssa to convene the Cable Advisory Committee, and the first meeting is now scheduled for Monday. One item on their agenda will be establishing relations with the Charter Communications representative for Dalton, and another will be choosing an attorney to work with—there are two available, one from KP Law and one independent lawyer referred to DCTV Executive Director Michael Sinopoli.

Regarding a meeting with the new Pittsfield mayor: Mayor-elect Marchetti is due to be sworn in January 2. I’ll arrange to meet with him once he’s in office to speak about Gulf Road.

At a recent meeting with other municipal managers, in a discussion about civility and the recent free speech ruling regarding comments at public meetings, it was suggested that Select Boards might want to put a limit on the amount of time any one person can speak under the public comments section, perhaps three minutes. It was also emphasized that no discussion should take place around topics brought up unless and until the item is put on the agenda.

I met with an engineer regarding a cost for preliminary design options for lifts at Town Hall. The current one is unreliable enough to be practically non-functional, though it did pass the recent state inspection. Once we have the preliminary options, with cost estimates, we can apply for a grant, though the Massachusetts Office of Disability grants cover just 60% of the cost, with a 40% Town match.

I’m pleased to say that the quote for services to prepare for the installation of insulation at the Town garage was low enough that Bud can use his own budget. We have two sources of funding for the work: a Green Communities grant and a utility rebate. Kudos to Tom Irwin for setting up the project.