**Town Manager Update**

*May 13, 2024*

We have secured a grant through the Mass Tech Collaborative for $56,603.77 for digital equity planning and implementation, with potentially more for implementation given our eventual plan. I’d like to thank BRPC for their attention to the plan; we’ve been working with them on a preliminary process. The grant is first to complete a Digital Equity Plan. I have asked our Town Planner to take the lead role in this project. We will develop a project proposal that falls within the eligible uses of funding under MassTech’s Digital Equity Implementation Program in preparation for a formal funding application before July 31, 2025. Projects could include bringing fiber to the Dalton Housing Authority apartments and other underserved areas, and downtown wireless. Please let me know if you have any other ideas.

We received two bids for the Climate Action Plan RFP, which were reviewed by the Green Committee. After they selected Blue Strike Environmental as the most advantageous candidate, I opened the price proposals, which came in under budget, so I have informed them they are the apparent winner, pending reference checks.

I have sent to the state what I hope is the final response regarding the Town Hall renovation project’s contractor, Cape Cod Builders. Giving a failing review to a contractor is a serious matter, but both our former Buildings and Grounds Superintendent and our architect thought that their performance was substantially sub-standard.

I have received word from Jean Boudreau, our Principal Assessor, that she intends to retire. Assessor positions can be hard to fill, so we have started advertising and contacting individuals who might be interested.

I have also received word that the co-chairs of the Board of Health are resigning as of June 30, so if anyone hearing this knows of someone who might be interested, we’d be more than happy to talk with them.

I have reached out to staff and a resident who spoke at Town Meeting about working on the structure of the fund for clean-up of condemned houses. Staff are enthusiastic, and the experienced professional who spoke at Town Meeting will be able to assist. We are meeting this week to go over some initial steps.

In DPW news, as I’m sure you know by now, Gulf Road is now open. Lanesborough has been clearing and grading, including being so kind as to grade Dalton’s end. I understand Lanesborough workers were approached by some Dalton residents who were out hiking who were under the impression that Dalton had closed Gulf Road permanently for hiking, which they tried to tell the graders; the graders let them know that was not the case.

We received only one bid for the garage roof improvements, and it was $100,000 more than our budget. We’re in the process of figuring out why there was such a difference—perhaps materials costs, an overly optimistic initial estimate, a year’s passage of time, or any other factor. We will re-bid, but we don’t want to change the specifications, so we need to figure out what additional funding we might need.

I’m working with Bud on a plan for sidewalk improvements, with the goal of having a cost estimate for a section of downtown ready for the next annual Town Meeting.

In Police Department news, there has been an odor in the walls of the Police Department suggesting a dead animal, and a mouse was spotted as well. The Police Department and Building Superintendent are addressing the issues, and people from the state Department of Public Health Indoor Air Quality Program will be visiting to review conditions. I understand that there have been prior concerns about ventilation and proximity to a boiler.

The Police Sergeants have voted to form a union and affiliate with the Massachusetts Coalition of Police, known as MassCOP. Their representative wrote that they would be fully honoring their contract with the Town, which has another year to go, so we will not be negotiating that contract till next year. The other three union contracts will be negotiated this coming year (Police, Highway/Cemetery, and Dispatchers).

Finally, I’d like to commend the Dalton Police Department for a very well executed arrest and related activity related to a drug-related shooting in town, the first in recent memory. The hard work, initiative, and teamwork demonstrated were excellent.