**Town Manager Update**

*July 15, 2024*

I’m working with Janko and BRPC on a community meeting regarding digital access and digital equity. BRPC is the lead, with the Town supplying the venue and publicity. We’ll be meeting this week to organize the community meeting.

Our new Emergency Management Director, J.D. Hebert, is working on a possible mutual aid agreement with neighboring towns. Such agreements are common for Police and Fire, but apparently there is nothing similar for emergency management.

The group working on the condemnation fund is meeting again July 24. We’re close to having a comprehensive plan and will bring it to you soon with some policy recommendations for decisions that we need to help shape the program.

The Department of Public Utilities just came out with new rules that would allow Dalton to offer more products in its aggregation program (for example, 100% green energy) without going to the DPU for approval. Our requests to offer a 100% green option has been stuck in the state process for years, so this could speed that up. We are still unsure about what will be required to move those products forward, though, so I’ll have more to report as the questions raised by the rulemaking are resolved.

The solar project of Citizens Energy will be paying personal property taxes instead of negotiating a PILOT for their solar project. We have been trying to negotiate a PILOT for six months but the process broke down between our two lawyers. The silver lining is that, from what I have been given to understand from our Town Counsel, the property tax process route, while a bit more cumbersome for both parties, is likely to net the Town more money.

Dalton is finishing its stint as the lead town in the 2020 federal Community Development Block Grant program, focusing on housing rehabilitation. We have been part of a consortium of four towns: Dalton, Becket, Stockbridge, and Sheffield. There is just one more job to do, in Stockbridge, and the current CDBG grant will be complete. After that, Becket will take over being the lead town for the next few years, meaning their Administrator and Accountant will be responsible for monitoring BRPC’s work in housing rehabilitation and any other eligible work.

I met on Wednesday with Bob Bishop, Fire Chief Tobin, and Water Commissioner Cam Cachet regarding Dalton Fire District plans to secure the Dalton Garage. They have been working with the owners and have decided to present a plan to buy the building. They realize this would have to be approved by the voters but believe they are ready to make that proposal. They also said that they would be interested in working with the Town, as the amount of space available—about 13,000 square feet—was more than they needed (though they would still have to construct a separate bay for the larger engines).

I’ll be meeting with the Accountant and Town Treasurer next week to prepare a second round of rescissions to ARPA projects, which will also clarify a more exact amount that is still available for spending by the end of December.