

Town of



AMHERST *Massachusetts*

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TO: Select Board

FROM: John P. Musante, Town Manager

DATE: June 18, 2012

SUBJECT: Self-Evaluation & FY 12 Town Manager Performance Goals – Progress Report

As part of my annual performance evaluation, as requested by the Select Board, I have prepared a Self-Evaluation Summary for your review and discussion at your June 18 meeting. The second part of this memo contains an update to my January 2012 report regarding progress on FY 12 performance goals.

Self-Evaluation Summary

One of the many important issues confronting me and the Town over the past many months occurred outside of work, when I was forced to miss several weeks of work in September and October recuperating from injuries sustained in an accidental slip and fall in my neighborhood. I would be remiss on not thanking again so many for the support and encouragement I received from members of the community, the Select Board, staff, and my family. Town staff at all levels performed exceedingly well in my absence. While not a surprise to me, it was a demonstration again of the tremendous skill, dedication, and work ethic each and every Town employee brings to their everyday work in our collective efforts to be leaders in everything we do. This is a source of tremendous pride to me as their Town Manager. I particularly want to recognize the steady and responsive leadership as Acting Town Manager provided by Planning and Development Director Dave Ziomek and that of Assistant to the Town Manager Debra Roussel in my absence.

I would like to list what I believe are the key highlights and accomplishments over the past year, fully cognizant of the fact that many of these would not have been achieved without the skill and dedication of the Town staff. As the Town and region emerge from the protracted recession, I believe the positive momentum is palpable and reflected in a number of exciting initiatives:

- *Recruitment of two additional outstanding professionals, Building Commissioner Rob Morra and Human Resources Director Deb Radway, to join my Town of Amherst team.*

- *All operating & capital budget articles were adopted as recommended at the Annual Town Meeting in May. Maintains current service levels after four years of belt-tightening.*
- *In March, Standard & Poor's reaffirmed the Town's strong and stable AA bond rating. A higher bond rating leads to lower interest rates on debt that the Town issues.*
- *Creation of the Emily Dickinson Historic District is a far-reaching protection for the historic character of the Town. Town Meeting approval achieved with great staff, committee, and community members' work and collaboration.*
- *Residential Parking Design Standards were approved decisively by Town Meeting, a small, but significant step forward in our Safe & Healthy Neighborhoods Initiative.*
- *A new After School Program Partnership by the Town and the Amherst Public Schools, funded in part with funds approved by Town Meeting, will begin in September at all three Amherst elementary schools. Superintendent Maria Geryk and I are committed to this partnership in order to strengthen and enhance the strong programming currently in place, not replace it.*
- *Resurfacing of 10 miles of badly deteriorated Town roadways in 2011 while also incorporating pedestrian, cyclist, and public transportation improvements.*
- *Rehabilitation and reopening this summer of the War Memorial Pool at Community Field with the help of a \$208,000 state grant and a unanimous vote for funding by Town Meeting.*
- *Election as chair of the PVRTA Advisory Board, a position from which I will work even more closely with our regional partners and the Five Colleges to preserve and strengthen our public transportation network.*
- *The downtown Business Improvement District was launched in 2012 to supplement Town services focused on marketing, beautification, special events planning, and parking to solidify Amherst's standing as one of the best college towns in America.*
- *Applied for designation as a "Green Community" in May, with the prospect of access to state grants for energy efficiency and conservation for initiatives such as LED streetlights.*
- *Town Meeting approval of my proposal to start a bold and ambitious tree planting plan to plant 2,000 trees in the next three years to beautify our community and reduce pollution.*
- *The Amherst and Pelham Select Boards and the Regional School Committee are poised to act later this month on my recommendation to transfer all eligible retired teachers and their dependents from the Commonwealth's GIC health and life insurance plans to the local Amherst-Pelham Health Claims Trust plans. The change is projected to reduce costs for both employers and nearly all retirees.*
- *This year, Town staff at all levels and our partners in the community and at UMass continued development of our Safe and Healthy Neighborhoods Initiative to improve quality of life in neighborhoods across Amherst. We strengthened a collaboration to strategically plan for the student celebrations that typically accompany the warm weather. Late April weekends, typically filled with large parties that disrupt neighbors, were quieter than usual.*
- *Last October, the Select Board approved a Sewer Extension Master Plan that recommended that the neighborhoods in the Harkness Road and Wildflower Drive areas should have sewer mains extended into them as soon as practicable, endorsed*

my recommendation to pay for sewer extensions from sewer fees charged to all customers consistent with the Town's past practice, and Town Meeting passed a \$4.2 million bond issue.

I am deeply grateful to the Select Board and the community for the confidence you have placed in me. I am enjoying the work immensely even though these past several months have been particularly challenging as I recuperated from my injuries sustained in a fall last September. I believe I have done a better job this year prioritizing my work and delegating when appropriate. To continue to be successful over the long term, I believe I still need to do a better job improving the timeliness of some of my responses to inquiries and requests from staff and the community at large.

FY 12 Town Manager Performance Goals – Progress Report

I am pleased to offer this Progress Report to the Select Board to assist in our discussion of the Town Manager's performance goals at your June 18 meeting. My input is noted in italics following each of the nine performance goals developed in August.

1. The Town Manager shall develop specific **recommendations for consideration by the Select Board** to address the ongoing revenue challenge, to include:

- a. generating new revenue;
 - *Solar power at the old landfill and potentially other municipally-owned locations in Town has the potential to generate substantially reduced and more stable electricity costs for the Town and schools and provide hundreds of thousands of new property tax revenues. The developer has submitted its Interconnection Agreement application with WMECO and a negotiated Power Purchase Agreement with the developer is nearing completion. Both are a precursor to state and local permitting processes with additional opportunities for public input.*
 - *My Energy/Sustainability Coordinator Stephanie Ciccarello led an internal team in the completion and submittal in May of an application for Amherst's designation as a "Green Community" in 2012 by the Commonwealth, which will lead to the award of energy efficiency and other grants to the Town. A decision from state officials is expected this month.*
 - *The creation of a Regional Emergency Communications Center (RECC) with the Towns of Belchertown, Pelham, and Hadley is progressing with the assistance of a \$735,000 State 911 pre-development grant, the prospect of increased state subsidy of operations, training and capital costs, and reduced Town operating subsidies. The Town has received word that the grant award has been extended for an additional year. The next key step is completion of a detailed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the four communities. I am also working with our public safety team, with encouragement from the State 911 staff, to actively explore and implement an interim RECC at the existing Communications Center with two of the other communities. This phased progression to a RECC will also generate substantial savings and increased state financial support.*
- b. reducing expenses through efficiencies in Town structure and service delivery, including regionalization of services where appropriate;

- *Regional dispatch and attaining Green Community designation are a primary focus, as noted above.*
 - *Other initiatives, some articulated in my FY 13 budget proposal approved by Town Meeting, include increasing the size (and cost sharing) of our successful Regional Veterans Service District and increasing shared public health services with Northampton and other communities.*
 - *Standard & Poor's reaffirmed the Town's strong and stable AA bond rating. A higher bond rating leads to lower interest rates on debt that the Town issues. On March 1, the Town had a very successful \$4.8 million bond sale with a winning interest rate bid of only 2.16%. Standard & Poor's cited "the Town's strong and stable economic base, anchored by the flagship campus of the University of Massachusetts, as well as Amherst College and Hampshire College...Good income and wealth indicators, which are particularly significant given the high student population...Good financial management and good reserves...Low overall debt burden and rapid debt amortization." The ratings report also cited our favorable FY 11 financial results, i.e., the fact that we produced a \$996,000 operating surplus and our "strong and consistent" reserves. Finally, the report hinted that if we were to begin to tackle our Other Post Employments Benefits (OPEB) liability, we might be in line for a ratings upgrade in the future.*
 - *Employee/retiree health insurance rates will remain unchanged in FY 13, in contrast to a nearly +10% industry trend. This is the direct result of proactive multi-year efforts by the Town to stabilize employee health care costs by eliminating the costly indemnity plan, adding HMO's and the option of purchasing lower cost Canadian prescription drugs, increasing employee contributions, and increasing premiums to appropriate levels to pay claims and restore reserve levels in the Health Claims Trust Fund to required levels. Plan design changes have generated estimated savings well in excess of \$3 million since 2006.*
 - *Additionally, the Amherst and Pelham Select Boards and the Regional School Committee are poised to act on my recommendation to terminate acceptance of Chapter 32B, Section 11e, thereby transferring all eligible retired teachers and their dependents from the Commonwealth's GIC health and life insurance plans to the local Amherst-Pelham Health Claims Trust plans. The change is projected to reduce costs for both employers and nearly all retirees and has received a unanimous recommendation from the employee/retiree Insurance Advisory Committee and a large majority of retired teachers attending a June public hearing on the issue.*
 - *Due to an aggressive multi-year capital investment program to promote energy conservation, and to favorable long-term energy contracts, I have been able to level fund the municipal utilities budget in FY 13.*
- c. negotiating contracts through the collective bargaining process that are reflective of the community's capability and willingness to support, and mindful of the stagnant economy and conservative projections for the next few years;
- *By December 2011, the Town successfully concluded collective bargaining negotiations with all four municipal unions through June 30, 2013. Salaries and wages constitute almost 80% of the General Fund budget and so settling these contracts at reasonable levels was essential to keeping the Town's finances in*

balance in FY 13 and beyond. I am pleased that we have good labor relations with all of our unions. These contracts are fair and the Town can afford them.

d. pursuing an increased economic development profile to increase the tax base and reduce the burden on residential property taxpayers.

- *I have continued to focus on refinement and passage of Village Center rezoning proposals for North and South Amherst to grow the Town's tax base consistent with the values expressed by the community in the Master Plan. Articles 24 (Atkins Corner) & 25 (North Amherst) achieved 62% and 65% support, just shy of the 2/3 majority required for passage at the Annual Town Meeting in May. I will work with the Planning Board and the community on next steps. We will get there. I am committed to it.*
- *In October, the Select Board approved the launch of the downtown Business Improvement District in 2012 to supplement Town services focused on marketing, beautification, special events planning, and parking to solidify Amherst's standing as one of the best college towns in America. As Town Manager, I serve on the newly formed Board of Directors and our first major action this spring was to hire the young and energetic Alex-Krogh-Grabbe as our first Executive Director to help bring the organization and its many initiatives to life.*
- *The adopted FY 13 capital budget included my recommended funding to upgrade the free downtown Wi-Fi network, one of the top five largest and fastest networks of its kind in Massachusetts. Significant upgrades this summer will improve reliability and coverage.*
- *My FY 13 budget proposal contained a list of priority items if additional funds were to become available, including funds for an economic development position at Town Hall to bring together all of the right people to pursue targeted locations for development and redevelopment, identify state and federal resources available to work toward those development goals, and mobilize those resources and others to respond to these and new economic development opportunities as they arise. While not ultimately included in the budget recommended to and adopted by Annual Town Meeting, a framework for progress has been laid out.*

2. The Town Manager shall continue to strengthen relationships with UMass and the Colleges, for concrete progress in areas that improve the community's quality of life by:
 - a. mitigating the impacts of a significant student population: on neighborhoods, on demand for public safety resources, on parking and traffic issues, and so forth;
 - b. compensating for the significant amount of non-taxable property;
 - c. pursuing issues of mutual benefit to the Town and the academic institutions
- *A staff team from the Town Manager's office, Health, Inspections Services, Fire/EMS, Police, Finance, IT, and Planning departments led by Health Director Julie Federman continues development of our Safe and Healthy Neighborhoods Initiative to improve quality of life in neighborhoods across Amherst.*
- *In May, Residential Parking Design Standards were approved decisively at Annual Town Meeting, a small but significant step forward.*

- *This year, Town staff at all levels and our partners in the community and at UMass strengthened a collaboration to strategically plan for the student celebrations that typically accompany the warm weather. Late April weekends, typically filled with large parties that disrupt neighbors, were quieter than usual. This is due, in part, to the shared efforts of many in our community. On campus, that includes Dean of Students Enku Gelaye and her staff (who were particularly effective, I thought, in educating and laying out expectations and consequences for students), the UMass Police Department, the Center for Student Development, Residence Life, External Relations, and student government leaders. In Town, key partners include the Amherst Police, Fire, Health, and Inspection Services Departments, landlords and property managers. Town public safety leaders and Select Board chair Stephanie O’Keeffe are among the Town contributors to the Campus and Community Coalition to Reduce High Risk Drinking (CCC), now an award-winning organization and a role model for other college towns nationwide.*
- *A Code Enforcement Officer position was added to Inspection Services and he is focusing in the near term on problem properties.*
- *Town staff collaborated with UMass on a new Campus Master Plan guiding future development on campus which also includes a transportation plan in partnership with the Town.*
- *In January, I was elected chair of the PVRTA Advisory Board by my colleagues from the 24 cities and towns served by this regional transit authority, a position from which I am working even more closely with our regional partners and the Five Colleges to preserve and strengthen our public transportation network.*
- *The January reopening of the Lord Jeffery Inn following Amherst College’s \$15 million renovation investment is bringing new local property, meals, and lodging tax revenues and renewed vitality on the edge of the historic Amherst Town Common.*
- *I and staff have been supportive of Hitchcock Center’s MOU to pursue a state of the art environmental learning center partnership with Hampshire College.*
- *I have initiated constructive dialogue with the new presidents of Amherst and Hampshire Colleges and the incoming chancellor at UMass.*

3. The Town Manager shall actively engage the community to:

- a. provide information about Town successes and challenges, and to seek support for initiatives that address the latter;
 - b. gather information about strengths and weaknesses of municipal service delivery
- *Last October, the Select Board approved a Sewer Extension Master Plan developed by staff and our consulting engineers that recommended that the neighborhoods in the Harkness Road and Wildflower Drive areas should have sewer mains extended into them as soon as practicable. The Select Board reviewed Finance Director Sandy Pooler’s analysis of Sewer Rate and Per Household Impacts of Payment Options for the recommended sewer extensions and endorsed my recommendation to pay for sewer extensions from sewer fees charged to all customers, consistent with the Town’s past practice. The November Special Town Meeting passed a \$4.2 million bond issue to fund these sewer extensions over the next two years.*
 - *In October, using a template developed by me over the past several years, Finance Director Sandy Pooler presented to the Select Board, Finance Committee, School*

- Committee, and Library Trustees a detailed report highlighting fiscal trends over the past ten years, their implications for budget and policy development, and a snapshot of the current and future fiscal realities shaping our budget and strategic planning.*
- In January, I presented a balanced FY 13 budget proposal with an accompanying prioritized list of restorations or additions to address needs in the community. In the detailed departmental sections of my budget proposal, staff at my direction prepared a comprehensive summary of recent accomplishments and challenges and both long term and short term performance and staffing needs objectives, a focused response to one of the Select Board's performance goals for me.*
 - All FY 13 operating and capital budget articles were approved by Annual Town Meeting in May as recommended. The budget maintains current service levels after four years of belt-tightening.*
 - I worked with staff, the Select Board, and the business community to develop and implement a Downtown Parking Improvement Plan last summer to make downtown a more customer-friendly destination. The plan included the installation of "Pay by Space" parking machines that allow the customer to pay for parking at the machine and continue to their destination without having to return to their car and also accepts payment by credit card and cell phone. Machines have been installed at the Boltwood Garage, the Town Lot behind CVS, the lot behind Town Hall, and the Main Street, Spring Street, and Amity Street Lots.*
 - Following an early Halloween Snowstorm that caused widespread tree damage and knocked out power to the entire Town, and to some for up to eight days and nights, I convened our staff Emergency Management Team and actively solicited community feedback on both strengths and areas for improvement on the Town's responses to the storm. As I reported to the Select Board in November, while there was praise for many aspects of the Town's emergency response, suggestions made included the purchase of an emergency generator for Town Hall, exploration of the use of social media such as Facebook and Twitter to enhance communications to and from community members during and after an event, and planning for and opening as necessary in future emergencies a "Community Warming Place" for people to keep warm, recharge cell phones/laptops, and exchange information. In April, I established a Twitter account @AmherstMusante and have tweeted many pieces of information over the past few months about Town events, successes, and challenges. Annual Town Meeting approved my capital budget recommendation to purchase an emergency generator for Town Hall.*
 - In April, I appointed a new Building Commissioner, Rob Morra, who has over thirteen years experience in public and private construction management. My priority for Inspection Services, simply stated, is to renew and refocus Inspection Services' mission to protect our community related to land use and to the construction and occupancy of buildings and structures and to do so in a manner that provides maximum clarity, responsiveness, and accountability without placing an undue burden on property owners and businesses who wish to invest in Amherst. A candidate screening panel named by me was led by Conservation and Development Director David Ziomek and also included two members from the Amherst business community, Chris Riddle and Tony Maroulis, Fire Chief Tim Nelson, Health Director Julie Federman, and Planning Director Jonathan Tucker. Mr. Morra has successfully reorganized permitting procedures, introduced the use of field computer tablets by inspector staff, and established and improved coordination*

between six departments in his previous position in Weston, Massachusetts. As importantly, he has a proven track record of effectively communicating expectations and resolving issues with permit applicants and supervising and mentoring professional and administrative staff.

4. The Town Manager shall make high staff morale a priority. Efforts shall include:
 - a. increasing communication between himself and staff at all levels, in order to inform, engage and solicit feedback;
 - b. encouraging a workplace culture of civility, mentoring and receptivity to new ideas and innovations for improved service delivery.
 - *I continue to make a conscious effort to project a positive “can do” attitude and for staff to feel comfortable approaching me with questions and/or suggestions for improvement.*
 - *In December I agreed to form a Labor Management Committee with the DPW AFSCME bargaining unit to work together on a Compensation Study on pay scales by job title comparing Amherst with comparable communities. This has not been done in a number of years and will be useful information for successor bargaining in 2013. It is an opportunity for constructive dialogue with union leadership. The committee has met several times so far.*

5. The Town Manager shall conduct an assessment of the Town’s Human Resources needs and capabilities, in order to determine how well we are recruiting, hiring, retaining and supporting Town staff, and how aligned we are with best practices in the human resources field. The Town Manager shall inform the Select Board about the assessment results and his plan to address any necessary changes.
 - *In June, I announced my appointment of Deborah Radway to the position of Human Resources Director. In this capacity, she will also serve as the Town’s Human Rights Director. She will begin service here on July 16. Ms. Radway has 23 years experience with human resources at the manager or director level, including fourteen years of experience in public sector human resources and general government management. Since 2005, she has worked for the Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor & Workforce Development managing the Franklin Hampshire Career Center. Previously, she served as Town Administrator in Montague and as Personnel Director/Assistant Town Manager in Lexington, Massachusetts. I believe that Deb Radway will be another outstanding addition to the Town of Amherst team. She brings to the Town a breadth of public and private sector experience pointed toward human resources, excellent problem solving and people skills, a track record of tackling issues head on, and a proven commitment to promoting diversity and inclusion in the workplace.*

6. The Town Manager shall keep the Select Board fully informed by:
 - a. responding to and initiating improved communication efforts;
 - b. recognizing that any issue or change that directly or significantly impacts the community falls within the Select Board’s authority to provide feedback;

- c. allowing the Select Board opportunity to provide feedback on policy/practice initiatives and changes before implementation;
- d. involving the Select Board in the determination of collective bargaining strategies for the current contract process, and keeping us updated on its progress;
- e. ensuring that all members of the Select Board are aware of anything significant before it appears in the newspaper.

I have made a number of efforts to improve two-way communication between the Town Manager and the Select Board. Examples include:

- *Substantive and detailed Town Manager Reports at regular Select Board meeting;*
- *The opportunity for Select Board feedback on CDBG funding priorities before submittal of the grant;*
- *Dialogue on budget priority setting and prospective proposals before the finalization of my recommendations for FY 13;*
- *Regular updates and dialogue on collective bargaining issues in executive session, and;*
- *Advance information sharing on hot button community issues such as weather emergencies, Village Center rezoning initiatives, and licensing issues.*

7. The Town Manager shall provide the Select Board with a detailed assessment of Town-owned buildings regarding their current use, and anticipated future benefit and liability. He will make recommendations on whether or not it is in the Town's best interest to maintain ownership of each one. If any recommendations are to repurpose a building or not maintain its ownership, he will suggest how best to proceed.

- *My time and focus on this project was impacted these past months because of the length of time I was out of work last fall recuperating. I have begun this effort with Facilities Director Ron Bohonowicz and other staff to compile a detailed town-wide inventory of buildings, their history and current use, operating and capital costs, and a list of possible future uses.*
- *I am completing with staff by the end of June a more detailed template for the report. I expect to be able to review a draft report in mid-July with a final report to the Select Board by approximately August 1.*

8. The Town Manager shall help Amherst become a greener, more sustainable community by initiating and advocating for new "green" efforts and programs, and he shall inform the Select Board and the community about these efforts and their results.

I have articulated a bold community vision and offered specific action steps for Amherst including:

- *My proposal to embark on a bold and ambitious tree planting plan to plant 2,000 trees in the next three years to reduce pollution, beautify our community, and reverse a twenty-plus year trend of net loss of hundreds of street trees was passed overwhelmingly by Town Meeting in May. This follows my recruitment in 2011 of certified arborist Alan Snow to be the Town's first full-time Tree Warden and the DPW's Division Director for Parks and Grounds, an industry best practice.*

- *Submittal of a state application for designation as a “Green Community” and receipt of State grants for energy efficiency and conservation (ex. LED streetlights).*
 - *Becoming a leader in renewable energy from installation of a solar array at the Old Landfill (see Performance Objective #1a).*
 - *Resurfacing of 10 miles of badly deteriorated Town roadways in 2011 while also incorporating pedestrian, cyclist, and public transportation improvements.*
 - *Commencement of a town-wide transportation plan with all of those elements by appointing a task force comprised of members of the Planning Board, Public Works Committee, Public Transportation and Bicycle Committee, and key Town staff.*
9. The Town Manager shall create, through consultation with each department’s staff, a recommended staffing plan that suggests the optimal number and types of positions in each department to best address current service levels and key needs. This will provide a framework for prioritizing recommendations for future hiring. Such future recommendations should address the full cost of each position, including post-employment benefits.
- *As I summarized in my progress report on performance objective #3, I presented a balanced FY 13 budget proposal on January 13 with an accompanying prioritized list of restorations or additions to address needs in the community. In the detailed departmental sections of my budget proposal, staff at my direction prepared a comprehensive summary of recent accomplishments and challenges and both long term and short term performance and staffing needs objectives, including more detailed and comprehensive Police and Fire/EMS staffing needs analyses.*