



To: Town Council
Fr: Paul Bockelman
Town Manager
Dt: May 1, 2020
Re: Town Manager Report for May 4, 2020

Town Manager Update:

- **COVID-19:** The disease is not increasing, but it is not decreasing in Massachusetts, either. That means efforts will continue to educate and enforce social distancing. New developments:
 - MMA Working Group: I have been asked to serve on a working group of about ten municipal leaders formed by the MMA has formed a working group of mayors and town managers to gather feedback from local leaders across the state about concerns, priorities and resource needs, and to share that information with the administration.
 - Governor Baker is issuing an order that will require face coverings for all who are in public or in a business. Enforcement will fall to the Town. The Police Department will be working closely with the Health Director to ensure education and enforcement is done properly.
 - Stay at Home Advisory: The Governor extended his Stay at Home advisory until May 18th. As stated previously, the Town aligns its policies with those of the Center for Disease Control, Massachusetts Department of Public Health, and directives and advisories from the Governor.
 - Town buildings: All town buildings, including schools, remain closed.
 - Committee meetings: In March, all meetings were canceled except those of the Town's governing bodies (Town Council, School Committee, Board of Library Trustees). In April, we permitted meetings by the adjudicatory bodies (Zoning Board of Appeals, Planning Board, Board of Health, Conservation Commission, Historic District Commission, and Historical Commission) to comply with time deadlines and ensure building projects could continue moving forward. In May, we will begin to ramp up the meetings of all other committees, as technology and staff support allows.
 - Case Numbers: As you know, the State Department of Public Health releases town-by-town numbers weekly. (The Town updates its website daily with the most current number of cases). Due to a reporting error, the case number for Amherst in the Massachusetts Department of Public Health's report issued this afternoon, April 29th, is wrong. The report shows 83. The correct number is 33. The State was unable to correct this number prior to the release of the document this afternoon. We expect it will be corrected soon.

- The Town continues to stay ahead of the game with regard to our stock of PPE specifically to address the pandemic.
- Values. These are the core values that I have used in decision making:
 - *Public Health, Public Safety.* All of our decisions are based on what is the best decision for the public's health and the public's safety.
 - *Rely on the science.* I and my team read and listen to as much as we can to be aware of the changing nature of this event. But we aren't experts on everything so we rely on the built-in expertise of the Centers for Disease Control and Massachusetts Department of Public Health to provide broader guidelines.
 - *Depend on my people.* We have superb, experienced staff working daily in every aspect of our Town government. I trust their judgement and rely on their frank give-and-take to ensure I am making the best decisions in the Town's interest.
 - *Each Person has a Role.* We all know our roles. We all speak to our roles. The Health Director speaks to the primacy of public health. The Fire and Police Chiefs and Superintendent of Public Works focus on public safety and the delivery of essential services. The Interim Finance Director keeps an eye on all things financial. And the Assistant Town Manager is central to every discussion.
 - *Town is our Focus.* The health and safety of our Town – taxpayers, residents, businesses – is our staff's primary mission. Our taxpayers pay us to make the best decisions we can for the Town and community at large.
- Outreach:
 - Coffee with Town Manager:
 - The next Cuppa Joe will be on Friday, May 8th from 8am – 9:00 a.m. with Tony Maroulis from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst as our special guest. It will be a Zoom time to get together. BYOC – Bring your own coffee!
 - Call-in shows: We continue to hold twice-weekly (Tuesday and Thursday at 12:00 noon) call-in shows. The Communications Manager organizes and runs the shows. On Tuesdays, I and a special guest participate. We have had the Police Chief, Director of Senior Services, and the Emergency Management Director/Fire Chief. Next Tuesday is the Assistant Town Manager/Director of Conservation and Development. Every Thursday features the Health Director.
- Appointments:
 - I will be reviewing reappointments for July 1st and begin to forward them to the Town Council for its review.
- Outreach and Community Participation Officers (CPOs):
 - CPOs are organizing the production and distribution of cloth masks for those members of our community who do not have access to cloth masks. CPOs are working with the large apartment complexes to coordinate distribution.
 - Complete Count – United States Census: The Town received a grant of \$25,000 from the Secretary of State's office to expand our efforts to ensure all people in Amherst are counted. Our original plans, submitted prior to the pandemic, will be altered significantly under the new realities we face. Congratulations to our Census team for taking the initiative to secure this grant!
- Town-Gown:
 - Hampshire College: The agreement with Hampshire College has terminated due to the excellent dues from our testing. We are decommissioning the Hampshire shelter as a result.

- Amherst College: We are in discussions with Amherst College to determine ways they can support local efforts during the pandemic.

Departments:

- Information Technology (I.T.): No new developments.
- Town Clerk:
 - The Clerk's office is busy certifying nomination papers for those running for state-wide office. The recent change in legislation regarding signature requirements for candidates running for State seats and the extension of the deadline to submit nomination papers has resulted in a daily surge of submissions to the office.
 - Residents continue to renew business certificates and dog licenses.
 - The office is receiving more requests for absentee ballots for the upcoming fall elections amid concerns with COVID-19.
- Public Safety:
 - Although most students, including those who live off-campus, are not in Town, the Town has received some complaints in the Fearing/North Pleasant Streets area and in the Grantwood Drive area. Police continue to meet with property owners in those areas and police will continue to monitor those areas more closely.
 - Officers continue to patrol Town roads for compliance with traffic laws, including speeding. The public is encouraged to notify the Police Department if there are areas that you believe needs additional enforcement efforts.
 - The Town will have a police presence at Puffers Pond, especially as the weather warms up, to prevent gatherings and educate visitors about social distancing.
 - Police officers will play a role in helping to educate the public and enforce the new face covering order issued by the Governor.
 - The Fire Department is still answering calls for service and encourages people not to wait to call for help. They have seen people waiting to seek care because of fears of contracting COVID-19 if they go to a hospital.
- Human Resources:
 - Staff have migrated all wellness programming to online platforms and reprogrammed its efforts to reflect our new work reality.
 - All Human Resources functions continue including providing support to employees and managing union relationships.
- Public Works:
 - Water and Sewer Rates. We held an information session on block rate pricing structures on Friday where our consultants, Tata and Howard, provided information about ascending block rates and flat rates, which is how we price.
 - Paving. All of this work is subject to change, of course.
 - East Hadley Road. Sidewalk work is continuing by a private contractor.
 - South East Street. A private contractor will be providing a 1.5" overlay.
 - Pelham Road. A private contractor will be milling the road removing 1.5" of material and overlaying it with 1.5" of new asphalt. There will be no work done on the sidewalk. DPW crews have been busy preparing the area by trimming trees and clearing brush.
 - Bids are being reviewed for new work utilizing existing funds including a full depth reclamation with asphalt injection of Henry Street.

- Staffing. DPW has extended its staggered shift schedule to maintain social distancing among various crews in accordance with the Town's and Governor extension to May 18th. Employees are working seven days a week, but there are different groups working
- Work. Street cleaning is underway.
- Finance:
 - Budget:
 - I called a meeting of the Budget Coordinating Group for April 23rd. There is a The Interim Finance Director and I will make a major budget presentation on May 11th to the Town Council, School Committee, and Board of Library Trustees.
 - The Interim Finance Director is reviewing options for FY20, FY21, and beyond. I characterize these options as bad, worse, and worst case scenarios. We are fortunate that we have reserves and strong management that will sustain our finances through this crisis. But difficult decisions will be required.
 - All staff are looking forward to May 11th, which is the start date for our new, permanent Finance Director.
- Sustainability:
 - Community Choice Aggregation has received funding through the efforts of our State Representative and State Senator. These funds will support the development of an aggregation plan that will be submitted to the Massachusetts Department of Public Utilities and the creation of a legal Joint Powers Agreement that would be entered into by the Towns of Amherst and Pelham and the City of Northampton. The purpose of the Aggregation is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through energy efficiency and the development of local renewable distributed energy resources.
 - The Municipal Vulnerabilities Preparedness (MVP) Action Grant from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEA) if funding work by Linnaen Solutions to hire technical assistance, interpreters/translators, and to engage a community liaison in the development of a Climate Action, Adaptation and Resiliency Plan. These advocates and advisors will work closely with the Town's Sustainability Coordinator and other staff with advice from the Town's Energy and Climate Action Committee (ECAC).
 - I am hoping we can open the Valley Bike Share service on or around June 1st. But can not guarantee that can happen.
- Community Services:
 - Leisure Services: No new updates.
 - Senior Center: No new updates.
 - Health Department: The Health Department, especially the Health Director, is at the center of every major decision being made by the Town be it the Shelter, cloth face coverings, or swimming pools. The work of that group is truly remarkable.
- Conservation and Development:
 - Supportive Housing at 132 Northampton Road: The Town Attorney conducted a training session for the Zoning Board of Appeals on the ins-and-outs of a Chapter 40B, comprehensive permit. Deadlines for this project are can be adjusted due to the tolling of permit dates granted by the State.
 - Housing Choice Designation: The Planning Department is submitting an application to renew its Housing Choice Designation. This designation makes the Town eligible for funds that benefit low and moderate income people.
- Economic Development: The Chamber of Commerce and Business Improvement District will make a presentation to the Town Council at its meeting.

Delegated Authority (March 2020):

- Short-Term Event Uses of Town Commons: None
- Short-Term Parking Requests: None
- Short-Term Road or Sidewalk Closures: None

Major Capital Projects:

- Groff Park: Project delays due to construction issues are being resolved.
- DPW/Fire: No developments
- Schools: We have a meeting with staff of the MSBA on Monday to review the timeline and expectations for the MSBA funding. I will be seeking applicants to serve on a building committee for this project.
- Library: A small group reviews the library project and scope out options for the future.

Project Update:

- Destination: Amherst!
 - Kendrick Park Playground: LSSE, DPW, and the Planning Department continue to move this project forward.
 - All material can be found on the project page found here: <https://www.amherstma.gov/3527/Kendrick-Park-2020>
 - On April 15th, there was a preliminary presentation to the Planning Board about the proposed design with the opportunity for public input.
 - On April 22nd, the Design Review Board reviewed the project with opportunity for public input.
 - On May 6th, there will be a Public Hearing before the Planning Board for Site Plan Review of the design of the playground with the opportunity for public input.
 - The Town must submit its plans to the State by June 1st.
 - Construction is expected to begin in September with a completion date of June, 2021.
 - Performing Arts Shell on the Town Common: No developments.
 - Parking Structure on Town Land at North Pleasant Street Parking Lot: No developments.
 - North Common Restoration/Main Street Parking Lot: No developments.
 - Infrastructure Improvements: The Town will be working on other infrastructure improvements so that we are prepared to apply for “shovel-ready” project should the government seek to jump-start the economy.
- Hickory Ridge: No developments.
- East Street School: No developments
- North Amherst Library: The anonymous donor has expressed interest in continuing with this project so we will be moving this forward.
- Solar on the Landfill: Slow, steady progress continues to be made as we work through the permitting and interconnection approvals. We are projecting construction to begin in November of 2021 and operation to begin in April of 2022.
- Dog Park: The dog park is moving forward with significant funding from the Stanton Foundation. Bids for construction are in and an award will be made soon.

Upcoming Meetings and Events:

- May 11th – Town Council special meeting
- May 18th – Town Council meeting
- May 25th – Memorial Day holiday
- June 1st – Town Council meeting
- June 15th – Town Council meeting
- June 29th – Town Council meeting

Other events:

- May 5th – 12:00 noon – COVID-19 Call-in Show
- May 7th – 12:00 noon – COVID-19 Call-in Show
- May 8th – 8:00 a.m. – Cuppa Joe with Paul
- May 8th – 8:00 p.m. – BID/Chamber Luminaria to thank frontline workers
- May 12th – 12:00 noon – COVID-19 Call-in Show
- May 14th – 12:00 noon – COVID-19 Call-in Show