



To: Town Council
Fr: Paul Bockelman
Town Manager
Dt: August 29, 2020
Re: Town Manager Report for August 31, 2020

Town Manager Update:

- Top Line:
 - Election: The primary election has been a significant challenge for the Town Clerk's office. A high profile primary for Senate, COVID-19 adjustments, relocation of voting locations, concerns of hosts of existing voting locations, the reduction in the number of election workers available, the expansion of early voting, the popularity of mail-in voting, and intense demands on the Town Clerk staff have created a particularly challenging election. The Town Clerk's staff have come through significant challenges and I expect the election will come off successfully. Town staff and others have stepped up to provide added support. The next challenge will be the general election on November 3rd.
 - Mask Order: The Board of Health approved a mask order for the general downtown area effective August 3rd. The Town has begun hiring ambassadors to promote the wearing of masks and educate the population in the downtown and other areas.
 - UMass: The Town and University have established a working group to facilitate communication and provide a place for sharing information and making decisions in real time.
 - This group, working through the University, is hosting a community forum on **Thursday, September 3rd at 5:30 p.m.**
 - A link to the livestream of the event is here: <https://livestream.com/umassamherst/community-members>
 - Here is the link to sign-up to attend the forum: https://umass-amherst.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_oKORvpzVTce3EHuP3FvjQQ
 - Here is the link to submit a question in advance of the forum: <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScDGfqoyszzejGEuvmJ8gtzKYFecVIGWSG2DfH9HBwrjkuPIA/viewform>
 - Racial Equity:
 - I had a conversation with a representative of the Racial Equity Task Force and hope to engage with that group in a more substantive way.
 - The Town has joined the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE). GARE is a national network of government cohorts working to achieve racial equity and advance opportunities for all. They believe government's proactive

work on racial equity has the potential to leverage significant change, setting the stage for the achievement of racial equity in our communities. GARE goal is to catalyze community, government, and other institutions to dismantle structural racial inequity and create equitable outcomes for all.

- Alternatives to Police: I met with a large group organized by the Defund 413 Amherst group. The purpose of the meeting was to answer questions on the Town's budget process and how members of the community can better access the decision-making points in the development of the Town's budget.
- Outreach:
 - Coffee with Town Manager: We will continue outreach efforts in September with Town staff joining me at various locations around Town to connect with people informally in one-on-one settings.
 - Call-in shows: We are reviewing the value of continuing the call-in shows to determine whether we should continue them into the Fall
 - Appointments:
 - I continue to seek members to serve on the Agricultural Commission, Affordable Housing Trust, Cultural Council, CDBG Advisory Committee, Community Preservation Act Committee, Council on Aging, Disability Access Advisory Committee, Leisure Services and Supplemental Education (LSSE) Commission, Public Art Commission, and Public Shade Tree Committee. Interviews are beginning with several of these groups.
 - I have submitted names for the Elementary School Building Committee and Human Rights Commission to the Town Council for its review.
- Outreach and Community Participation Officers (CPOs):
 - Complete Count – United States Census: The CPOs have been promoting the census in many ways with mailings, social media, and personal appeals.
 - Free Masks: The Masks for All initiative continues to draw interest and remains very popular.
 - Outreach: CPOs have been pivotal as we continue to conduct outreach in these strange times and are successful by making themselves available in a variety of settings.
 - Panelist: Communications Manager, Brianna Sunryd, has been selected to participate in a national panel titled "Engaging Along the Road to Reopening" sponsored by the Emerging Local Government Leaders (ELGL) in partnership with the Davenport Institute at Pepperdine University.
- Town-Gown:
 - On-campus students: All three higher education institutions have re-opened with students on campus.
 - Off-campus students: We anticipate a larger than normal number of students will be in Town this summer and that many students will be living off-campus during the Fall. Staff have been discussing the impact this may have for public safety and public health and we will be meeting with the colleges and University to discuss the issues this population of students is likely to raise. We are told from large landlords that parents are seeking to rent apartments so that their students can have "a true college experience."

Departments:

- Town Clerk:
 - Election: The primary election has been a significant challenge for the Town Clerk's office. A high profile primary for Senate, COVID-19 adjustments, relocation of voting locations, concerns of hosts of existing voting locations, the reduction in the number of election workers available, the expansion of early voting, the popularity of mail-in voting,

and intense demands on the Town Clerk staff have created a particularly challenging election. The Town Clerk's staff have come through significant challenges and I expect the election will come off successfully. Town staff and others have stepped up to provide added support. I have established that this and the general election are a top priority for the Town and staff have been informed that the election is an "all-hands-on-deck" priority for the Town.

- Early Voting: Early voting was held from August 22nd to August 28th at the Bangs Community Center.
- Mail-in Voting: Voting by mail has proven to be very popular with the electorate.
 - The Clerk's office purchased and installed, with the help of the Facilities Department, a dedicated mail-in box on the Main Street side of Town Hall. Ballots have been deposited in this box through the end of voting on Election Day. The box is monitored and emptied multiple times a day.
 - Additional staff have been assigned to support the Town Clerk's office during the work day, after hours, and on weekends.
- Election Day:
 - The Town Clerk has implemented the Town Council's vote to move three voting locations to the Amherst-Pelham Regional High School and maintain the other locations.
 - The Clerk has worked closely with the Facilities Manager, Public Works Department, and School Department and other voting location hosts to ensure voters have the opportunity to vote in safe, accessible locations on Election Day.
 - Day-of-voting protocols are established and personal protective equipment has been secured for each voting location. Poll workers are instructed in how to maintain a clean site for safe voting. The Town Clerk's office has utilized existing election workers, new election workers, and Town staff to fully staff the voting locations.
 - Disposable air filters for the HVAC equipment that services the polling areas will be changed before and after the elections.
 - HVAC equipment tags have been reviewed to ensure the maximum MERV rated filters would be used.
 - The disinfectant service provider would spray/mist the disinfectant solution into any accessible return air ducts.
 - The Town has engaged a professional industrial cleaning company to provide viral disinfection services to each of the election polling locations. A complete summary of the post-election disinfecting is attached to end of this report.
- The next challenge will be the general election on November 3rd.
- Public Safety:
 - Police officers have been responding to numerous complaints about house parties and noise disturbances.
 - The Police Department has obtained – at no cost – a "comfort dog" who will prove useful during stressful situations for people and be a good "ice-breaker" when interacting with the public.
 - I appointed three firefighters to the Fire Department to fill two vacant positions and fill a third position in anticipation of an upcoming retirement to maintain adequate staffing. I

have also authorized the employment of additional temporary staffing which will be paid out of COVID-19 CARES act funding.

- Human Resources:

- Human Resources Manager Joanne Misiaszek is serving as the acting Human Resources Director.
- Public Health Nurse Jennifer Brown will be serving as the acting Health Director. She will be supported by the Assistant Town Manager for administrative issues. I am contracting with a neighboring health director to provide additional support during the transition.
- Searches are coming to a close for the Health Director and Human Resources Director positions. Review teams have reviewed applications and conducted interviews. We have two strong pools of applicants and will move forward with deliberate speed in filling these positions.
- I have filled two vacant firefighter positions and hired a third position in anticipation of an upcoming vacancy in the Spring.
- The new travel order from the Governor has required the Town to establish new rules for Town employees traveling outside the 8 approved states. Information can be found here: <https://www.amherstma.gov/CivicAlerts.aspx?AID=2686>

- Public Works:

- Pine/Meadow/North Pleasant Street Intersection: Work continues on the installation of so-called “smart traffic signal” at this intersection. The poles have been installed and signals attached to the poles. Work continues to remove old equipment, install pedestrian controls, install sensors, and program the lighting control equipment. The new signals are operating in the same pattern as the old signals until this work can be completed
- Wastewater Testing: The Town is working with the University of Massachusetts to conduct innovative COVID-19 testing on wastewater sample. The Town will provide influent wastewater samples and space, and appropriate housing and/or cooling for the sampling equipment.
- West Street Pedestrian Bridge: A small pedestrian bridge that carries the sidewalk over the Plum Brook on West Street north of the Pomeroy Village center is closed due to accelerated deterioration. This was required when a State inspection found deterioration on the bridge’s eastern side. Pedestrians who use the bridge are being detoured into the road, where they will be protected from passing vehicles by Jersey barriers. Until the bridge is removed, repaired and reinstalled, likely by the end of September, a guardrail is being adjusted and asphalt access ramps are being installed so the sidewalk remains accessible.
- Station Road Bridge: The Town was awarded a \$500,000 grant from the State’s Municipal Small Bridge Program for construction of a new permanent bridge on Station Road. The program assists cities and towns with replacing or preserving bridges with spans between 10’ and 20’, which are not eligible for Federal aid.
- Technical Assistance: DPW was awarded 80 hours of hands-on technical assistance from the State Department of Environmental Protection to explore options for the Town’s waste hauling practices.
- Household Hazardous Waste Day: DPW held the collection at the Fort River School on August 15th.
- Paving:
 - Paving is being done on North East Street.
 - DPW crews are now on Old North Pleasant Street and Kendrick Park to make the changes necessary to connect the new park to the sidewalk system.

- Finance:
 - Budget: The Town Council approved the budget as presented at its meeting on July 20th. The Town Manager will be working to examine alternatives to policing and will hold filling two anticipated vacancies in the Police Department in abeyance until that review is completed which will be no later than January 31, 2021.
 - COVID-19: The finance department continues to submit reimbursements for COVID-19 funding from FEMA and the Federal CARES Act.
 - State Aid:
 - The Department of Revenue reported that the two major sources of State Aid to the Town would be level funded at this time.
 - The Governor and the Legislature stated that they are committing to no less than the FY20 level of funding for UGGA and Chapter 70 education aid as a baseline amount for FY21 funding.
 - This is the scenario we had presented to the Town Council and, if the State holds true, the Town will not have to access its reserves for FY21.
- Sustainability:
 - Green Communities Grant:
 - The Town has received a \$125,998 Green Community Competitive Grant from the State Department of Energy Resources (DOER) Green Communities Division. Approximately \$100,500 of the funding is being provided for LED lighting retrofits at the Munson Library, Police Station and Town Hall. In addition the Town has received \$25,500 for vehicle idle reduction technology.
 - The Town has previously received Green Communities funding for the following projects: retro-fitting town-owned streetlights to LED technology; municipal building lighting retrofits, more efficient boiler replacement; increased mechanical efficiency for HVAC systems; purchase of an electric vehicle and staff training regarding energy management systems.
 - Community Choice Aggregation: The Town is working on 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. We are about to engage a specialized law firm to provide legal advice utilizing State funds to pay for the legal time.
 - The Municipal Vulnerabilities Preparedness (MVP) Action Grant: The Energy and Climate Action Committee is holding a series of subcommittee meetings with Community Leaders and stakeholders. There are four Task Groups holding a series of three meetings each through September. Additional community outreach meetings are scheduled, the next one being October 30th. The group will prioritize strategies and rankings by sector in November.
- Community Services:
 - Unhoused Population:
 - We are working on with Craig's Doors to develop alternative arrangements for overnight sheltering this upcoming season.
 - Town staff are investigating options for a day shelter in preparation for the colder weather.
 - Director of Senior Services will be the lead for issues revolving around homelessness policies and activities taking over from the retired Health Director. She will be supported by the Assistant Town Manager.

- Leisure Services:
 - Staff have been reallocated to work at Cherry Hill, Puffers Pond, and Groff Park. In addition, staff have been assisting the Town Clerk with election preparations.
 - Some Fall sports are getting ready to debut including golf, track, and cross country.
 - The staff have put together a “camp-in-a-bag” resource for community members.
 - Mill River pool hours will be extended into September in recognition of the reduced number of ways that people can exercise.
 - Cherry Hill golf course has had a busy summer after a weak spring season.
- Senior Center:
 - The Director is engaged in fund-raising effort to raise enough money to purchase iPad type devices for seniors who may not have access to the digital world. You can support her in her “Move and Groove to Close the Digital Divide” here: <https://www.gofundme.com/f/move-amp-groove-to-close-the-digital-divide>
- Health Department:
 - The Board of Health voted to implement a requirement for facial coverings in the downtown area. Signs will be installed. See attached order and map.
 - Signs will be placed at the entrances to the “masks required” area to help inform the public.
 - With the support of the Department of Public Works, new signs have been installed throughout Town encouraging people to wear masks, maintain social distance, and avoid social gatherings.
 - 55,800 face shields have been donated to the Amherst Public Schools by AM Packaging in Chicopee. This should be enough to supply the District’s entire adult staff with face shields for at least six months.
 - The Town is unable to offer a flu clinic this year for its employees so we have engaged in a campaign to encourage every staff member to get a flu shot at a local physician’s office or pharmacy. It is particularly important for staff to get a flu shot this year due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.
- Conservation and Development:
 - Puffer’s Pond: We will maintain staffing at Puffers Pond through September as that is often the time when the area can become more crowded during warm weather.
 - Emergency Rental Assistance Program: The Town has dedicated \$250,000 in taxpayer funds to support income-eligible renters in meeting their rental requirements during the COVID-19 pandemic. Additional information can be found here: <https://www.amherstma.gov/CivicAlerts.aspx?AID=2672>
 - DOT Grant: The Town applied for funds from the Massachusetts Department of Transportation for temporary changes. We are refining the grant application to make it more competitive in the eyes of the Department of Transportation.
 - Supportive Housing at 132 Northampton Road: A public hearing began on June 25th on Valley CDC’s Comprehensive Permit application to the Zoning Board of Appeals for the supportive studio apartment project, including 28 units for low income individuals, proposed to be constructed at 132 Northampton Road. The ZBA will take numerous meetings listening to public comment and reviewing this proposal which has received significant Town financial support.
 - ADA Transition Plan: Consultants were in Town surveying all Town buildings to identify the barriers to full accessibility to those who are disabled.
- Information Technology (I.T.):

- I-Net: I.T. is moving forward on a contract to construct a replacement I-Net loop to replace the current Comcast loop which the Town must abandoned in compliance with the contract we have with Comcast.
- Cybersecurity: The Town is participating in a State-sponsored cybersecurity awareness training program designed to help staff spot threats, change behaviors, and reduce risk at every level of the organization.
- Economic Development:
 - The Amherst Area Chamber of Commerce, with the Town's support was awarded a Resurgent Places Grant to install plantings and wayfinding signage in three areas of Town: Pomeroy Village, East Amherst Village Center, and Echo Hill Village and to adapt the Visitor Center to an outdoor model.

Delegated Authority (July 2020):

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

Major Capital Projects:

- DPW/Fire: No developments
- Schools: I have forwarded the resident members of the Committee for review by the Town Council.
- Library:
 - July 2021 – The MBLC will award Amherst a provisional grant
 - December 2021 – the date by which the Town will have to vote to approve its share of the project cost – but there is still nothing preventing Town Council from voting on the project before December 2021.

Project Update:

- Groff Park:
 - The technicians contracted to operationalize the spray park are in Town working with the DPW. I anticipate the spray park will be tested and then operational in the next week or two.
 - Kendrick Park Playground: The construction is expected to start in late summer or early fall. DPW is busy preparing the walkways around the playground.
 - 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.
- Hickory Ridge: No developments.
- East Street School: No developments
- North Amherst Library: The anonymous donor has agreed to fund the next phase of design and community engagement.
- 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.

Upcoming Meetings and Events:

- September 7th – Labor Day Holiday
- September 14th – Town Council meeting
- September 21st – Town Council meeting
- September 28th – Town Council Public Forum on the Master Plan

Other events:

- September 3rd – 5:30 p.m. – Town/University Community Forum

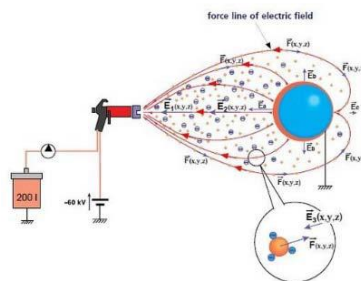
Viral Disinfection of Election Polling Locations

The Town has engaged a professional industrial cleaning company to provide viral disinfection services to each of the election polling locations.

Method/ Technology

Fogging and misting are the primary methods of the disinfection process. Fogging involves the application of fine droplets (less than 50μ) to the atmosphere where they generally remain suspended until evaporation. Misting produces fine droplets (up to 100μ) that are applied through the air to coat surfaces. In order to achieve maximum coverage and efficacy during the electrostatic spraying (ES) process, an electrical charge is applied to the disinfectant spray at the point of atomization.

The electrostatic spray technology is a time tested disinfecting method. Air and liquid enter the rear of the spray gun nozzle separately. The air moves through the nozzle under pressure and meets the liquid at the nozzle tip, causing the formation of spray droplets that are 30 to 60 microns in diameter. At the tip of the nozzle is an electrode which applies an electrical charge to the spray. The electrical charging causes a natural force of attraction between the spray droplets and target surface, similar to the attraction between items of clothing statically charged in a clothes dryer. The charge on the droplets pulls the spray mist towards the target at 75 times the force of gravity. The spray droplets can reverse direction, moving against gravity, to coat all sides of an object. Ultimately, this leads to the phenomenon of electrostatic wraparound which, in practical terms means that a disinfectant reaches all angles of the target surface including nooks and crevasses.



The ES process penetrates very small areas while quickly treating larger areas.

Most importantly, an electrostatic sprayer creates a lasting bond to any surface thus creating a treatment barrier that resists pathogens for weeks after application.

Direct Contact surfaces that experience a high frequency of human touch are of equal concern as a transmission medium and require diligent treatment to eradicate viruses that may remain viable in porous and non-porous materials. The list of common work and household direct surfaces include handles and knobs, desks and table tops, computer peripherals, arms of chairs and sofas, appliances, kitchen and bathroom fixtures and control panels. Indirect surfaces are incidental to every area and generally do not experience human contact on frequent basis (generally less than once per week). These surfaces include shelves, walls, floors, curtains, and interior spaces of drawers and cabinets. A regimen of disinfectant ES and fogging are employed for all direct and indirect surfaces, respectively.

Cleaning Chemicals

The viral disinfectant service provider uses hypochlorous acid (or HOCl). It is a hospital-grade disinfectant. This chemical is very effective for disinfection and sanitization and is EPA-registered to be used on porous and non-porous surfaces for the destruction of over 130 organisms specifically including the Human Coronavirus. At the appropriate concentration, HOCl has a 1-minute kill claim for Coronavirus.

Liability

The viral disinfectant service provider's personnel maintain Level C personal protection, at a minimum, during the treatment work in accordance with OSHA protocol. Impacted cleaning materials and personal protective equipment (PPE) are disposed of in accordance with the application regulations.

The Town will be provided with a certificate of completion for the disinfection and sanitizing work.