



To: Town Council  
Fr: Paul Bockelman  
Town Manager  
Dt: August 23, 2019  
Re: Town Manager Report for August 26, 2019

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Note: since time ran short last week, this Report has kept the same information from last week's report in case members of the Town Council have questions or comments.

### **Town Manager Update:**

- Coffee with Town Manager: The next coffee Cuppa Joe with Paul will be on September 13<sup>th</sup>. I will be with Human Resources Director Evelyn Rivera-Riffenburg at Amherst Coffee from 7:30 – 9:00 a.m.
- Outreach: I am scheduled to speak at the Rotary Club on October 3<sup>rd</sup>.
- Appointments:
  - Appointments for the Board of Assessors and Design Review Board have been referred to the Town Council for its review.
  - I will be referring the Personnel Board appointments shortly.
  - We are interviewing for the Public Art Commission, Council on Aging, Disability Access Advisory Committee, Board of Registrars, and Water Supply Protection Committee.
  - We are advertising for the Cultural Council, Agricultural Commission, CDBG Advisory Committee, Community Preservation Act Committee, Munson Library Building Trustees (South Amherst residents preferred per the committee charge), Board of Registrars, and Transportation Advisory Committee.
  - I am also seeking a student member for the Human Rights Commission and just had a resignation from the LSSE Commission and we are seeking interested volunteers for that committee.
- New School Year:
  - The new school year will kick off on Tuesday, August 27<sup>th</sup> with the First Day Celebration on the Town Common from 5:00 – 6:30 p.m.
  - The University's new school year will kick-off with the annual Community Breakfast on Tuesday, August 27<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 a.m.
- Craig's Doors Shelter: The State Division of Housing and Community Development, the primary source of funds for the Shelter, made a site visit and is working with the Craig's Doors Board of Directors on an improvement plan for the Board. The Town is actively assisting the State and the Board as they explore multiple options for ensuring that the Shelter is able to reopen on time November 1<sup>st</sup> under the same model as in prior years. This is a very large challenge that and

Town staff are fully engaged in the process. The Town's Health Director has taken the lead on this situation.

- Community Participation Officers (CPOs):
  - CPOs will be a strong presence at the First Day Celebration on the Town Common. They are partnering with the Ranked Choice Voting Committee to help educate residents on that process.
  - CPOs are also planning to fully engage parents and guardians during the numerous back-to-school events.
  - CPOs will be at the BID Block Party working with the Ranked-Choice Voting Commission and they are able to provide support to the Town Council for whatever the Council needs for that evening.
  - CPOs are working with the State to offer an electricity supplier awareness/equity forum.
- Town Hall and Workplaces:
  - We are reorganizing the first floor financial offices and have done a deep and thorough cleaning and installed new, modern office furniture. This is part of a larger plan to create additional meeting space and relocate the Human Resources department to the first floor so that it is near payroll and we are able to offer a better, more confidential and welcoming space for Town employees to address their personnel issues.
  - We are evaluating options to rehabilitate the front doors of Town Hall, which are original to the building and suffering from wear and tear.
  - We will be updating the Town website to bring it into compliance for those with disabilities and to design it with an eye toward "mobile first" which is how more and more people are accessing the website. In this process, we will be seeking members of the public to advise on the project.
- Town-Gown:
  - Hampshire College's new president, Ed Wingenbach, came to Town Hall this week to introduce himself and understand the College's important role in the community. He started his position on August 6<sup>th</sup>. He and his family, including two school-aged children, are living in South Amherst. He acknowledges that he has a large task in front of him but
  - Staff are meeting internally and with representatives of the University on a renewal of the Strategic Partnership Agreement negotiations. The School Superintendent has been engaged in the process. I anticipate having a more complete update in September.
- Ranked-Choice Voting:
  - Town Attorney Lauren Goldberg met with the Commission on August 22<sup>nd</sup> and reviewed legal constraints and suggested strategies for the implementation of ranked-choice voting. The conversation also covered the possibility that the Legislature would not approved ranked-choice voting and what the default option might be for the Town if this Charter-mandated provision did not become law.
  - Ranked-Choice Voting Commission members will be present at the First Day Celebration to reach out to voters to educate about their work.
- Economic Development:
  - The Economic Development Director is leading a discussion among staff to determine steps the Town can take to become, and be perceived as, business-friendly.
  - We have decided to not submit an application for a MassWorks grant this year. After reviewing the status of the potential private and public projects, we determined that our time would be better spent working to develop the proposal over the coming year to make an application next year more compelling.

- The Business Improvement District Board of Directors (on which I sit) interviewed three finalists for the BID Director and I selected Gabrielle Gould as its new Director. While all three candidates were exceptional, Ms. Gould brings a level of experience and energy that is palpable. She will be at the Council’s meeting on Monday and will be introduced by BID Board of Directors president Barry Roberts.
- Public Safety:
  - I promoted Detective Gregory D. Wise to the position of Police Sergeant.
  - Our three new three new firefighter/paramedics, Matthew Chipman, Angela Danger, and Denis Pelletier, have started at the Fire Department and are nearing the completion of their training. The Fire Chief reports that all three are meeting or exceeding his expectations.
  - We are seeking another firefighter/paramedic for the Fire Department to replace a firefighter who retired earlier than anticipated.
  - The Police Department’s “Adventure Academy”, held in conjunction with the UMass Police Department is at full enrollment with 35 middle school students in daily activities led by UMass and Amherst police officers.
- Human Resources:
  - The Town Clerk search continues and the interview team is interviewing.
  - I am looking at options for filling the Principal Assessor role. Principal Assessor David Burgess has retired but will return to work part-time post-retirement. This is a great benefit to the Town. We will be developing a profile and staffing plan for the Assessors office during the next few weeks.
  - The Sports Director for LSSE has resigned and we will be searching for his replacement. I note that the School Department recently hired a new Athletic Director.
  - Human Resources are rolling out a series of trainings for staff this fall including Customer Service, Communications, Supervisory Training, and Performance Reviews.
  - Communications Manager Brianna Sunryd was awarded a grant from the Massachusetts Municipal Management Association to attend the ICMA conference this October.
- Public Works:
  - DPW has received an “M36 Water Audit”, includes recommendations and suggestions for improving our water quality. Taking part in this audit is a real feather in our caps representing our leadership on these issues. Our score was second highest of those audited. Weston & Sampson conducted the study. Several water systems were selected by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection to perform an American Water Works Association (AWWA) M36 Level 1 validation water audit for five Massachusetts Water Management Act (WMA) permit holders as well as an AWWA M36 Level 2 validation water audit, including a Water Research Foundation (WRF) Component Analysis, for nine Massachusetts WMA permit holders who had each completed a previous M36 audit. The report will be posted to the Town’s website.
  - DPW crews have been putting in extensive work on the Town and School playing fields as we prepare for the Fall school sports seasons. The work includes deep aeration and increased irrigation.
  - Town crews will be doing sidewalk enhancements with the work Mill Street to continue the multi-use path from the bridge to State Street.
- Community Services:
  - LSSE:
    - LSSE’s staff conducted a debriefing of the Independence Day event and have developed some changes to the day to make the holiday even better next year.

- Summer camps are in full swing with enrollment at about the same levels as last year.
  - Senior Center: Mary Beth Ogulewicz, the new Director of Senior Services, started her new position on July 29<sup>th</sup>. She has hit the ground running meeting with dozens of people, visiting Applewood, Clark House and numerous other groups. A special thanks to Health Director Julie Federman for stepping in to serve during the interregnum.
  - Health Department:
    - The Director of Public Health is working with the Superintendent of Schools to support the Amherst-Pelham Regional Public Schools in the exploration of potential partnerships and opportunities to support early childhood education expansion in the district.
    - The Director of Public Health has taken the lead on addressing numerous challenges that revolve around how the Town addresses its responsibility to those experiencing homelessness including actively engaging in the future of the Craig's Doors shelter and concerns about uninvited camping on private property. She works closely with the Police Department, other public entities, and private organizations.
    - A major responsibility of the Health Department is the monitoring of communicable diseases. This work is incredibly time intensive with extensive work that needs to be done with the people with the disease, their health care providers, and the State Department of Public Health. Amherst is always an active community due to the large number of people who travel internationally.
- Conservation and Development:
  - Environment Massachusetts recognized the Town for its leadership on renewable energy and reducing fossil fuels and for the staff and volunteers who create, propose, develop, and implement these projects. They identified the Town's work including the use of electrified school buses, the Town's net zero energy buildings bylaw, ValleyBike Share, and the CCE+ collaboration with the Town of Pelham and City of Northampton. A press conference was held in the Main Street parking lot and the Town Council president spoke on behalf of the Town. The full report can be found here: <https://environmentmassachusettscenter.org/sites/environment/files/reports/Renewable%20Communities-compressed.pdf>
  - The first net-zero school in Massachusetts is scheduled to open in Cambridge this school year. On August 23<sup>rd</sup>, there will be a tour of a new high performance campus which is the largest net zero emissions building in the state. The project consists of a middle school and elementary school, district administration offices for the school district, a public library, a public pool and other public functions.
  - Kendrick Park Playground: We are waiting to hear on the Town's application for a PARC grant for \$400,000 from the State.
  - The Planning Board and Tree Warden will hold a joint public hearing on the removal of twelve shade trees on South East Street on August 27<sup>th</sup> at 7:05 p.m. I will attend this hearing as the Town Manager is where appeals to decisions are lodged. The public hearing notice is here: <https://www.amherstma.gov/ArchiveCenter/ViewFile/Item/11314>

**Delegated Authority** (June monthly report):

- Short-Term Event Uses of Town Commons:
  - Mystra Records, August 25<sup>th</sup> (small music concert on North Common)

- St. Brigids, October 12<sup>th</sup> (prayer rally on North Common)
- Short-Term Parking Requests:
  - North Common Parking Lot (adjacent to ValleyBike station), July 23, 2019 (Environment Massachusetts Renewable press event)
  - Boltwood Avenue, October 1-2, 2019 (Boltwood Avenue for Annual Yankee Candle Meeting)
  - Boltwood Avenue and Spring Street lot, August 27<sup>th</sup> (First Day Celebration by Amherst Public Schools)
- Short-Term Road or Sidewalk Closures:
  - Blue Hills Avenue, August 17, 2019 (Annual Block Party)
  - North Pleasant Street from Amity Street to Kendrick Park, September 19, 2019 (BID Annual Block Party)
- Charter Requirement 7.6: Candidate Statements on Town Website. Submitted a list of legal questions to Town Attorney for review. Still awaiting a response from the Town Attorney.
- Charter Requirement 10.12(a): Americans with Disabilities Act coordinator. I have had conversations with the Town staff and met with the Disability Access Advisory Committee on August 6<sup>th</sup>. The DAAC had two comments. First, they did not see the need for a full-time position and thought it would be a waste of taxpayer's money. Second, they thought having a designated person on staff who was the designated ADA coordinator would create an advocate within the Town government and that would be a good thing. They hoped such a person would be more proactive in advancing the cause for moving beyond the basic legal requirements for ADA access. Currently, the Town Manager is the ADA coordinator. I do not think the Town should have a full time Americans with Disabilities Act coordinator. However, I will be evaluating options to delegate that responsibility to an appropriate staff person.
- Charter Requirement 10.12(b) and (c): Permitting Non-citizens to vote and hold elective office and lowering the voting age for Town elections. See attached legal letter from the Town Attorney.

### **Major Capital Projects:**

- North Common Restoration/Main Street Parking Lot: On hold.
- Groff Park: The contractor is making good progress, with play structures being installed and landscaping taking shape.
- DPW/Fire: A site for the new DPW facility has been identified on South East Street on a flat field owned by Amherst College north of Stanly Street and Tamarack Drive. Three teams that included the CPOs and the Fire Chief, Superintendent of Public Works, and Assistant Town Manager went door-to-door over a two-day period on June 21-22 to meet with residents and to listen to their first impressions. Staff attended the property association's meeting on June 23<sup>rd</sup> as well. An informal gathering at Kiwanis Park was held on June 29<sup>th</sup> where neighbors could view the site and discuss concerns with staff and several Town Councilors. District Two meetings were held at the Fort River School on July 8<sup>th</sup>, which was attended by about 15 people, and July 23<sup>rd</sup>, which was attended by about 30 people plus several Town Councilors. We are now reviewing the comments from those listening sessions and will be determining next steps during August.
- Schools: Awaiting word from the MSBA, which is due in December. The Superintendent and I agree that it is the best course of action to prepare to bid the Crocker Farm School study and initiate the study if we are admitted into the MSBA process this year. We anticipate the study will take about two months to complete.

- Library:
  - Two grants were awarded by the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners. That moves the Jones Library up and this project is now number two on the waiting list

### **Project Update:**

- East Street School: We have issued an RFP for development of the school and adjacent property for affordable and market housing. The deadline for responses is October 1<sup>st</sup>. The RFP can be found here: <https://www.amherstma.gov/bids.aspx?bidID=283>
- Station Road Bridge: We have received several compliments on the design and installation of the bridge and traffic seems to be navigating the two-way, one lane bridge without much difficulty or conflict.
- Downtown Parking: The public meeting is scheduled for August 28<sup>th</sup>. After taking into consideration comments at that forum, the consultants will be scheduled to make their final presentation to the Town Council on September 23<sup>rd</sup>.
- Puffer’s Pond Parking and State Street Changes: The new road and parking configuration is working well with few complaints from neighbors or residents.
- North Amherst Library: An anonymous resident has offered a substantial challenge grant to make the building accessible and add bathrooms. I have released funds and authorized Kuhn-Riddle to develop schematics, which will help determine the true cost of such a project.
- Solar on the Landfill: The project is moving into the permitting phase with engineering plans expected to be submitted this week.
- Marijuana: The Town received four applications from Recreational Marijuana Retailers seeking to open retail establishments in Town. This is the second request the Town has issued. The first request resulted in the award of three host community agreements. The proposals are reviewed by a Town Review Team that includes the Economic Development Director, Health Director, Planning Director, Police Chief, and a former member of the Select Board who had continued her service on the Review Team for this round only.

### **Upcoming Meetings and Events:**

- September 2<sup>nd</sup> – Labor Day Holiday
- September 9<sup>th</sup> – Town Council meeting
- September 17<sup>th</sup> – Joint Meeting with School Committee on Fort River School study
- September 21<sup>st</sup> – Town Council retreat
- September 23<sup>rd</sup> – Town Council meeting
- October 7<sup>th</sup> – Town Council meeting
- October 14<sup>th</sup> – Indigenous People’s Day holiday
- October 21<sup>st</sup> – Town Council meeting

#### Other events:

- August 27<sup>th</sup> – University of Massachusetts Community Breakfast
- August 27<sup>th</sup> – First Day Celebration
- August 28<sup>th</sup> – Downtown Parking Forum
- September 6<sup>th</sup> – Opioid Forum at UMass
- September 13<sup>th</sup> – First Responders Picnic
- September 19<sup>th</sup> – BID Block Party