



To: Town Council
Fr: Paul Bockelman
Town Manager
Dt: January 22, 2021
Re: Town Manager Report for January 25, 2021

Town Manager Reports are available on the Town's website here: [Town Manager Reports](#)

Town Manager Update:

- COVID-19:
 - Hot Line: We have received 598 calls and email messages since launching the hotline at the end of August.
 - Early on most of the calls and emails were questions about the mask enforcement zone downtown.
 - During the bulk of September and October people were calling and emailing about off-campus parties.
 - As the numbers increased, the focus of the calls shifted to COVID 19 contagion response:
 - Businesses wanted to know what to do when one of their employees tested positive.
 - People wanted to know where to get tested.
 - Everyone had questions about travel restrictions around the holidays.
 - Since January 1st the focus of the calls and emails has shifted to vaccine roll-out:
 - When can I get a vaccine? Where? How do I sign up?
 - The Senior Center has also been inundated with phone calls from seniors eager to gain access to the vaccine.
 - Ambassadors:
 - The Ambassadors are on a reduced staffing schedule but still present in the downtown area.
 - We were fortunate to utilize Ambassadors at the UMass testing site to support community members seeking testing.
 - Ambassadors have also been assigned to the Town's vaccination site to provide added support and provide early intervention for those who were seeking the vaccine, but may not be eligible.

- Racial Equity:
 - Community Safety Working Group:
 - The Community Safety Working Group has meet weekly through December. They did not meet on December 27th but will meet again on January 6th and then every week in January.
 - The chair and vice chair will provide an update to the Town Council at your meeting on January 25th.
 - The Working Group held two public forums to hear comments from the public on Wednesday, January 13th at 5:30 p.m. and on Saturday, January 16th at 3:00 p.m.
 - The Working Group has submitted a significant number of questions to the Police Chief on a wide range of issues involving police data and operations.
 - I have offered stipends to the members of the Working Group in recognition of the large amount of work and intense demand on the Working Group’s time during their time-limited term.
 - The Working Group is seeking professional consulting services to ensure they can accomplish their work in a timely manner.
 - Core Equity Team:
 - Our Core Equity Team, the employee empowered and led group that is working on racial equity in Town government, continues to actively engage employees. The Team has been meeting weekly to work toward goals and an action plan for the Town Manager’s review.
- Outreach:
 - Coffee with Town Manager: The last Cuppa Joe with Paul featured Business Improvement District Director Gabrielle Gould, Amherst Area Chamber of Commerce Director Claudia Pazmany, and Director of Placemaking & Special Projects at The Mill District Hanna Rechtschaffen. The next coffee is planned for February 12th.
 - Community Chats:
 - The Communications Manager and I continue to host our weekly Community Chats. This week we hosted the Town’s Health Director and Director of Senior Services for a robust conversation on vaccines.
 - Our next Chat will be on Thursday, January 28th.
 - The Community Chats are every Thursday for 30 minutes...and recorded so you can listen at your convenience.
 - Office Hours: I have established monthly virtual office hours via Zoom. This will allow individuals who would like to meet one-on-one with the Town Manager the opportunity to schedule a time during established office hours. The first set of office hours will be Friday, January 29th. Email the Town Manager’s office to schedule a one-on-one time to chat! TownManager @amherstma.gov
 - Web Site:
 - We continue to tweak the updated Town website.
 - We have added all Town Manager reports to the Town Manager page.
 - We will be systematically standardizing committee web pages so that there is a consistency of appearance and inclusion of committee members, committee charge, staff liaison, minutes, links to videos, etc.
 - Engage Amherst: There is much interest in our community engagement platform, “Bang the Table”, that we will utilize to engage members of the public as an additional way for

the public to learn about and comment on specific projects. We will be releasing the platform for the North Amherst Library shortly.

- Town-Gown: The Town and University reopening working group will meet on January 7th and January 21st. We discussed wastewater testing for COVID-19 being conducted by a University professor at the January 7th meeting. We discussed the University's reopening plan at the January 21st meeting.
- Town Staff:
 - Multi-talented Jennifer Moyston was featured in the premier of a new video produced by the MMA at the Massachusetts Municipal Association annual meeting. The video was promoting diversity in the municipal careers, and she was the star of the show! Jennifer's video is featured here: [Mass Municipal Part 2 Compilation Video 1 D3 on Vimeo](#)
 - Ms. Moyston joins Communications Manager Brianna Sunryd as a rising young professional spotlighted by the MMA in its initiative to attract younger and more diverse applicants to municipal employment. Brianna's video is featured here: <https://masstowncareers.org/watch-stories/> and here: <https://masstowncareers.org/>

Departments:

- Public Works:
 - Station Road Bridge Replacement: The Town has been successful in advancing in our request for additional funds from the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency's Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities program to replace the Station Road bridge. The application is now being reviewed at the Federal level by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. This would provide a second source of significant funding for this large capital project.
 - Pelham: We are exploring options with representatives from the Town of Pelham regarding the extension of the Town's sewer system to serve a small segment of customers in Pelham as requested by the Town of Pelham.
 - Leverett: We are working with the Town of Leverett to extend the Town's water line to service homes that have had their wells negatively impacted by the Leverett landfill.
 - Wastewater Treatment Plant Testing: The Town continues to work with the University to test wastewater at the Town's treatment plant for the COVID-19 virus.
- Town Clerk:
 - The Acting Town Clerk has advised Town employees – and elected and appointed officials – that they must complete the [Ethics Commission's Online Training Program](#) within 30 days of becoming an employee, and every two (2) years thereafter within the Commission's compliance cycle from December of every even-numbered year to the first week of the following April. Amherst employees are required to take the online training and submit Certificates of Completion of online training to the Town Clerk no later than April 5, 2021.
 - We have advertised for a new Town Clerk and hope to move expeditiously on the appointment.
 - The Town conducts required conflict-of-interest trainings every other year. 2021 is our year for the trainings, so all appointed and elected officials will be asked to take the online training and test during 2021.

- Public Safety:
 - Ambulance and emergency calls continue to be at an all-time low with calls coming in at about half of what they are normally. Police calls and noise disturbance calls are lower.
 - The Police Department is preparing to work with the University as we prepare for expected spring activities and outdoor gatherings.
- Human Resources:
 - The Town's part-time wage study is under further review by staff to craft a plan to get Town employees to the \$15.00/hour minimum wage as soon as financially feasible. The Town will observe the increase in the state minimum wage on January 1st.
 - The H.R. staff have taken a leadership role in working with the Core Equity Team to plan some foundational/basic training, and then later deeper issue training, related to diversity, equity and inclusion issues.
- Finance:
 - Four Capital Projects: Staff are preparing financing options for the four major capital projects for presentation to the Finance Committee in February.
 - FEMA/CARES:
 - The Town is winding down spending from the first package. Working with department heads including schools and library to allocate funds where the greatest need exists.
 - The CARES program spending has been extended through December 31, 2021. This is good news for the Town.
 - We are monitoring progress on the new a new stimulus package. We know the needs will continue well into 2021.
 - Financial Policies: Town staff are reviewing the Town's Financial Policies for possible updates.
 - Transportation: Parking and enforcement fees are down significantly from prior years, putting strain on the Transportation Enterprise Fund.
 - Cannabis: Town staff are preparing a cannabis update to summarize the financial status of cannabis in Amherst.
 - Inventory: Town staff have implemented a new inventory reporting system to begin in January of 2021
- Sustainability:
 - BRIC Grant Application: We are waiting to hear on our application under the Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) grant for capacity and capacity building. We are seeking funds to study a renewable power supply to serve the community during extended power outages. We are seeking to site a facility within, or closely adjacent to, environmental justice neighborhoods.
- Community Services:
 - Senior Center:
 - The Senior Center is dedicating itself to answering questions. The Senior Center is collecting names of seniors who want to be contacted when for seniors to sign when the vaccine is available. Seniors can call (413) 259-3038 to have their names added to the list.
 - The Senior Center is partnering with the Hadley Senior Center to offer free curbside AARP tax preparation services at Hadley Senior Center for Amherst residents.

- Four nursing students from the University will join the Senior Center to expand the reach of the Senior Center's health services. They will work under the supervision of the Senior Center's registered nurse. They will work remotely to support the wellness of assigned seniors.
- The four nursing students will also contribute to an ongoing project, Senior Walking Loops in Amherst, by providing heart and brain healthy considerations to promote safe movement.
- The Senior Center is welcoming Marina Santiago, a Masters of Social Work candidate, who will be completing her clinical social work fieldwork at the Senior Center. Marina will be working under the supervision of the Director on a number of outreach projects as well as providing remote social work support. Marina grew up in Amherst and shared that her grandmother used to come to the Senior Center when she moved here from Puerto Rico.
- The Director of Senior Services asks us all to Take the Good Neighbor Pledge. Join the #ReachOutMa campaign and perform small acts of kindness. Small Act. Big Impact.
- A Puzzle Loan Library is now a puzzle factory in Holyoke.
- The Director of Senior Services is moving towards conducting a needs assessment of seniors in low income housing and developing supports for aging in place at a time when movement to a long-term care setting carries increasing danger of disease transmission.
- December Dinner Delights: The Amherst Area Chamber of Commerce and Amherst Business Improvement District continue to provide 100 meals twice a week to Amherst families affected by Covid-19. The Town's financial commitment to this program ended at the end of December, but staff continue to support the initiative.
- Town Social Worker: The Town has contracted with Family Outreach of Amherst to secure the services of a social worker to work with families negatively impacted by Covid-19. In the first two weeks of the program, about a dozen families were served. Most are facing multiple issues such as job loss, food insecurity, health needs, and housing needs. The working poor are among the hardest hit members of our community. The upward trend for assistance is anticipated to continue.
- Unhoused Population:
 - The Town's service providers have reached capacity at both sites operated by Craigs Doors indicating the wide need for housing in the area.
 - The Town is well represented at the Western Massachusetts COVID-19 Task Force meeting that meets regularly to discuss the overall situation in Western Massachusetts. There is a commitment to addressing the needs of the unhoused on a regional, instead of a town-by-town, basis. It is important for the Town of Amherst to be part of that regional approach and that the State recognize its responsibility to being an active partner in meeting that need.
 - Town staff have continued internal discussions to find a long-term solution for the unhoused.
- Recreation:
 - We are preparing to study the operations of Cherry Hill Golf Course to prepare plans for its future. I will working with the Recreation Commission to establish an

advisory committee to look at all aspects of golf course operations and management.

- The Recreation Department has developed “Winter Walks” at Groff Park and Mill River Recreation areas.
- Staff continue to work with the School District to develop plans to utilize the Middle School pool for lap swimming. Issues with pool equipment have delayed this initiative.
- Staff are working with the Chamber and the BID to develop creative programming for Winterfest, which is likely to come at a bleak time during February.
- Health Department:
 - Vaccinations
- Economic Development:
 - Chamber Microgrants: The Amherst Area Chamber of Commerce is offering a Winter Microgrant Program.
 - Small Business COVID Recovery Grants Program: The Town has been awarded federal funds through the CARES Act to support local small businesses hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. Valley Community Development Corporation will act as Program Administrator for the application and selection process to award one-time grants up to \$10,000 for businesses located in Amherst. Those interested may visit the [Amherst Small Business COVID Recovery Grants Program webpage](#) for eligibility criteria, resources and full details. The online application portal opened for applications on November 2nd.
 - Licensing:
 - The Board of License Commissioners is working to simplify and clarify the licensing process and is preparing for the hopeful resurgence of social and economic activity after the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - After last year adopting regulations regarding war veterans’ clubs and setting up a process to approve alcohol service in temporary outdoor dining areas, the Board is working on the following projects:
 - Drafting Regulations Relating to Alcohol Service on Town Commons & Public Property. After the Town Council amended the General Bylaws in May of 2020 to allow for open containers of alcohol on public property at events licensed by the Board of License Commissioners, the Board has been considering what additional criteria they will use to evaluate the suitability of an application for a Special Short-Term (One-Day) Liquor License compared to a typical application on private property. The Board is seeking to establish clear regulations by late Spring 2021 to accommodate any potential outdoor events this summer.
 - Private Club Regulations. The Board set out to adopt regulations relating to establishments with Club-type On-Premises Liquor Licenses that are clearer than the sometimes ambiguous M.G.L. c. 138 to make sure that expectations are clear to all. The Board adopted regulations in October 2020 relating to Veterans’ Clubs, but these regulations do not cover private clubs not affiliated with a veterans’ organization. While Amherst does not currently have any nonveteran private clubs, the Board is looking to adopt regulations on their conduct in a proactive

manner. Also relevant is the fact that private clubs have been created in other municipalities in the Commonwealth as a way to allow a sort of on-premises marijuana smoking bar.

- **Adult Use Marijuana Licensing.** While Adult Use Marijuana establishments are heavily regulated on both the state and local levels, the regulatory tools that municipalities have generally available – Host Community Agreements and Zoning Special Permits – do not have direct, immediate enforcement mechanisms like liquor licenses do. While all of the marijuana establishments that have opened in Amherst so far have been cooperative with Town officials and abided by all relevant laws, the Board is keen to have an enforcement mechanism available to the Town should a problem develop with one of the marijuana establishments. Adopting regulations to establish a local Marijuana License would provide the Town with those enforcement mechanisms. The Board will discuss the regulation and consult with other Town stakeholders on what they would like to see included in the regulation.
- **Short-Term Rentals & Rental Registration.** The Residential Rental Property Bylaw, passed in 2013, has been useful in helping Inspection Services staff to oversee problem & nuisance rental properties. However, after eight years, the Bylaw is starting to show its age. Certain parts of the bylaw have proven insufficient for Inspection Services’ needs, and the Bylaw does not touch upon Internet short-term rental services such as Airbnb have drafted an amended bylaw that adopts gender neutral language & clarifies some ambiguous phrases as a jumping off point. The Building Commissioner is reviewing the draft provided by the Board and is considering what alterations to the Bylaw would assist Inspection Services oversee problem rental properties.
- **Guidelines for Liquor License Decisions.** The Board reviewed several applications for liquor license amendments, it was suggested that the Board adopt a clear set of criteria that they use to evaluate liquor license applications. This would allow the Board to set clearer expectations for applicants and to avoid claims of being arbitrary or capricious if they feel they need to deny an application.
- **Adopt Clearer Regulations on Lunch Carts.** The existing, unclear regulations on Lunch Carts have been a thorn in the side of the Board of License Commissioners and the Select Board before them for a long time. They are not dispositive in the event of a conflict, with multiple lunch cart licensees wishing to use the same spot; they are also unclear on what regulatory oversight could or should be exercised if a Lunch Cart licensee would like to serve food in an area not listed on the application page. The Board hopes to adopt clearer regulations by Summer 2021 with the hopes of increased outdoor activity and events in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Other projects.** The Board is reviewing fee schedules and live entertainment licensees. In addition to these ongoing projects, the Board

has been

maintaining a fast pace of processing liquor license applications, handling five applications in the last two months alone.

- Online Application. Town staff have developed an OpenGov application created for Short-Term Liquor Licenses to make the process for both applicants and staff easier than in the past.
- Conservation and Development:
 - The Town received notice that it has been awarded \$825,000 from the Massachusetts Community Development Block Grant Mini-Entitlement program. We are awaiting guidance from the Department of Housing and Community Development for guidance on this award.
 - The State Department of Housing and Community Development provided updates to the Governor's [Eviction Diversion Initiative](#). These changes include:
 - Creating an application process for landlords, who own up to 20 units in Massachusetts, to apply directly for RAFT/ERMA on behalf of tenants. [More information here.](#)
 - Increasing the maximum benefit for all RAFT/ERMA eligible households to \$10,000.
 - Removing the recent rule that a landlord had to commit to preserving tenancy for 6 months to access more than \$4,000 in RAFT.
 - Providing access to free legal services which are available to eligible tenants and low-income landlords in owner-occupied 2-3 family homes through the Covid Eviction Legal Help Program (CELHP). [More information available here.](#)
 - Providing free community mediation services for eligible tenants and landlords who need help in reaching agreements that work for both of them. [More information available here.](#)
 - ADA Transition Plan: Consultants are finalizing a draft of the transition plan. This plan will be reviewed with the Disability Access Advisory Committee. We will then utilize the plan as a tool to prioritize ADA improvements in Town buildings and public spaces.
- Information Technology (I.T.):
 - Town I.T. staff have been especially challenged to meet the large number of needs of Town staff seeking to work remotely and online. (The I.T. department has one of its staff on paternity leave.)

Delegated Authority (December 2020):

- Short-Term Event Uses of Town Commons:
 - December 22nd for up to three months: winter lighting on the North Common for Business Improvement District
- Short-Term Parking Requests: None
- Short-Term Road or Sidewalk Closures:
 - February 5-7, Boltwood Avenue use for drive-by viewing of WinterFest ice sculptures sponsored by the Business Improvement District and the Recreation Department
- Other: Soofa signs, previously approved by the Town Council, have been installed along with solar charging stations. See press release here:
<https://www.amherstma.gov/civicalerts.aspx?aid=2799>

Major Capital Projects:

- DPW/Fire: Town staff are working on a Request for Proposals for a location for the public works facility and working on a Request for Qualifications for a designer for the fire station on South Pleasant Street.
- Schools: The Elementary School Building Committee is expecting a response from the MSBA on its enrollment projections. The response will be discussed at the next Committee meeting on January 13th.
- Library: The Finance Director, Library Director and I met with staff of the Board of Library Commissioners to review the requirements and schedule for the grant that will be awarded to the Town for renovations to the Jones Library.

Project Update:

- Kendrick Park Playground: The work will be done in the spring as work must be completed by June 30, 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: Staff met with the TSO Committee on December 17th. The next meeting with TSO will be on January 28th.
- Hickory Ridge: No new developments.
- East Street School: No developments
- North Amherst Library:
 - The trees behind the library were removed because they sit where the addition's north wall will be. They needed to come down for the addition and removing them now makes the work we have to do this week easier. They were not shade trees and do not fall under There was a drilling rig at the library taking soil samples to be used in designing the foundation for the library.
 - DPW are removing the stumps and digging one or two test pits next to the existing wall.
 - With this work, we should have all the information needed to complete the design and there will not be a lot more activity until construction.
 - I have invited five members to advise me on the project: Library Trustee Alex Lefebvre, Library Director Sharon Sharry, Superintendent of Public Works Guilford Mooring, former president of the Jones Library Trustees Molly Turner, and North Amherst architect Laura Fitch.
- Solar on the Landfill: We are projecting construction to begin in November of 2021 and operation to begin in April of 2022.
- Pomeroy Village MassWorks Grant: I will present a memo to the Town Council at its January 4th meeting outlining plans for decision-making and public engagement on this important project that has received significant funding from the State.

Upcoming Meetings and Events:

- February 1st – District 4 meeting
- February 4th – Open Meeting of the Residents and School Committee
- February 5th – District 5 meeting
- February 5-6 – Modified WinterFest with Ice Sculptures on the Town Common

- February 8th – Town Council meeting
- February 11th – District 2 meeting
- February 15th – Presidents’ Day holiday
- February 22nd – Town Council meeting
- March 8th – Town Council meeting
- March 22nd – Town Council meeting



To: All Town of Amherst Municipal Employees
From: Susan Audette, Acting Town Clerk
Date: January 11, 2021
RE: 2021 Conflict of Interest Law Compliance

The Conflict of Interest Law (MGL c.268A, §27) requires that all municipal employees annually receive a [Summary of the Conflict of Interest Law](#), and **within ten (10) business days of receipt**, complete and file an Acknowledgement of Receipt of the Summary with the Town Clerk. The law defines a municipal employee as “a person performing services for or holding an office, position, employment or membership in a municipal agency, whether by election, appointment, contract of hire or engagement, whether serving with or without compensation, on a full, regular, part-time, intermittent, or consultant basis...” This includes appointed and elected municipal board, committee and commission members.

The law also requires every municipal employee to complete the [Ethics Commission’s Online Training Program](#) within 30 days of becoming an employee, and every two (2) years thereafter within the Commission’s compliance cycle from December of every even-numbered year to the first week of the following April. Amherst employees are required to take the online training and submit Certificates of Completion of online training to the Town Clerk **no later than Monday, April 5, 2021.**

These requirements are waived ONLY for the exempt municipal positions shown on page 2 of this memo.

REQUIRED ACTIONS

- 1) **Please promptly forward this memorandum and the Summary of the Conflict of Interest Law to:**
 - a. ALL employees in your department required to comply with the education and training requirements. Please provide a computer and printer for the online training.
 - b. ALL town board, committee and commission members your department serves as liaison. Online training may be done, and certificates printed, using one’s own personal computer and printer.
- 2) **Please instruct every employee in your department, and every board, committee and commission member your department serves as liaison:**
 - a. To return their Acknowledgement of Receipt to the Town Clerk **no later than Friday, February 5, 2021.** *The Acknowledgement form is located on the last page of the Summary.*
 - b. To take the online training (<http://www.muniprogram.eth.state.ma.us>), print and return their Certificate of Completion to the Town Clerk **no later than Monday, April 5, 2021.**

A listing of municipal employees who remain non-compliant at the end of the compliance periods will be furnished to each department head for follow-up. Please contact me with any questions.

Thank you.

Attachments: Summary of the Conflict of Interest Law, Acknowledgement of Receipt, Notice to Employees

EXAMPLES OF MUNICIPAL POSITIONS EXEMPT FROM CONFLICT OF INTEREST EDUCATION & TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

- 1) Unpaid volunteer positions in which employees do not have or exercise governmental authority and do not participate in or have responsibility for government decision-making, contracting, hiring, investigation or any other discretionary governmental action:
 - Library volunteer positions in which employees re-shelve books or read books to children during a story hour;
 - School volunteer positions in which employees come into the schools a few times a year to help with parties and projects, shelve books in the school library, or chaperone field trips and other school events;
 - Volunteer positions in which employees pick up litter at parks or beaches, or participate in a town "Clean Up Day";
 - Senior Center or Parks and Recreation volunteer teacher positions;
 - Positions in which volunteers assist with a town event by selling tickets, engaging in face painting, or helping "police" the grounds.

- 2) Short-term temporary or seasonal compensated positions in which employees do not have or exercise governmental authority and do not participate in or have responsibility for government decision-making, contracting, hiring, investigation or any other discretionary governmental action.
 - Poll worker positions;
 - Non-supervisory seasonal positions such as lifeguards and snowplow operators;
 - Substitute teachers who work less than one day per week;
 - Participants in senior citizen tax abatement programs (MGL c.59, §5K), and Senior Corps, the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program, Foster Grandparents, Senior Companions and comparable programs;
 - Medical Reserve Corps volunteers;
 - High school, college and graduate school students participating in summer and work-study employment, whether paid or unpaid;

- Participants in programs of the Department of Mental Health who are patients in a therapeutic program that includes employment;
- Individual vendors and contractors to public agencies who provide one day or less of services per calendar year;
- Participants in volunteer programs whose names are not available or known to any public agency, such as, for instance, town residents who help shovel snow or clean up after a flood.