



To: Town Council  
Fr: Paul Bockelman  
Town Manager  
Dt: June 5, 2021  
Re: Town Manager Report for June 7, 2021

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All Town Manager Reports are available on the Town's website here:  
<https://www.amherstma.gov/Archive.aspx?AMID=240>

**Town Manager Update:**

- COVID-19:
  - The Governor lifted all remaining COVID-19 restrictions effective May 29.
  - The Governor will end the State of Emergency on June 15.
  - On May 25<sup>th</sup>, the Governor filed legislation to extend certain emergency measures currently in place by executive order that are set to expire on June 15, when the state of emergency will be rescinded. The governor's legislation (S. 2452) would extend measures providing for a temporary suspension of certain open meeting law requirements, special permits for expanded outdoor dining, and billing protections for COVID-19 patients. Temporarily extending these measures, the governor said, would give communities and businesses time to transition, but extending them requires legislation. The Town and the MMA have been advocating for the permanent extension of many pandemic rules.
  - The Town of Amherst State of Emergency, which I issued on March 16, 2020 will be rescinded on June 15<sup>th</sup> simultaneous with the Governor's lifting of the State of Emergency in the State.
- Vaccination:
  - The Town continues to operate vaccination clinics. We will wind-down our clinics, offering second doses, and likely will halt clinics during July and August. Vaccine will still be available at the mass vaccination site in Springfield and at local pharmacies.
  - Health Department staff are developing plans to reach those who have not been able to be vaccinated including churches, food markets, etc. and offering incentives for vaccination.
  - The Health Department has continued to work with the School Department to offer special dedicated vaccine clinics for high school students at the high school and middle school students at the middle school.

- Town Hall:

- Town Hall and other offices reopened to the public for individual transactions on June 1<sup>st</sup>. We will maintain basic safety protocols as we transition to being fully reopened.
- With the Governor's State of Emergency being lifted as of June 15<sup>th</sup>, Town boards and committees will be required to meet in person unless there is new legislation to permit virtual meetings through the summer. It is important to maintain consistency in how we interact with the public so that the public understands whether meetings are virtual or in-person and there is consistency across the Town's boards and committees.
- The Town will return to the pre-existing Remote Participation



Policy that requires the presence of the chair and a quorum to meet. I am hoping the Legislature will act quickly to extend the Chair and quorum physical presence pieces beyond the life of the State of Emergency. Members of the Town Council have been proactive on this issue.

- Outreach:

- Cuppa Joe with Paul: The next Cuppa Joe is scheduled for Friday, June 25<sup>th</sup> in person, likely at an outdoor location.
- Community Chats: We are transitioning the weekly Community Chats to a new form of communicating with the public.
- Office hours: I continue to offer virtual office hours to those who are interested in talking one-on-one with me.

- Town-Gown:

- University of Massachusetts at Amherst: The Reopening Committee met on May 27<sup>th</sup>, the last time we felt it needed to meet until later in the summer.
- Amherst College: The College held its commencement on May 30<sup>th</sup>.
- Hampshire College: The College held a virtual commencement on May 15<sup>th</sup> with various programs and events for graduating students immediately prior to the commencement program.

- Racial Equity:

- Community Safety Working Group:
  - The Working Group submitted Part A of its final report to the Town Manager and made presentations to the Town Council and Finance Committee meetings.

- Core Equity Team: The Core Equity Team has been assembling small groups of employees to participate in trainings.
- Reparations: I met with representatives from Reparations 4 Amherst group and discussed ways the Town could utilize funds to support the work that they are doing following proper procurement and contracting rules.

## Departments:

- Finance:
  - Budget: The Town's operating budget and capital improvement program were presented to the Town Council on May 3<sup>rd</sup>. All material is available online.
- Public Works:
  - Waterline Extension to Leverett: Work to extend the water line from North Amherst into the Town of Leverett is expected to begin in the near future.
  - Mill River Recreation Area: DPW crews have been working on the basketball courts and are preparing to install two full-length and two half-court basketball courts. They will be repaved when other paving work is being done in Town.
  - Groff Park Spray Park: The Groff Park Spray Park opened on May 28<sup>th</sup> and has been very popular, especially with the warmer weather!



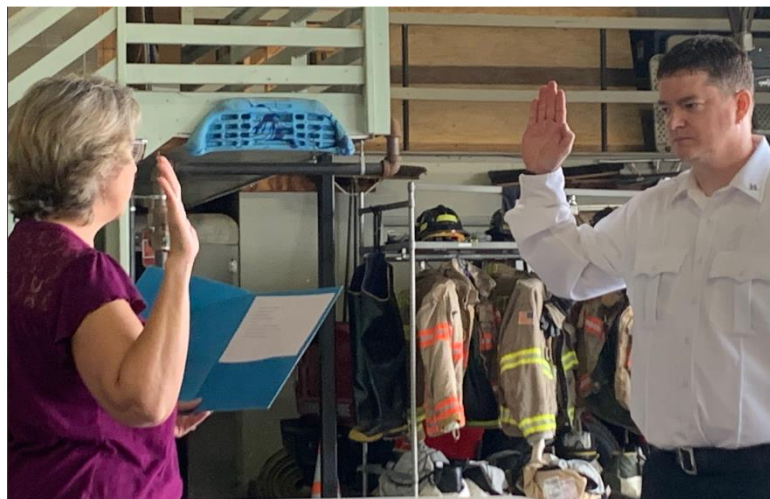
- Road construction projects: The major road construction project is expected to begin this week. This includes paving Henry Street, Bridge Street, and part of Pine Street. The DPW was successful in negotiating some difficult permitting issues with the railroad.
- Town Clerk:
  - Voter Veto Petition: The Town Clerk's office has been devoting large amounts of time responding to requests for information from proponents of the petition. The Board of Registrars met on Friday but made no decisions. They meet again on Monday.
- Sustainability:
  - We have received two proposals to provide municipal aggregation consulting services for the Town of Amherst, City of Northampton, and Town of Pelham. I am reviewing the two proposals and expect to award the contract shortly.

- Public Safety:

- Fire:

- Firefighter David Clooney was sworn in as the Town’s newest Fire Captain.

Captain Clooney has been a contributing to the Department since he was a student at the University and has been a full-time firefighter since 2000. He was awarded “Firefighter of the Year” by the Governor in 2000/2001 for his assistance at a serious fire in Hudson,



Massachusetts. Here, he is being sworn in by the Town Clerk at a ceremony at the North Fire Station as his father and family watched along with Town Hall staff and members of the Fire Department.

- The Town is seeking candidates to fill the two current vacancies. The Fire Chief anticipates that hiring new firefighters will be a challenge and the Town is actively recruiting strong candidates.
      - Four additional firefighter/EMTs are on duty to support the Department’s response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

- Police: The Police Chief and his staff have been working with Law Enforcement Action Partnership (<https://lawenforcementactionpartnership.org/alternatives911/>) cited by the Community Safety Working Group to analyze call data as the first step in developing a Community Responder program. “The Law Enforcement Action Partnership’s mission is to unite and mobilize the voice of law enforcement in support of drug policy and criminal justice reforms that will make communities safer by focusing law enforcement resources on the greatest threats to public safety, promoting alternatives to arrest and incarceration, addressing the root causes of crime, and working toward healing police-community relations.”

- Human Resources/Human Rights:

- Credit to our talented H.R. Department for being the catalyst for providing gift baskets to our first responders. We are providing acknowledgements to all Town staff throughout the month of June. This work is all funded privately.
  - Human Resources are recruiting for Recreation Director and numerous other positions.

- The Human Rights Commissions has initiated the Human Rights Youth Heroism Awards, an annual celebration of Amherst area youth. 2021 represents the fourteenth year of these awards! The Commission celebrated the youth who have shown a special gift from the heart or an ability to love and care for one another. The awards are presented to young people who have demonstrated acts of kindness, usefulness, social courage and/or community service within their families, their schools, or the community.
- The Human Rights Commission will celebrated this year's Heroes at its annual community picnic Saturday June 5<sup>th</sup>.



- Community Services:

- Recreation: Assistant Town Manager David Ziomek is also serving as the acting Recreation Director. Applicants for the Recreation Director have been received and interviewing has begun.
- Health: The Health Director continues to make connections with other Health Departments in nearby communities developing a needed regional approach to serving the public health needs of Hampshire County.
- Senior Center: The Senior Center has reopened for appointment events such as exercise classes. The response has been overwhelmingly heart-warming...and needed by our seniors.
- Unhoused Population:
  - The new Homelessness and Rehousing Task Force is beginning to meet with most members meeting on May 28<sup>th</sup>. The next meeting is this week. The group includes (I am recruiting one other person):
    - Mary Beth Ogulewicz, Director of Senior Services (facilitator);
    - Kevin Noonan, Executive Director of Craigs Doors;
    - Jane Mairs, board member of Craigs Doors;
    - Lev Ben Ezra, Executive Director of The Survival Center;
    - Allegra Clark, Amherst Affordable Housing Trust;
    - Jay Levy, Eliot Community Human Services;
    - Kim Alli, Vice President of Greenfield Savings Bank;
    - David Ziomek, Assistant Town Manager.
  - We have allocated \$20,000 in CARES Act funds to Craig's Doors to make modifications to the existing trailer to accommodate a handicapped accessible shower. This is the quickest, most efficient way to provide a shower facility without delays in permitting.

- The Director of Senior Services and I participated in a program put on by the Western Massachusetts Network to End Homelessness on June 3<sup>rd</sup>. Several hundred people participated in this virtual event including many State legislators.
  - Economic Development:
    - The Business Improvement District Block Party is being planned for September 16<sup>th</sup>.
    - The Amherst Center Cultural District is scheduled to come to the Town Council for approval before the end of July.
    - The Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (PVRTA) is holding public hearings on several changes including: making Senior Fare-Free Tuesdays permanent; Pilot Monthly Fare Capping at \$54 using PVRTA's Mobile Fare Payment App.; MassDOT BusPlus Fare Structure for Amherst/Worcester Intercity Route. The public is invited to comment on June 10<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 a.m. and again at 3:00 p.m. Notice is posted on the Town's website. Here are the links: Join a Public Hearing from your computer, tablet or smartphone by visiting: [www.gotomeeting.com/meeting/join-meeting](http://www.gotomeeting.com/meeting/join-meeting) GoToMeeting ID: 534591493 or Phone #: +1 (669) 224-3412 Access Code: 534-591-493
- Conservation and Development:
  - Planning:
    - A zoning change that would impose a moratorium on new buildings in certain zones has been submitted. Amendments to the Inclusionary Zoning Bylaw were also reviewed. A joint public hearing of the Planning Board and the Council's CRC Committee was held on May 19<sup>th</sup>.
    - At its meeting, the Planning Board voted 6-0 and 1 absent to support the Proposed Inclusionary Zoning Bylaw. In addition, the Planning Board voted 6-0 and 1 absent to not support the proposed Temporary Moratorium Bylaw.
    - Here is the Planning Website on the zoning amendments currently being considered: <https://www.amherstma.gov/3603/2021-Zoning-Amendments>
- Information Technology (I.T.):
  - The I.T. Department has reviewed options for conducting in-person, fully remote, and hybrid meetings. Hybrid (Zoom and in-person) can only be held in the Town Room due to the required equipment. Additional staff will be needed to support the operation of these meetings.

**Delegated Authority (April 2021):**

- Short-Term Event Uses of Town Commons:
  - Use of East Street Common for the Mobile Market. This request will come to the Town Council when their timing exceeds the number of days permitted to be approved by the Town Manager.
- Short-Term Parking Requests: None
- Short-Term Road or Sidewalk Closures:
  - Use of the public way on East Hadley Road for the Mobile Market. This request will come to the Town Council when their timing exceeds the number of days permitted to be approved by the Town Manager.

## Major Capital Projects:

- DPW Building/Fire Building: The Request for Proposals for a site for a new Department of Public Works building has been advertised. Proposals were due on June 4<sup>th</sup>.
- Schools:
  - The MSBA found the documents provided in conjunction with other materials provided by the District to be sufficient for the MSBA to vote on the Town's choice of Owner's Project Manager (OPM).
  - The MSBA's OPM Review Panel meeting Monday, June 7<sup>th</sup>. I anticipate approval of our OPM at that meeting.
- Library:
  - Town Council approved the borrowing and CPA funds on April 5<sup>th</sup>.
  - A Voter Veto petition was initiated but failed to produce enough signatures.
  - The petitioners brought a complaint to the Superior Court requesting (i) additional time to submit signatures, (ii) a reduction in the number of signatures needed, and (iii) permission to submit signatures electronically. The hearing on this case was held on Wednesday, April 28<sup>th</sup>.
  - The Judge in the case denied the request by the plaintiffs.
  - I submitted all signed documents to the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners prior to the required April 30<sup>th</sup> deadline to receive funds this year.
  - The plaintiffs submitted a document to the Court stating that, "Pursuant to Mass. R. Civ. P. a1(a)(1)(i), the Plaintiffs hereby dismiss the above-captioned action without prejudice" thus dismissing the case against the Town.
  - We will be creating a Building Committee to oversee the project.
  - A new complaint was filed titled: Terry Y. Allen, et al. v. Board of Registrars of the Town of Amherst. The Town will be responding to this complaint within the designated timeframe.

## Project Update:

- Kendrick Park Playground: There is still no time frame for delivery of the granite needed, but the DPW has developed some work-arounds to maintain progress on the project. This playground will be a huge addition to the Town's infrastructure.
- Dog Park: Our contractor is wrapping up another project in the area and then will be moving crews to this project. The first order of business is to complete screening of 6000cy of fill and transport it to the site. The project is very straightforward with grading, water lines, fencing, walkways and parking. Once the contractor is on site, things will move quickly.
- Performing Arts Shell on the Town Common: No developments.
- Parking Structure on Town Land at North Pleasant Street Parking Lot: We are proposing to rezone parcel 14A-33 on North Prospect St., currently used as a municipal parking lot, from RG to BG. This will open the opportunity for the development of a new parking structure on that lot. This rezoning does not mean that lot *will* become a parking structure, but creates the opportunity for such use should the Town decide to pursue that option.
- North Common Restoration/Main Street Parking Lot:
  - The Council held a public hearing on the proposed parking changes on May 24<sup>th</sup>.
  - Work will begin on the schematic drawings.

- Congressman McGovern has listed additional work on the roadways surrounding the Town Common for funding as stated above.
- Town staff continue to seek out additional sources of funds to substitute or supplement the Town's current funding plan.
- **Hickory Ridge:** A Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) agreement is being negotiated with the property owner for the solar that is proposed for the site. The solar project and its final approval by the State is the major issue still in play for this project.
- **North Amherst Library:**
  - The architect is working on the construction documents, which we will need for bidding.
  - We will be holding a public meeting to review the latest documents.
  - The project page is now up and available for public comment. It can be found here: <https://engageamherst.org/north-amherst-library-project>
- **Pomeroy Village MassWorks Grant:** The Town Council approved the development of plans for a roundabout at this intersection.
- **Solar on the Landfill:** In the coming months, crews will be working on the Northern Landfill to mow, set the access road, and set preliminary sediment control. The "real" construction work is scheduled for August, along with the fence around the Southern Landfill.
- **Belchertown Road/East Street School:** Town staff are preparing an RFP that will be issued by the end of June. We anticipate a fair amount of interest from non-profits in this opportunity to create additional affordable housing in Town.
- **Downtown Improvements:**
  - **Pleasant Walkway:** The Pleasant Walkway that connects North Pleasant Street with the Bangs Parking Lot is under construction. The work will eliminate the broken concrete and make the area fully accessible. This was initiated by the Council on Aging and funding by a grant secured by the Planning Department.
  - **Bangs Center Ramp:** Bids have been received within the budget for this project which will install an ADA accessible ramp on the south side of the Bangs Center toward Clark House and the Musante Health Center entrance. This is a grant-funded project by our talented grant-writing team. We hope to have the project completed during the summer.
  - **Crosswalks and Pleasant Walk:** Work to rebuild three existing crosswalks on North Pleasant Street and the walkway that connects the Bangs Parking Lot to North Pleasant Street will begin in the very near future. These projects are funded by a grant obtained by our grant-writers combined with some capital funds allocated for sidewalk improvements.





**Upcoming Meetings and Events:**

- June 18<sup>th</sup> – Juneteenth holiday celebrated
- June 19<sup>th</sup> – Juneteenth Events
- June 21<sup>st</sup> – Town Council meeting
- July 5<sup>th</sup> – Independence Day

