



To: Town Council
Fr: Paul Bockelman
Town Manager
Dt: July 30, 2021
Re: Town Manager Report for August 2, 2021

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

Town Manager Update:

- Vaccination:
 - Health Department staff are reaching out to those who have not been able to be vaccinated:
 - Town staff held a vaccination clinic at The Boulders from 10-12 on July 18th.
 - The State MassVax bus was in Town on June 27th with stops at Renew (South Point); Colonial Village; and on the Spring Street parking lot.
 - The State MassVax bus will return to Town on July 18th at the same locations/times.
 - Health staff have co-located with the Mobile Markets to offer vaccinations to people who want them after visiting the Mobile Market.
- Community Engagement:
 - Community Engagement with University of Massachusetts:
 - The Town is working with University of Massachusetts at Amherst College of Information and Computer Sciences (CICS) Assistant Professor Narges Mahyar, Assistant Research Professor Ali Sarvghad, and Associate Professor Ethan Zuckerman (jointly appointed with the School of Public Policy), along with Distinguished Professor Jane Fountain of the School of Public Policy, utilizing a seed grant from the University's Institute of Diversity Sciences (IDS) for a project investigating whether digital technologies can help increase public participation in municipal government and civic life.
 - The researchers, working with Town staff and others, will field-test new techniques as we look at the use of outdoor space in the downtown area, specifically connected with expected funding coming to the Town from Congressman McGovern's directed funding.

- “Community engagement is imperative for participatory democracy, yet difficult to achieve,” the researchers say in a description of the project. “Participating in town halls and public meetings can be difficult for all citizens—and poses particular challenges for diverse and marginalized populations. Some of these challenges include participants’ apprehension towards confrontation, lack of confidence in articulating viewpoints, shyness, discussions hijacked by outspoken individuals, and lack of time.”
 - Professor Mahyar has developed several community-centered tools to address those problems. For this project, the researchers will build on the Town’s existing EngageAmherst website as a the starting point and may use the [CommunityClick](#) tool previously developed by Mahyar and Sarvghad, which allows community members to silently and anonymously participate in public discussions in real time, and a social network that allows community engagement during and after public meetings.
 - The research team will implement the tools and collect data in the Town and in the City of Holyoke. Using the data, they will analyze whether the digital tools led to more equitable participation in local government, looking closely at the relationships between civic participation and gender, race, education, and ethnicity. The results will be used to inform the development of new technologies to support equitable participation. The team also plans to expand the project to other communities.
 - I credit the Town Councilors who facilitated this connection and the Town staff for its active participation in this project.
 - Cuppa Joe with Paul: I held a Cuppa Joe with Paul on Friday, July 16th on the Town Common. Community Participation Officers and a couple Town Councilors joined.
 - Municipal Immigrant Support Network: I participated in the inaugural meeting of the Municipal Immigrant Support Network, a working group of municipal managers and mayors organized by Mayor Janey of Boston and Mayor Curtatone of Somerville. This group of municipal leaders will be addressing issues facing the immigrant population and will include exploration and advocacy around vaccine efforts & language access; citizenship; and cash assistance programs.
- University/College Relations:
 - Hampshire College:
 - The Hampshire College Board of Trustees unanimously agreed to offer President Ed Wingenbach a five-year extension of his appointment.
 - Since joining the College in 2019, President Wingenbach successfully developed a viable multi-year path to financial sustainability; restructured the operating budget, working collaboratively and transparently with faculty and staff to meet expense targets; oversaw the successful launch of the \$60M *Change in the Making* campaign, which has already generated more than \$25M in new commitments to the College; led a community-wide process to reimagine and reinvigorate an innovative student academic experience; rebuilt a dynamic and experienced senior leadership team; maintained continuing accreditation with NECHE, and navigated the Covid-19 crisis on campus, allowing students a

residential educational experience while maintaining rigorous public health and safety standards.

- President Wingenbach has been a stalwart supporter of the Town, a good communicator, and an exceptional leader especially when offering campus facilities to support members of our unhoused population who may have needed shelter if diagnosed with the COVID-19 disease early during the pandemic.
- New students move-in day is August 26
- Returning students move-in days are August 28 and 29
- Amherst College:
 - Freshmen move-in day is August 25
 - Move-in days for all other classes is August 28 and 29
- University of Massachusetts:
 - Freshmen move-in day is August 27
 - Transfer Students move-in day is August 28
 - All remaining students move-in day is August 29
- Racial Equity:
 - Community Safety Working Group: At its request, I have extended the deadline for the Working Group to conclude its work by two months, November 1st.
 - Reparations: We are soliciting representatives to serve on the newly created African Heritage Reparations Assembly. I am assembling an interview team to help select the appointees.
 - Training:
 - I and other staff participated in the National League of Cities’ Race, Equity, and Leadership (REAL) program, a 3-part racial equity training series on normalizing, organizing, and operationalizing racial equity within cities and towns.
 - NLC’s REAL program advises local leaders across the nation on how to address and advance racial equity in our communities.
 - This webinar is part of REAL’s “100 series” that focuses on normalizing a shared understanding of the history of institutional and structural racism in America. The content provides leaders with a shared language for racial equity, examines existing racial disparities in cities and towns and the implications for advancing racial equity, and introduces important concepts and tools for organizing and operationalizing racial equity.
 - I have attended the first two webinars which were offered to municipal leaders in Massachusetts and six other state municipal associations in New England and New York.
 - The third webinar was a “town hall discussion,” specifically for Massachusetts municipal officials, which will allow participants to connect and discuss the information, concepts, and questions from the previous webinars.

Departments:

- Finance:
 - Budget: Town staff are in a busy period as they close out FY21 and set-up the newly approved FY22 budget. There is an avalanche of work to process FY21 invoices, FY22 procurements, and salary adjustments.

- Public Works:
 - Street Sweeping: The Department of Public Works has begun sweeping the main routes and hills that receive the most sand during the winter months. After completing these areas the DPW will begin sweeping the various sections of town, if all goes well this will start on April 1, 2021.
 - Below are the areas that will be swept and the order they will be done in.
 - Main Roadways: Amity Street, Bay Rd, East Hadley Rd, East Leverett Rd, East Pleasant St, Henry St, Leverett Rd, Meadow St, North East St, North Pleasant St, Pelham Rd, Pine St, Rte 9 from Amherst Center to Belchertown town line, Rte 116 (Snell to Country Corners Rd), South East St, South Pleasant St to Snell St, Sunderland Rd, Triangle St, West Bay Road.
 - Central – East includes: Chestnut, High, Canton Ave., Churchill, Clifton Ave., Cottage, Dickinson, Eames Ave., East St. Common, Gray, Grove, Harvard Ave., North Whitney, Hills Rd., Red Gate Lane, Kellogg Ave., Lessey, South Whitney, Spring, Taylor, Mt. Pleasant, Pleasant Court, Pokeberry Ridge, Salem, Seelye, Shumway, Smith, Strong St, Maplewood development , Windridge Terrace, Hedgerow, Arbor Way and Wildwood Lane.
 - Central – West includes: Lincoln Ave. and all streets in between the boundary of Massachusetts Ave and Northampton Rd. (Allen, Beston, Blue Hills Rd., Cosby, Cows Lane, Dana Pl., Dana St., Elm, Fearing, Gaylord, Hallock, Kendrick, McClellan, McClure, Nutting Ave, Paige, Phillips, North & South Prospect, and Sunset.), Butterfield Terrace, Greenleaves.
 - South Amherst. All streets proceeding from Northampton Rd. (south), Baker, Blakefield, Canterbury Lane, Carriage Rd., Columbia Dr., Country Corners Rd.,, Elf Hill, Farmington Rd., Glendale Rd., Harris Mt., Hillcrest, Hitchcock, Hulst Rd., Jeffery Lane, Longmeadow Dr., Memorial Drive, Middle St., Mill Lane, Mount Holyoke Dr., Orchard Dr., Pomeroy Lane and developments off Pomeroy Lane, Pondview Dr., Potwine Lane, Rambling Road, Shays St., Stagecoach Road, , West Pomeroy Lane, Woodside, Walnut.
 - East Side route includes: all of Echo Hill, all of Amherst Woods, Logtown Rd., Hall Dr, Jenks, Ward, Thayer, Bayberry Lane), Old Belchertown Rd., Old Farms Rd., Station Rd., Cortland Dr., Iduna Lane, Stanley Street & Misty Meadows, Valley View Circle.
 - North Amherst. All streets proceeding from Berkshire Terrace, Blackberry Lane, Bridge St., Cherry Lane, Cows Rd., Fairfield St., Farview Way, Fisher, Flat Hills Rd., Grantwood Dr., Harlow Dr., Harris, Hitching Post, Hobart Lane,, Lilac Lane, Market Hill Rd., Moorland, Old Montague Rd., Old Town Road, Plumtree, Puffer Circle, Pulpit Hill Rd., Rolling Ridge, Rosemary, Russellville Road, Sand Hill Rd., Sheerman Lane, State St., Summer Street, Shutesbury Rd., Valley Lane and Van Meter.
 - Waterline Extension to Leverett: Work to extend the water line from North Amherst into the Town of Leverett is expected to begin very soon.
 - Mill River Recreation Area: Work on the basketball courts to install two full-length and two half-court basketball courts is awaiting the paving contractor. They will be repaved during the paving projects happening now in Town.

- Road projects:
 - The major road construction projects continue with paving the final coat on Henry Street, Bridge Street, and part of Pine Street.
- Town Clerk:
 - Today, Governor Baker signed a supplemental budget that included provisions to extend early voting through Dec. 15, 2021. It:
 - Extends no-excuse absentee voting for all elections through Dec. 15, 2021;
 - Authorizes in-person early voting for any regular or special municipal preliminary, primary or general election on or before Dec. 15, 2021;
 - Authorizes early voting by mail for any regular or special or state preliminary primary or general election on or before Dec. 15, 2021;
 - Extends the right of voters ordered to quarantine to select an alternative location for delivery of ballots for annual or special municipal or state primary or election held on or before Dec. 15, 2021;
 - Allows a select board, board of selectmen, town council or city council — after a public hearing and by recorded and public vote at least 45 days prior to the date of an election — to opt-out of allowing early voting by mail for any annual or special municipal preliminary or municipal election. Unless told otherwise, we will be implementing these newly allowed changes.
 - These COVID pandemic-related changes to election procedures, initially made in spring 2020, were extended by three months in March, but the extension ended on June 30. The extension through Dec. 15 covers city elections set for this fall.
 - See the attached memorandum from the Secretary of the Commonwealth’s Elections Division.
 - The Town Clerk has posted the deadlines for nomination papers, etc. on the Town’s website here: <https://www.amherstma.gov/1079/Running-for-Elected-Office>
 - The decision about polling locations for the November 2021 election and future elections is to be considered by the Town Council at its meeting on Monday.
- Sustainability:
 - Utilizing a State grant, the Town changed lighting in the Town Hall, Police Station, and Munson Memorial Library. The project replaced over 800 ballasts and tubes with high-efficiency ballasts and LED lights. We project a 30% savings in energy use as a result of this change.
- Public Safety:
 - Fire Department:
 - Two Amherst firefighters were among the 21 graduates from Massachusetts Firefighting Academy. These firefighters completed a 50-day Career Recruit Firefighting Training Program. This rigorous professional training provides firefighters with the basic skills to perform their jobs effectively and safely. In addition, they train to respond to all types of hazards and emergencies such as chemical and environmental emergencies. Students learn all the basic skills they need to respond to fires, to contain and to control them, including the latest science of fire behavior and suppression tactics. They also receive training in public fire education, hazardous material incident mitigation, flammable liquids, stress management, and self-rescue techniques. The intensive, 10-week program for

municipal firefighters involves classroom instruction, physical fitness training, firefighter skills training, and live firefighting practice.

- To graduate, students must demonstrate proficiency in life safety, search and rescue, ladder operations, water supply, pump operation, and fire attack. Fire attack operations range from mailbox fires to multiple-floor or multiple-room structural fires. Upon successful completion of the course, our newly graduated firefighters were certified to have met the national standards of National Fire Protection Association 1001 and are certified to the level of Firefighter I and II, and Hazardous Materials First Responder Operational Level by the Massachusetts Fire Training Council, which is accredited by the National Board on Fire Service Professional Qualifications.
- 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.
- Community Responders:
 - Harvard Kennedy School of Government:
 - The Town will be working with Harvard's Government Performance Lab's Alternative 911 Emergency Response Community of Practice.
 - Although we were not accepted as a member of the Alternative 911 Emergency Response Cohort – only five cohort communities were accepted out of dozens of applicants – we are pleased to be able to learn from other communities doing similar work.
 - The Community of Practice will hold space once a month for governments to hear cohort participant presentations on real-time alternative response initiative implementation learnings and offer direct connections to peer jurisdictions through facilitated Q&A sessions and a community of practice listserv.
 - The Community Responder planning and implementation team has begun meeting to move forward on getting the program up and running. The members of this team include the two co-chairs of the Community Services Working Group, Police Chief, Fire Chief, Director of Senior Services, and Community Participation Officer Jennifer Moyston. We will involve representatives from the existing Ambassadors program, Finance, Human Resources, Dispatch, etc. as needed.
 - The Town is seeking funding from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health's Equitable Approaches to Public Safety (EAPS) grant program to support the Community Responder initiative.
 - The Town's implementation team which includes the Police Chief, Fire Chief, Director of Senior Services, Community Participation Officer, and co-chairs of the Community Safety Working Group is meeting weekly to develop the program design, job descriptions, and other elements to implement the program.
- Police:

- The Governor signed the supplemental budget which includes \$12.5 million for implementation of the December 2020 police reform law, with a specific focus on de-escalation training, use of force training and school resource officer training, as well as \$5 million for initial costs associated with the newly created Massachusetts Peace Officer Standards and Training Commission.
 - The Town has advertised to fill budgeted but vacant positions with strong candidates who are academy trained, if possible.
- Human Resources/Human Rights:
 - The Town is experiencing a very large amount of change among staff right now. Coming out of the pandemic, we see staff making important work/life decisions that may have been forestalled or accelerated by the pandemic.
 - After over 30 years of service, Treasurer Cheri Boucher has decided to take a well-deserved break and retire in September. Cheri has made invaluable contributions to the Town over the years and we are going to miss her tremendously.
 - Jennifer LaFountain will add this role to her current duties as Collector. Jenn has been learning from Cheri over the past several years and is well-prepared for these additional responsibilities. She will, of course, be working under the direct supervision of Finance Director Sean Mangano.
 - We continue to work on filling the Recreation Director position and will initiate a search for a new Health Director. I note that Public Health Nurse Jennifer Brown will be taking on the responsibilities of Temporary Health Director.
- Community Services:
 - Recreation:
 - Camps are staffed and operating successfully.
 - Cherry Hill is experiencing some staff shortages, but the course looks good and has been very popular.
 - Health:
 - Mosquito Opt-out:
 - The Town submitted its request to opt-out of this program. Our request was denied.
 - Along with our State Senator and State Representative, we are frustrated by the denial of mosquito spraying opt-out applications.
 - There appears to be no ability for the Town to appeal the denial or revise our applications to meet state standards.
 - In our area, there were a number of applications approved and a number denied. All of the denied applications were from towns judged to be in a region with a moderate level of risk to public health caused by Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) as determined by EEA, while all the approved applications were from communities judged as having a lower regional risk. This gave the impression that the regional risk level, and not anything written in the municipality's opt-out application, was the key factor in the state's decisions.
 - Our Representative and State Senator sent [this letter](#) to EEA and MDAR posing questions and concerns about the decision-making process for these

opt-out applications. They requested that every community whose application was denied be afforded an opportunity to address areas where the Department had concerns before their denials were finalized and before any spraying occurred in those communities.

- The response was wholly inadequate and can be found [here](#).
- A task force has been established to examine this issue further.
- Senior Center:
 - The Senior Center has reopened for appointment events such as exercise classes.
 - Retire Senior Volunteer Program workers are staffing the Civil War tablets regularly so the public may view these remarkable historical artifacts. The exhibit is being guided by Debora Bridges, daughter of Dudley Bridges Sr. and descendant of the Thompson's. Hours for viewing are Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday from 10:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m.
- Unhoused Population:
 - The new Homelessness and Rehousing Task Force has begun meeting. The work is being coordinated by the Director of Senior Services.
- Economic Development:
 - Licensing: Attached to this document is the list of licenses by category for the Town of Amherst.
 - Concerts on the Common: The Business Improvement District has received approval from the Town to hold four concerts on the Town Common. They have been licensed to serve beer and wine during the concerts.
 - The Business Improvement District Block Party is now being planned for September 9th. Note the change of date.
- Conservation and Development:
 - There is currently no swimming allowed at the mill street/summer street side of Puffer's Pond and the Wentworth Conservation Area on Stanley Street due to high levels of E. coli bacteria that have been detected during routine water testing.
 - Amherst Supportive Studio Housing:
 - The Amherst Supportive Studio Housing at 132 Northampton Road received an allocation of federal and state low-income housing tax credits and subsidy funds from the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development. As a reminder, this is a new construction project to be built by the non-profit Valley Community Development Corporation.
 - The Town has committed \$700,000 in funds of its own to support the project.
 - When completed, Amherst Supportive Studio Housing will offer 28 total studio units with supportive services.
 - Twenty units will be affordable to individuals earning less than 60% of AMI, with 12 units reserved for extremely low-income individuals earning less than 30% of AMI and, in some cases, making the transition from homelessness.
 - Safe Streets and Paths Grant: The Town was awarded a Massachusetts Department of Transportation grant of \$184,728 under its MassDOT Shared Streets and Spaces Program. The Town's Safe Streets and Paths project will make mobility improvements along Triangle, Pray, and East Pleasant Streets. The Town Council will review the public way changes at its meeting.

- North Square: The Governor, Lt. Governor, Secretary of Housing and Economic Development, and other State officials joined the property owner, developer, and Town officials at a ribbon cutting of the North Square at the Mill District mixed-use development. The Governor was here twice before to view the site when it was just a concept and at the ground-breaking. It was a joyous occasion and I was flattered that the Lt. Governor complimented the Town on its ability to secure State grants and the developer who discussed the successful working relationship with Town staff including planning, building, fire, public works, etc.
- Zoning: 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 continues to work on technology and procedures 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 (May 2021) [This will be updated in the next report]:

- Short-Term Event Uses of Town Commons:
 - The Rotary is scheduled to bring the Community Fair to Town during the last week of August. August 25-29). We are working with the Farmers Market to accommodate both events successfully.
- Short-Term Parking Requests: None
- Short-Term Road or Sidewalk Closures:

Major Capital Projects:

- DPW Building/Fire Building: The Request for Proposals for a site for a new Department of Public Works building have been reviewed and all bids were rejected as not being in the best interest of the Town. Staff are now reviewing additional options.
- Schools: Working with Anser, the Town submitted a Request for Services for design work for the new building(s). A vendors viewing of the Fort River site was well attended this week.
- Library: I am recruiting members to serve on the Jones Library Building Committee including one Town Councillor.

Projects Update:

- Energy Conservation: Utilizing a State grant, the Town changed lighting in the Town Hall, Police Station, and Munson Memorial Library. The project replaced over 800 ballasts and tubes with high-efficiency ballasts and LED lights. We project a 30% savings in energy use as a result of this change.
- Kendrick Park Playground: Our best estimate now is the end of July.
- Dog Park: Work has continues on the Dog Park.
- Performing Arts Shell on the Town Common: No developments.
- North Common Restoration/Main Street Parking Lot:
 - Congressman McGovern has listed additional work on the roadways surrounding the Town Common for funding.

- Town staff continue to seek out additional sources of funds to substitute or supplement the Town's current funding plan.
- The Town is working with a University-sponsored project to expand public engagement as noted above.
- 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:
 - We are developing construction documents and have funding available through bidding. I anticipate construction documents will be completed by the end of September with bidding to take 6-8 weeks after that.
 - We held a public meeting to review the latest documents earlier this week.
 - 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. Town staff are working on drawings and will return to the Town Council in the near future with plans that are 25% complete.
- Solar on the Landfill:
 - The "real" construction work is scheduled for August, along with the fence around the Southern Landfill.
 - A conservation restriction will be presented to the Town Council in the near future.
- Belchertown Road/East Street School: Town staff are preparing an RFP that will be issued by the end shortly. 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 nearing completion. 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: A new, grant-funded ADA ramp at the Bangs Community Center is being installed now. Concrete for the new ramp and repaired steps is being poured today. The ramp is located south of the Bangs Community Center and north of Johnny's. It will provide access from the upper Boltwood parking lot to the Musante Health Center, Clark House, and the courtyard.
 - Crosswalks and Pleasant Walk: Work to rebuild three existing crosswalks on North Pleasant Street continues. These projects are funded by a grant obtained by our grant-writers combined with some capital funds allocated for sidewalk improvements.
 - Street Furniture on Boltwood Plaza: The Town has secured a grant to purchase and install new street furniture (tables, chair, benches) on Boltwood Plaza. We hope this furniture will help activate the valuable resource in the downtown area.

Upcoming Meetings and Events:

- August 23rd – Town Council meeting
- September 6th – Labor Day