



To: Town Council

Fr: Paul Bockelman  
Town Manager

Dt: August 13, 2021; **Updated August 23, 2021**

Re: Town Manager Report for August 23, 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:**

- Updates:
  - Community Fair: The Community Fair is scheduled for August 25-29 on the Town Common. The Building Commissioner worked with the Amherst Farmers Market to accommodate both events on the Town Common. With the Community Fair, the Farmers Market will relocate to the north end of the Town Common and utilize the row of parking on the south side of the Spring Street lot. We are seeking additional parking for this weekend from private parking lot owners.
  - Community Breakfast: The University is planning on reviving the annual Community Breakfast the week of August 30<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 a.m. at the new Student Union. You will be receiving invitations in the near future.
- University/College Relations:
  - Amherst College:
    - Freshmen move-in day is August 25
    - Move-in days for all other classes is August 28 and 29
    - The College reports excellent compliance with the requirements that students be vaccinated. Those who refuse and do not have a valid religious or medical excuse will be withdrawn from the College and not permitted on campus.
    - The College expressed its gratitude to the Town for the success in relocating the house from South Pleasant Street to Baker Street.
    - **See attached note at the end of this Report on payments from Amherst College to the Town.**
  - 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
  - Classes start on September 1
  - The University expects a fully-operational campus this Fall
  - The University reports excellent compliance with the requirement that students be vaccinated. Those who refuse and do not have a valid religious or medical excuse will be withdrawn from the University.
- Hampshire College:
  - New students move-in day is August 26
  - Returning students move-in days are August 28 and 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 1<sup>st</sup>. The Working Group continues to meet to conclude the second part of its charge.
  - 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 that will include Barbara Love, Sid Ferreira, Keisha Dennis from the Residents' Advisory Committee, and staff member Jennifer Moyston.

## **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:
  - Northampton Road: The State Department of Transportation intends to begin the reconstruction of Northampton Road from South Pleasant Street to University Drive. This will be an extensive construction project that includes replacement of Town utilities, relocation of poles, installation of a multi-use path, and other work. This project will be disruptive to vehicular traffic and will go on for a long time. I will get a construction schedule which will be shared with the public.
  - Paving: The Town's paving contractor will return at the end of August to place the final coat on Snell Street, Henry Street, and Bridge Street. The contractor will also be paving the new basketball courts at the Mill River Recreation area. Line painting will follow this work later in September.
  - Utility Work: Eversource is beginning work on the 354 Line Optical Ground Wire (OPGW) Project in several communities, including Amherst.
    - They will be replacing existing shield wire on existing transmission structures with OPGW. Eversource crews will use cranes, helicopters, and/or ground methods to install the OPGW, which will help provide reliable high speed and high-capacity communications to all substations and Eversource facilities.
    - All abutting property owners have received correspondence on the Project. Additionally, their representatives did door to door outreach ahead of any work beginning.
    - Work is scheduled at various locations and is expected to be completed by mid-November 2021. Work hours will be Monday through Saturday, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Specific work hours and days may vary by area.

- Less than 0.25 mile of OPGW is being installed. Work will occur in the area of Hulst Road and Bay Road.
  - 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.
  - Waterline Extension to Leverett: Work has begun to extend the water line from North Amherst into the Town of Leverett.
  - 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. I expect this work to be done in the next two weeks.
- Town Clerk:
  - Census: Preliminary census numbers show an increase in population in Amherst. The Town has been advised by the State that the Town had to add two additional precincts. The Districting Advisory Board will consider 15 precincts in addition to a 12 precinct option (so that there are an even number of precincts in each district). Town I.T. staff are supporting the work of the Board.
  - Elections: The Governor signed a supplemental budget that included provisions to extend early voting through Dec. 15, 2021 which:
    - 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 the town 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.
  - 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>
- Sustainability:
  - 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.
- Economic Development:
  - GreaterAmherst.com campaign: The Amherst Area Chamber of Commerce and Amherst Business Improvement District launched a state-funded marketing campaign to attract tourists to Amherst and surrounding communities.

- The “What’s Next” initiative, along with the greateramherst.com website, is being launched using a \$116,655 state Travel and Tourism Recovery Grant.
  - The campaign builds on the Town’s “Destination: Amherst” initiative to improve the downtown area.
  - The grant money is paying for increased staffing at the Visitor Information Center and a marketing initiative, put together by Tigerweb, an Amherst-based marketing company.
  - The greateramherst.com website states, “We’re ready when you are” and introduces visitors by describing Greater Amherst as “a place that helps you appreciate the beautiful outdoors. A setting for making meaningful, lifelong memories with friends and family. It’s a place where we can live, work, and enjoy life.”
  - Keiko Orrall, the executive director of the Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism, spoke at the launch of the campaign. She was joined by state Representatives Mindy and Daniel Carey.
  - The chamber is also partnering with the Five Colleges Consortium and Museums10, the Hampshire Regional Tourism Council and town officials in Amherst and Sunderland.
- Adventure into Amherst: The Business Improvement District and Chamber of Commerce will be sponsoring the annual “Adventure into Amherst” on August 28<sup>th</sup> as a promotion to college students to explore downtown Amherst.
- Cannabis: We have been informed that Rise is modifying its operations at its location on Meadow Street by focusing exclusively on sales of medical marijuana. This is being done so the business can purchase a different retail operation. More information will be forthcoming as this moves through their work with the Cannabis Control Commission.
- Band Shell: The Downtown Amherst Foundation continues to develop plans for a band shell on the South Common. They will be bringing the conceptual design to the Town Council in the near future.
- Concerts on the Common: The Business Improvement District has held four concerts on the Town Common, all with alcohol service. All were well attended and brought in a large crowd, many of whom purchased food from downtown restaurants to eat as they enjoyed the concerts.
- Block Party: The Business Improvement District Block Party is now being planned for September 17<sup>th</sup>. Note the change of date.
- Public Safety:
  - Fire Department:
    - The Town has filled the two current vacancies with strong candidates who will be starting their duties in September. Both have excellent paramedic backgrounds.
    - Four additional firefighter/EMTs are on duty to support the Department’s response to the Covid-19 pandemic.
  - Community Responders:
    - 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 Department:
    - The theft of catalytic converters has been an ongoing problem, in the New England region and throughout the United States. The Town saw an uptick in these calls in the Spring and is monitoring the area for any resurgence.
    - The Town is recruiting strong candidates for the Police Department and one candidate has been interviewed and offered a position.
- 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.
  - For instance, four employees recently retired with 132 years of experience including Kim Littmann from the accounting department with 24 years of service to the Town, Theresa Fleurent from the accounting department with 32 years of service, Cheri Boucher, the Town Treasurer, with 36 years of service to the Town, and Cheryl Lofland who had an incredible 40 years of service to the Town. We thank each of these incredible women for their knowledge, dedication, service, and commitment to the Town of Amherst.
  - We continue to work on filling the Recreation Director, Health Director, and Director of Senior Services. I note that Public Health Nurse Jennifer Brown will be taking on the responsibilities of Temporary Health Director.
- Community Services:
  - Health:
    - Mosquito Opt-out:
      - The Town submitted its request to opt-out of this program. Our request was denied.
      - 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.
  - Senior Center:
    - Age and Dementia Friendly Community:
      - The Town’s Senior Center and Planning Department are working together to secure support from the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission to identify the Town as an “Age and Dementia Friendly Community”, a designation that was included in the previous Town Manager’s budget presentation.
      - The Town Manager will designate a working group to develop an implementation plan.

- Funding is being provided by the Tufts Health Plan Foundation through the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission.
    - The Senior Center has reopened for appointment events such as exercise classes.
    - Retire Senior Volunteer Program workers are staffing the Bangs Community Center and 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 continues to meet. A report is being prepared and should be finalized in the next couple of weeks.
    - A location for the congregate shelter operated by Craigs Doors has been identified. The property owner is reviewing the request and we are hopeful this new location will be available prior to the opening of the shelter on November 1<sup>st</sup>.
- Conservation and Development:
  - Affordable Housing:
    - East Street School/Belchertown Road: The Request for Proposals is being finalized and is expected to be issued for these two sites. We anticipate serious interest from non-profit affordable housing developers in this area.
    - Strong Street: The Affordable Housing Trust is exploring a Town-owned site on Strong Street as a new location for affordable housing.
  - 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.):
  - I-Net: The backbone construction of the 192 count, 144 count and the 288 count aerial fiber and underground fiber are complete with the exception of one area located on University property. We are working with the University to finalize the agreements needed to do this work. The plan is to have the project completed by October 15<sup>th</sup>.
  - Remote Meetings: 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.
  - Reprecincting: Town I.T. staff are providing important technical support to the Districting Advisory Committee.

#### **Delegated Authority:**

- 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: Staff are exploring multiple options for a new site for the Department of Public Works, including the Town-owned Ruxton site.
- 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.

### 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: We are scheduling a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the week of August 23<sup>rd</sup>. Expect an invitation once the date and time are finalized.
- Dog Park: The target completion date is the end of September. Water connection to Town waterlines are going in this week.
- Performing Arts Shell on the Town Common: It sounds like this proposal will be coming to the Town Council for a “first look” in the near future.
- North Common Restoration/Main Street Parking Lot: Awaiting action from Congress.
- 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. We anticipate closing on the project this Fall.
- 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.
  - 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. We will be scheduling a ground-breaking ceremony in the coming weeks to recognize the long path and huge effort that went into making this project a reality.
- 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.
  - 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 25-29 – Community Fair
- September 6<sup>th</sup> – Labor Day holiday
- September 13<sup>th</sup> – Town Council meeting
- September 17<sup>th</sup> - BID Block Party
- September 27<sup>th</sup> – Town Council meeting
- October 4<sup>th</sup> – Town Council meeting
- October 11<sup>th</sup> – Indigenous People’s Day holiday
- October 18<sup>th</sup>- Town Council meeting
- November 2<sup>nd</sup> – Election Day
- November 8<sup>th</sup> – Town Council meeting
- November 11<sup>th</sup> – Veterans Day holiday
- November 15<sup>th</sup> – Town Council meeting
- November 22<sup>nd</sup> – Town Council meeting
- November 24-25 – Thanksgiving Day holidays
- December 6<sup>th</sup> – Town Council meeting
- December 20<sup>th</sup> – Town Council meeting





**To:** Town Council  
Paul Bockelman, Town Manager

**Fr:** Sean Mangano, Finance Director  
Jennifer LaFountain, Treasurer/Collector

**Dt:** August 19, 2021

**Re:** Amherst College Payments to the Town

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### Background

At the August 2<sup>nd</sup> Town Council meeting, Councilor Brewer requested more information on the payments and related agreements between Amherst College and the Town. The following is provided in response to that request.

Amherst College makes three types of payments to the Town: 1) property taxes, 2) ambulance & fire services, and 3) contributions to the schools

### Property Taxes

Amherst College pays property taxes on several properties throughout Town. These taxes are calculated in the same fashion as they would be for other residential properties. No agreement exists for these payments nor is it necessary.

### Ambulance and Fire Services (yearly support fee)

The Town bills Amherst College for the provision of these services. These services are billed on a reimbursement basis – FY21 bill is based on FY20 service levels. The Town bills based on the percentage of calls from Amherst College multiplied by the net cost of providing the services. There is no formal agreement in place and Amherst College often contributes a greater amount than they are billed.

### Contributions to the Schools

At the present time, Amherst College contributes \$75,000 to the schools to support the Family Center and subsidies for low income families to participate in after-school programming. There is a signed memorandum of understanding related to these payments that is renewed every couple of years.

The chart on the following page shows the history of these payments.

	<b>Yearly Support Fee</b>	<b>Real Estate Tax Paid</b>	<b>Schools</b>
<b>YEAR</b>			
<b>2008</b>	-	409,932	
<b>2009</b>	120,000	449,046	
<b>2010</b>	90,000	504,026	
<b>2011</b>	90,000	510,375	24,250
<b>2012</b>	90,000	533,008	158,012
<b>2013</b>	90,000	527,377	47,932
<b>2014</b>	122,000	535,013	75,000
<b>2015</b>	130,000	563,914	82,900
<b>2016</b>	130,000	546,451	82,900
<b>2017</b>	120,000	588,600	82,900
<b>2018</b>	80,000	588,913	75,000
<b>2019</b>	110,000	606,765	75,000
<b>2020</b>	125,000	624,871	75,000
<b>2021</b>	140,000	649,449	75,000
	<b>1,437,000</b>	<b>7,637,741</b>	<b>853,894</b>