



To: Town Council  
Fr: Paul Bockelman  
Town Manager  
Dt: November 5, 2021  
Re: Town Manager Report for November 8, 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:

- Case counts: The 4th pandemic wave continues to show signs of receding in both the Town and at the University. Most hospitalized cases and COVID-related deaths occur in the unvaccinated population.
  - Daily case counts along with 14-day average incidence rate are provided here:  
<https://www.amherstcovid19.org/>
  - The Town has links to the websites of all three institutions of higher education here:  
<https://www.amherstcovid19.org/schools>
- Vaccination:
  - Booster Shots: The Health Department is offering booster shots along with 1st and 2nd doses in three ways:
    - Thursday afternoon 3:00 - 6:00 in the Bangs. More information on this follows.
    - Continuing outreach (senior housing, large apartment buildings, churches, restaurants, Amherst Survival Center, Craigs Doors, etc.). We have two clinics scheduled now at two apartment locations in addition to clinics at Clark House and Ann Whalen.
    - For people at risk secondary to occupational risk (first responders, health care workers).
  - Appointments are required. To schedule an appointment, go here:  
<https://home.color.com/vaccine/register/townofamherst?calendar=1647d54b-9340-4d5b-865f-e8c15dedb323> Appointments will be populated there on Monday at

12PM. For those coming for a 2nd, 3rd, or booster dose, we ask that they bring their vaccination record card or other proof of their vaccination.

- To date, the Health Department has delivered the following vaccines:

	Number of Doses	Percent
Booster	179	1.3%
One	7,838	58.3%
Two	5,426	40.4%
Grand Total	13,443	

- The Health Department is working with the School District to provide vaccinations to their students.

- Testing:

- Community Testing:

- The Town’s Health Department continues to offer asymptomatic, unobserved community testing for Covid-19. These PCR testing kits are free. Adults and children ages 4 and older without symptoms of COVID-19 are eligible for testing. Individuals with any COVID-19 symptoms should not come to the Health Department, and should make an appointment with their physician for testing. This new service is in collaboration with the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Many thanks to our Health Department staff and Facilities Department for helping to making testing available in Town.

- Kits can be picked up at the following locations:
        - Bangs Community Center *side entrance*, 70 Boltwood Walk. Hours: Monday thru Friday 10:00 AM - 2:00PM, or;
        - Jones Library in the front hallway. Hours: During regular Jones Library opening hours.
        - After picking up your kit, please administer your test *outside of the building* (home, car, etc.)
      - Drop off test kits:
        - All test kits should be returned to the secure drop box outside the *main entrance* of the Bangs Community Center.
        - Make sure to read all the instructions on the slip of paper in your kit.
        - First-time testers need to fill out the questionnaire on the back of the instructions or the test will be void!
        - Drop off is 24/7 and you can expect results within 24-48 hours.
        - Note: if you deposit your kit on Friday or over the weekend, expect results by Monday evening or Tuesday.
        - If you test negative, expect an email.
        - If you test positive, expect a call with instructions.
      - The University of Massachusetts continues to provide testing for members of the community utilizing the self-test drop-off system. More information may be found here:

<https://www.umass.edu/coronavirus/coronavirus/covid-19-testing>

- University/College Relations:
  - University of Massachusetts at Amherst:
    - Campus and Community Coalition: The CCC, which was formed to reduce high-risk drinking, held its first meeting of the year and addressed planning and key dates.
    - Public-Private Partnership Project: Work on the new undergraduate student community being built on Massachusetts and Lincoln Avenues has begun.
      - Undergraduate Housing: This development is scheduled to open in the Fall of 2023 and will include 623 beds, fitness center, café, wellness space, and a courtyard.
      - Graduate Housing: This development will replace the current Lincoln apartments and is scheduled to open in the Fall of 2023 with 201 beds and small group study spaces.
      - Demolition/Construction: The area has begun to be fenced off and will remain fenced through the summer of 2023. The University will close the north end of Lincoln Avenue and construction traffic will access the site from Route 91/116 to Massachusetts Avenue. While most work will happen on weekdays beginning at 7:00 a.m., there may be weekends throughout the project.
    - 2020 Commencement: The University will hold a special in-person commencement ceremony recognizing undergraduates who earned their degrees as part of the Class of 2020 on November 7<sup>th</sup> at 11:00 a.m. at the Mullins Center.
- Racial Equity:
  - Community Safety Working Group: At its final meeting, the Working Group discussed a number of things. I was able to be present to thank them for their hard and transformative work. The members concluded with heartfelt statements about the work and bonds the Working Group built during the life of the committee.
  - Reparations: The African Heritage Reparation Assembly continues its weekly meeting schedule and will present its initial report to the Town Council on November 8<sup>th</sup>.
- Outreach:
  - Candidates:
    - Presentation: Many Town Council candidates participated in a presentation by Town Staff on Town government October 12<sup>th</sup>. This program was similar to what I did prior to the election in 2018.
    - One-on-One meetings: I continue to meet with Town Councilors-elect to offer time to sit down to discuss any issues that they would like.
  - Cuppa Joe: The next Cuppa Joe with Paul will be on Friday, November 19<sup>th</sup> with Finance Director Sean Mangano as my guest and Communications Manager Brianna Sunryd as the host. This session is timed to complement the presentation of the Financial Indicators Report.

○ Community Participation and Outreach:

- GovLove Podcast Series: Town staff including the Town's Neighborhood Liaison Officer, Ambassador Coordinator, and Communication Manager recorded



a new episode on the hot new GovLove Podcast Series on local government for a session titled: “Responding to COVID-19 in College and University Communities”. This series is produced by “Engaging Local Government Leaders” [www.elgl.org/](http://www.elgl.org/)

- The Communications Manager had previously discussed “Data and Engagement During COVID-19” in May. You can find that episode here: <https://elgl.org/podcast-data-engagement-during-covid-19-with-brianna-sunryd-amherst-ma/>
- Town staff has been working with a research team at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst over the past few months to introduce new ways to engage with our community members. Part of this larger study is a short survey to better understand digital engagement capacity for our community members. We have been sharing it out through various channels. The survey will be open for responses until the end of October. Town residents are asked to fill out a survey to help us better tailor our outreach and engagement efforts to reach a wider, more diverse audience? Here is the link to a short survey at: [https://umassamherst.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_0lzdIgA6ApVCwdM?source=CouncilorComms](https://umassamherst.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_0lzdIgA6ApVCwdM?source=CouncilorComms) The survey is available in English, Spanish, and Mandarin at this time.

● Finance:

○ Free Cash:

- The Department of Revenue has certified that the amount of available funds or "free cash" as of July 1, 2021 for the Town is \$8,881,421.
- Huge congratulations to our Comptroller and our entire Finance Team for their accuracy as their projection was off of the final certified amount by one dollar!
- Town staff will present a recommendation on Free Cash and use of reserves to the Town Council at its November 15<sup>th</sup> and the November 16<sup>th</sup> Finance Committee meeting.
- Free Cash was also certified for the Town's Enterprise Funds.
- Free cash is a revenue source that results from the calculation, as of July 1, of a community's remaining, unrestricted funds from its operations of the previous fiscal year based on the balance sheet as of June 30.

- It typically includes actual receipts in excess of revenue estimates and unspent amounts in departmental budget line items for the year just ending, plus unexpended free cash from the previous year.
    - Free cash is offset by property tax receivables and certain deficits, and as a result, can be a negative number.
    - To see free cash certified for all cities and towns since FY2003, click [here](#).
  - ARPA: The Finance Director has held four public engagement sessions and with this input we are developing a revised distribution of funds. In addition, members of the public may weigh in at the Town's EngageAmherst website here: <https://engageamherst.org/arpa>
  - Resident Capital Requests: The Resident Capital Request window is now open until November 19, 2021 at 4:30 PM. Residents who would like to add a capital project to the request list may submit the request online. [Click here](#) for the submission form.
- Public Works:
  - Curbside Leaf Pick-up: Curbside pick-up of bagged leaves, using the Town-approved, 30-gallon paper biodegradable bag, began on November 1<sup>st</sup>. There is no curbside collection of loose leaves. Loose leaves may be brought to the Transfer Station if you have a current sticker. Residents should place bagged leaves at the curb by 7:00AM. on the day your area is scheduled for pickup. Bags are available from many retailers, and prices may vary – please check that bags are biodegradable. The pick-up schedule by street can be found here: <https://www.amherstma.gov/CivicAlerts.aspx?AID=2992>
  - Water: We are through the month in November and I'm pleased to report that the water system has held up very well.
    - We made it through the highest month of water use, September, without any issues.
    - Our current water usage is trending well below 3 MGD and we are moving into our late fall early winter weather.
    - We are still working on installing the new pump in Well 4. There are supply chain issues that are impacting the installation but it is moving forward.
    - We have enough backup capacity to meet demand if another major source goes down.
    - If you are interested in following a summary of water use, precipitation and reservoir levels it can be found at this link. [Amherst Water Supply Status | Amherst, MA - Official Website \(amherstma.gov\)](#). It's being updated with the most recent data.
  - Northampton Road: The State Department of Transportation intends to begin the reconstruction of Northampton Road from South Pleasant Street to University Drive. The work is projected to continue through April 2024. 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. Initial work this fall will involve construction signs and erosion controls and tree work. Spring work will focus on drainage systems. The project will then move in excavation, milling and paving the road, and adding pedestrian ramps and new granite curbing, and putting in new traffic signals, signs and pavement markings.
  - Waterline Extension to Leverett: Work to extend the water line from North Amherst into the Town of Leverett is nearing completion. Paving of East Leverett Road is expected to conclude prior to Thanksgiving.

- Paving: Paving work is nearing completion for the season with the Mill River basketball courts having been paved and lines painted. An outside, professional painting company will be in Town as soon as the weather warms up in the spring to line the basketball courts properly.
- Mill Lane: The multi-use path on Mill Lane that will connect East Hadley Road to Groff Park is in design. We expect to complete permitting by the end of the calendar year, issue a Request for Proposals in the beginning of 2022, in the hope that work could be done in the March-May timeframe.
- Town Clerk:
  - Elections:
    - Early Voting: Early in person concluded with 698 voters coming to Town Hall to vote.
    - Election Day: NOTE: The following votes and tallies are NOT OFFICIAL and will change after the administrative review that will take place at Town Hall at 10:00 a.m. on November 8<sup>th</sup>.
      - The unofficial tally of votes from November 2<sup>nd</sup> can be found here: <https://www.amherstma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/58783/11-2-21-Town-wide-unofficial-results>
      - The unofficial turnout counts can be found here: <https://www.amherstma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/58782/Voter-turnout-unofficial-results>
- Economic Development:
  - Licensing: The Board of License Commissioners is preparing to renew alcoholic beverages licenses for the annual renewal.
  - Boy Scout Tree Sale: Boy Scout Troops 500B, 500G, and 504 will again host a tree sale from November 26 – January 8 at the southern-most end of Kendrick Park.
- Public Safety:
  - Police:
    - Halloween: Police handled dozens of calls on the Halloween weekend with the numerous parties and noise complaints.
    - Neighborhood Work: The Town’s community liaison officer, Chief, and I met with residents of a neighborhood adjoining the University to discuss numerous quality of life concerns. There will be a follow-up meeting with the residents, fraternity, Police, and University.
  - Fire:
    - Ambulance: The new ambulance which was ordered months ago has arrived and is expected to arrive in Town in the coming weeks. It will go through a thorough evaluation and outfitting by Town staff before being placed in service.
    - Cardiac Monitors: The five cardiac monitors that were approved by the Council have been purchased.
    - Halloween: Halloween weekend proved to be extremely busy for public safety, particularly our Emergency Medical Services. Numerous mutual aid ambulances had to be requested to meet the surge of requests for assistance between 11:00 p.m. and 3:00 a.m. on Saturday.
  - Community Responders:

- The Town was one of five communities in the State to be awarded a significant grant to develop equitable approaches to public safety. The Massachusetts Department of Public Health's (DPH) Bureau of Community Health and Prevention announced that the Town's application for funding under the Equitable Approaches to Public Safety (EAPS) grant program had been selected to receive \$449,949 in funding.
  - The funds will go to support the planning and implementation of the Community Response for Equity, Safety & Service (CRESS) program. The goal for this grant is to provide support in implementing the CRESS program and to provide the related services that will be needed to support residents in recovery. The grant will provide resources for the development of a comprehensive implementation plan.
  - Senator Comerford and Representative Domb were key players in including this funding in the State budget and were strong advocates for our application. These funds would not have been available without their influential work in this area.
  - The grant includes funding for a project manager and support, mental health providers, training, evaluation, and other related costs of the Community Responder program. The Town will be contributing matching funds to support the community responder positions, a program director, and administrative support.
  - In soliciting proposals, DPH stated it was seeking municipalities to implement public safety reforms and/or alternative investments to promote equitable public safety and public health outcomes. Public safety reform focuses on redefining how a community ensures public safety and responds to public safety crises, such as having community first responders for mental health crises. Alternative investments increase funding for strategies that address the root causes of crime and public safety crises, such as funding mental health or substance use treatment or supporting permanent housing.
- Human Resources/Human Rights:
  - Health Insurance:
    - Many elective procedures and surgeries were not performed in the last fiscal year. As a result, the MIIA Health Benefits Trust offered its members – including the Town - a premium holiday for the PPO, HMO and dental plans. This means no premiums will be paid by the Town and no deductions will be withheld from employee paychecks for the month of November (to pay December premiums). This premium holiday is coming from the MIIA Health Benefits Trust fund.
    - For the current year, the Town's claims data (the primary factor for premium determinations) is trending higher in the PPO plan but the HMO and Medex plans are trending at a lesser increase. With our move to MIIA in 2018, our claims experience has been lower and the reinsurance attachment point is lower, benefitting the Town's experience.
    - In addition, the Town's H.R. Department continues to offer wellness programming and events for Town employees utilizing mini-grants from the MIIA Health Benefits Trust. Most recently, employees participated in a MIIA Health Benefits Trust walking competition among employees. Participating employees receive a free Fitbit watch. The competition concluded on October 31<sup>st</sup> with the Department of Public Works dominating the competition! Great work, DPW!

- Community Services:
  - Health: The Town is working with the City of Northampton as a participant in a Public Health Excellence grant in which the Town will benefit with additional nursing services. The nurses can support the Health Department with MAVEN cases other than COVID, other initiatives, plus clinics. This work is looking forward to a more collaborative public health presence for Hampshire County over the next few years.
  - Recreation: The new Recreation Director has continued establishing himself in the community and, with the able assistance of the Human Resources Department, has hired a new Operations Manager and a new Sports Director, filling two vital positions.
  - Senior Center: Our new Senior Center nurse began his duties on November 1<sup>st</sup>.
- Conservation and Development:
  - Shelter:
    - Craig's Doors opened its congregate shelter on Wednesday. (It opened on Wednesday, instead of November 1<sup>st</sup> because the Church had previously-approved use of the space on Tuesday as a polling location.)
    - The new location will be at the Immanuel Lutheran Church at 867 North Pleasant Street.
    - Kudos to the staff of Craig's Doors, specifically Kevin Noonan, for connecting with the church and obtaining their support.
    - Assistant Town Manager Dave Ziomek attended many meetings with the church leaders with Craig's Doors staff including a meeting of the entire church membership to explain the Town's role and to show the support of the Town. He was able to answer questions from the congregation and address their concerns.
    - Town staff played a pivotal role in making this happen, specifically the Assistant Town Manager and our other Town staff including Inspections, Police, Fire, and Health who all worked to get the permits, procedures, and approvals necessary to have the Church approve the request.
  - Sheltering: The Assistant Town Manager and I met other CEOs and representatives from the Department of Housing and Community Development organized by the Western Massachusetts Network to End Homelessness, in which we are active participants.
    - In my comments, I made the following key points:
      - Must be regional: Solutions must be organized regionally. Individual communities attempting to address a regional problem individually will lead to lack of coordination and gaps.
      - Must provide supportive services: Providing shelter is just the beginning. The goal is to rehouse individuals experiencing homelessness. Shelter without supportive services has proven to be a stop-gap measure.
      - Must be permanent: A real infrastructure of housing, especially supportive housing like the Town is helping to build at 132 Northampton Road, is essential and, with funding available now, our strategy is to find a permanent home for shelters.
    - Here is data from the past year (courtesy of Craig's Doors):
      - The unduplicated number of people who are homeless who received shelter from Craig's Doors over the past year is 138.
      - Currently, there are 31 people being housed at the University Motor Lodge.

- 41% of those served self-report issues with mental health, although staff believe that number is higher.
- Most of those served have other factors such as substance use and medical conditions.
- The dignity afforded those able to be accommodated at the University Motor Lodge has been immeasurable. And it has been easier to rehouse people from the motel accommodations. Four have been rehoused in the past few months.
- Funding from the State and from FEMA have paid for many of these services and locations.
- Sustainability: I signed on to a letter with many other municipal CEOs to support the Net Zero Stretch Code. See the letter to Secretary Theoharides at the end of this report.
- Writers Walk:
  - Town Councilors, members of the Historical Commission, Community Preservation Act Committee, and Design Review Board were present for the ceremonial unveiling of the Writers Walk consisting of 12 informational signs located at the residences of notable writers in Amherst's history, which together form a walking tour, allowing people to engage with and learn more about the lives of these writers.
  - The project began with a Hampshire College class taught by former Select Board member Jim Wald and was advanced by a University class taught by Jon Olsen.
  - A launch event and walking tour was held on October 22nd outside of 97 Spring Street. Informational cards for the Writers Walk can be found at Town Hall, the BID/Chamber Visitor Center, Jones Library, and Amherst Books. More information on the Writers Walk and the writers' biographies can be found at [www.amherstma.gov/writerswalk](http://www.amherstma.gov/writerswalk)
- Hickory Ridge: The Assistant Town Manager will update the Town Council at its meeting on November 8<sup>th</sup>.

**Delegated Authority:**

- Short-Term Event Uses of Town Commons:
- Short-Term Parking Requests:
- Short-Term Road or Sidewalk Closures:

**Major Capital Projects:**

- Jones Library: With the very strong vote in support of the proposed Jones Library project, we will be moving forward with developing the Jones Library Building Committee, establishing a timeline, and setting a funding schedule after conferring with the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners.
- DPW Building/Fire Building: Staff are exploring multiple options for a new site for the Department of Public Works.
- Schools: Three members of the Elementary School Building Committee participated in the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) designer application review at the MSBA Designer Selection Panel on November 2<sup>nd</sup>. Interviews are scheduled for November 16<sup>th</sup>.

## Projects Update:

- Dog Park: The work on the dog park continues. Increased costs were identified and a request for funds will be presented to the Town Council on November 15<sup>th</sup>.
- Performing Arts Shell on the Town Common: This project continues to make its way through the review process with the various Town committees. The Finance Committee will discuss the maintenance fund at its meeting on November 16<sup>th</sup>.
- North Common Restoration/Main Street Parking Lot: Staff are developing the plans. We will be convening regular public meetings of stakeholders to ensure all opinions and views are heard.
- Hickory Ridge: The Assistant Town Manager will update the Town Council at its meeting.
- North Amherst Library: Construction plans are completed and we are now assembling those plans into the bid documents. We anticipate an approximately eight week bidding period with sub-bids, etc.
- Pomeroy Village MassWorks Grant: Town staff will present the 25% plans to the Town Council at an upcoming meeting.
- Solar on the Landfill:
  - Construction work on the North Landfill has begun, along with the fence around the South Landfill. The work will be able to continue through most of the winter.
- Belchertown Road/East Street School:
  - Town issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) to lease the properties located at 31 South East Street and 72-80 Belchertown Road for the development of affordable housing.
  - The Request for Proposals is here: [www.amherstma.gov/bids](http://www.amherstma.gov/bids)
  - Proposals are due on November 19<sup>th</sup>. A committee will review the proposals, ensure they are compliant with the RFP, and submit a recommendation to me for the award.

## Upcoming Meetings and Events:

- November 11<sup>th</sup> – Veterans Day holiday
- November 15<sup>th</sup> – Financial Indicators presentation
- November 15<sup>th</sup> – Public Forum on the Budget
- November 15<sup>th</sup> – Town Council meeting
- November 22<sup>nd</sup> – Town Council meeting
- November 24-25 – Thanksgiving Day holidays
- December 3<sup>rd</sup> – Merry Maple Celebration
- December 6<sup>th</sup> – Town Council meeting
- December 20<sup>th</sup> – Town Council meeting

Secretary Kathleen A. Theoharides  
Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs  
100 Cambridge Street, Suite 900  
Boston, MA 02114

Dear Madame Secretary,

The undersigned represent chief executive/administrative officers of Massachusetts cities and town deeply engaged in the battle against climate change. We strongly support the Commonwealth's commitment to achieve net zero emissions by 2050 as well as the interim goals required by this year's "Next Generation Roadmap for Massachusetts Climate Policy." This and more has to be done. Fires in California, floods in Germany, and record June temperatures at home remind us of the urgency of our situation. As the recent IPCC report on Climate Change in 2021 shows, we are now well past the 11<sup>th</sup> hour.

The Next Generation Roadmap legislation signed by the Governor in March requires DOER to develop a specialized stretch energy code that includes net-zero building performance standards and a definition of a net-zero building. The statute lays out an ambitious process of public engagement as the Department develops the required code. We welcome the opportunity to participate in this process.

At the outset, we strongly believe that both the statute and practical reality call for a true net zero stretch code. The specialized stretch code is optional. No municipality is required to adopt it, and not everyone will. But for the towns and cities ready to lead the way, the stretch code promulgated by DOER must be strong enough to get the job done. Nothing less than net zero will suffice. The municipalities that opt in are eager to be the Commonwealth's test kitchen. They need bold policies to test.

A true net zero stretch code must cover all residential and commercial buildings. It must foster high performance building envelopes, such as those contemplated by Passive House standards. It must promote electrification, and at the very least provide the municipalities who opt in with clear authority to prohibit on-site combustion in new building and major rehabilitation. Moreover, since time is of the essence, any phase-in period must be short and supported by clear and convincing evidence.

There are many ways of reaching our goal and that of the statute. We welcome the chance to engage in discussion about means. As local governments, we understand the importance of pragmatism. It is essential, however, that the path chosen leads to the right destination.

We appreciate your enthusiasm and professionalism and that of your staff. We hope that the process you are beginning will result in a code that will maintain Massachusetts's place as a national leader in the fight against global warming. Other jurisdictions, including California and the District of Columbia, have moved decisively in this direction, and we do not wish the Commonwealth to be left behind. We strongly support the process that is unfolding and look forward to providing any assistance we can.

Respectfully,

Paul Bockelman, Amherst Town Manager and other municipal CEOs