



To: Town Council
Fr: Paul Bockelman
Town Manager
Dt: November 18, 2021
Re: Town Manager Report for November 22, 2021

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 Town's Health Department continues to address the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - The Health Director notes that case counts are creeping up. This is not unexpected as people are spending more time inside where the virus spreads more easily. This can be seen in the county data, as well.
 - Family gatherings and large social events such as weddings are the most likely places to see the spread of the virus.
 - This is happening even with a large percentage of the Town's population – estimated at 91% - being vaccinated. This percentage is calculated weekly with the assumptions and calculations posted here: <https://amherstma.gov/DocumentCenter/Index/4401>
 - The increase means the Town must maintain continued vigilance and continue to utilize key public health disciplines including mask wearing, vaccination distribution, and testing.
 - 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:** 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, Craig's Doors). The Health Department also held special

- vaccination clinics at the Department of Public Works. These employees are at high risk and we are pleased with the response by our employees.
- 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.
 - The Health continues to work with the School District to provide vaccination to their students at the high school, middle school, and three elementary schools. Of kids registered for vax clinic:
 - 72% identify as students of color
 - 29% English Language Learners
 - 52% qualify for subsidized lunch
 - 29% Students with special needs
 - The School District has also arranged for Baystate Health to bring its mobile vaccination bus to the Schools on November 23rd offering free vaccinations to the public.
 - The Health Director has worked with Amherst College to utilize a deep freeze cooler that will allow the Town to obtain and store additional doses of the vaccine.
 - 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.
 - 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:
 - 2020 Commencement: The University held a special in-person commencement ceremony recognizing undergraduates who earned their degrees as part of the Class of 2020 on November 7th at the Mullins Center.
 - Racial Equity:
 - Reparations: The African Heritage Reparation Assembly continues its weekly meeting schedule and presented its initial report to the Town Council on November 8th.
 - Outreach:
 - Cuppa Joe: The next Cuppa Joe with Paul will be on Friday, November 19th 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/
- Finance:
 - ARPA: The Finance Director 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> With these comments, we presented an updated ARPA plan to the Town Council on November 15th.
 - 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:
 - Downtown: Temporary barriers for outdoor dining will be removed in the coming days.
 - Decorations: Public Works is working with the Business Improvement District to provide additional decorative lighting and decorations for the holiday seasons.
 - 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.
 - 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:
 - Recount: The district 4 councilor race will be recounted on Tuesday, November 23, 2021 at 10:00 am in the Large Activity Room at the Bangs Community Center.
 - Election Results: See attached vote results that have been finalized and certified by the Town Clerk.
- Economic Development:
 - Licensing: The Board of License Commissioners is reviewing the current regulations on lunch carts which govern the conduct of lunch carts and food trucks on public ways in

Amherst. These regulations were drafted under the previous form of government when the Select Board was the Local Licensing Authority (LLA) and the Guardians of the Public Way. Reworking the regulations under the current form of government, in which authority over the Public Way is held by the Town Council (and under some conditions, the Town Manager), while authority over local licensing is entirely held by the Board of License Commissioners (BLC), has proven difficult because the BLC's control over the conduct of licensed lunch carts has become disconnected from the authority to regulate where they may park and operate. The Board is requesting that the Town Council delegate some authority over the Public Way relating to lunch carts and food trucks to the Board of License Commissioners to grant more flexibility in the changes to these regulations.

- Boy Scout Tree Sale: Boy Scout Troops 500B, 500G, and 504 will again host a tree sale from November 18 – January 8 at the southern-most end of Kendrick Park. (Note, the start date is ten days earlier than previously reported.)
- A+ Awards Dinner: Several Town Councilors and staff attended the Amherst Area Chamber of Commerce Dinner on November 10th. A strong group of honorees were recognized by the community for their contributions to the Town over the years.
- Holiday Celebrations: The annual lighting of the Merry Maple will take place on December 3rd at 4:00 – 7:00 p.m. on the Town Common.
- Public Safety:
 - Police: After a very busy Fall, we anticipate – and hope for – a reduction in calls for service.
 - Fire:
 - Ambulance: The new ambulance which was ordered months ago is expected to be placed in service shortly.
 - Fire Pumper: The Town appropriated funds for a new Fire Truck. The specifications for the truck are being reviewed and it is likely the costs of the truck may exceed the appropriation, requiring staff to seek additional funds from the Town Council.
 - Cardiac Monitors: The five cardiac monitors that were approved by the Council have been purchased.
- 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 MIA Health Benefits Trust walking competition among employees. Participating employees receive a free Fitbit watch. The competition concluded on October 31st with the Department of Public Works dominating the competition! Great work, DPW!

- Community Services:

- Health:

- Health Director: I have referred the appointment of Jennifer Brown as the Town's Public Health Director to the Town Council for its review.
 - Public Health Excellence Grant: 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: I have referred the appointment of Hayley Bolton as the Town's Director of Senior Services to the Town Council for its review.

- Conservation and Development:

- Inspection Services:

- The Town successfully went live with a new online permitting and licensing portal earlier this month. The Town has started inviting customers and businesses to apply for permits and licenses online via this new portal, which is powered by OpenGov.
 - With this new portal, the Town now offers dozens of additional permits and licenses online, making it easier for residents and businesses to apply for and receive permits online. This includes building, electrical, gas and plumbing permits; rental registration; health licenses; parking permits, fire department permits; planning, conservation and many more. The Town will continue to add additional applications through the new portal in the coming weeks and months.
 - With the implementation of this new online portal the Town of Amherst enables a variety of capabilities to manage permitting, licensing, and code enforcement, including:
 - Automating operational processes associated with permitting, licensing and code enforcement.
 - Providing businesses and residents with access to critical information surrounding the process.
 - Reviewing, approving, and issuing permits and licenses from a single digital platform; and the ability to schedule inspections with ease.
 - Improving staff and community insights for more informed decision-making.

- Planning:

- The Town is updating its Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM) and Flood Insurance Study (FIS). Most of the Preliminary Flood Insurance Rate Maps have been

available for review since July 2020. Recently revised panels (#170, #351 & #334), dated June 30, 2021, have been available for review since July 2021. A 90-Day statutory appeal period for panels #170, 351 and 334 began on September 10, 2021 and will end on December 9, 2021.

- Amherst's Federal flood maps (FIRM maps) were last updated in 1983. New, better technology for mapping flood prone areas is now available and Town Meeting appropriated funds several years ago to update Amherst's flood maps.
- A consulting firm, AECOM, was hired by the Town and has been working with the Town and with FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) to create more accurate mapping of the floodable areas along rivers and streams in Amherst. The maps are posted on the town website at the following link: [FIRM Revision Project - 2021 Update | Amherst, MA - Official Website \(amherstma.gov\)](https://www.amherstma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/11111/FIRM-Revision-Project-2021-Update)
- The maps are also available in paper format for viewing at Town Hall, 4 Boltwood Avenue. Interested persons can arrange to view the paper maps by contacting the Department of Conservation and Development, Planning Director, Christine Brestrup at the link and phone number below.
- Public meetings with FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) and AECOM, the consultant, were held in 2017 and 2019 to discuss the revised flood hazard information, bylaw adoption and other frequently asked questions and concerns.
- The Preliminary Maps #170, #351 & #334 are now in a 90-day statutory appeal period, which will end on December 9, 2021. Once the appeal period is complete and all appeals have been resolved, the town will enter into a six-month compliance period, during which the maps will be presented to Town Council for approval, along with bylaw amendments associated with FEMA floodplain requirements.
- The Town expects the flood-mapping project to be concluded by June 2022.
- 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.
- Sustainability: The Town is seeking funding to develop and implement rental efficiency policy, one of the five priority initiatives in the Town's Climate Action Adaptation and Resiliency Plan.
- Hickory Ridge:

- The Assistant Town Manager updated the Town Council at its meeting on November 8th.
- Additional outreach events were held at the Mill Valley apartments on November 17th.
- The parking area at Hickory Ridge will be re-established to manage access and maintenance during the winter.

Delegated Authority:

- Short-Term Event Uses of Town Commons:
- Short-Term Parking Requests:
 - Free Parking Downtown – November 27, December 4, 11, and 18 – requested by the Amherst Business Improvement District
 - Two parking spaces – November 16-18 – on Spring Street to Grace Church to park trucks replacing the boiler system
 - Two parking spaces – November 15-16 – on Main Street to the Business Improvement District to facilitate decorating lamp posts
- Short-Term Road or Sidewalk Closures:

Major Capital Projects:

- Jones Library:
 - With the very strong vote in support of the proposed Jones Library project (3,231 in favor and 1,709 opposed), we will be moving forward with this project.
 - We have submitted the vote to the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners along with a request for disbursement of the first payment under the grant awarded to the Town in the amount of \$2,774,263.
 - Town and Library staff are establishing a timeline and setting a funding schedule.
 - I continue to seek members to serve on the Jones Library Building Committee and anticipate the Committee will begin meeting in December.
- 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 and interview panel on November 16th.
 - DiNisco Design was selected by the Massachusetts School Building Authority Designer Selection Committee to be the Designer for the Amherst Elementary School.
 - DiNisco Design (<http://www.dinisco.com/>) has completed many K-12 projects in the Commonwealth, including two prior projects which successfully joined two school communities together. DiNisco Design joins the Owner’s Project Manager, Anser Advisory Management LLC, on the consultant team for the Town’s elementary school building project.
 - The MSBA Designer Selection Panel has jurisdiction over the procurement of designers in connection with cities, towns, and regional school districts seeking funding from the MSBA for most public school construction projects. The designer selection process

incorporates the procedures required by the General Laws of Massachusetts pertaining to designer services for public building construction.

- Three members of Amherst's Elementary School Building Committee (Town Councilor and Committee Chair Cathy Schoen, Superintendent Mike Morris, and School Committee Member Ben Herrington) participated in the designer selection process.

Projects Update:

- Dog Park: The work on the dog park continues. Increased costs were identified and a request for funds was presented to the Town Council on November 15th and reviewed by the Finance Committee on November 16th.
- 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 discussed the maintenance fund at its meeting on November 16th.
- 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. I anticipate the first stakeholder meeting will be in January.
- Hickory Ridge: See above.
- 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 the Town Council meeting on November 29th.
- 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
 - Proposals are due on November 19th. 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 22nd – Town Council meeting
- November 24-25 – Thanksgiving Day holidays
- November 29th – Town Council meeting
- December 3rd – Merry Maple Celebration
- December 6th – State of the Town addresses
- December 6th – Town Council meeting
- December 13th – Town Council meeting
- December 20th – Town Council meeting
- January 3rd – Town Council swearing-in and meeting

BIENNIAL TOWN ELECTION
OFFICIAL CERTIFIED RESULTS
All races EXCEPT District 4 Councilor
November 2, 2021

In accordance with the Warrant, the polls were opened at 7:00 am and closed at 8:00 pm. The voters cast their ballots in their respective precincts. The results were as follows:

COUNCILOR AT-LARGE (Vote for Three)	
Robert E. Greeney	1047
Viraphanh Douangmany Cage	1734
Andrew J. Steinberg	2647
Mandi Jo Hanneke	2697
Elisha M. Walker	3209
Vincent J. O'Connor	1111
	0
All Others	27
Blank	2654
TOTAL	15126

Ballots Cast x 3

DISTRICT 1 COUNCILOR (Vote for Two)	
Michele Miller	296
Cathy A. Schoen	352
	0
	0
	0
	0
	0
All Others	8
Blank	408
TOTAL	1064

Pcts. 1 & 3 Ballots Cast x 2

DISTRICT 2 COUNCILOR (Vote for Two)	
Lynn Griesemer	957
Patricia C. De Angelis	880
	0
	0
All Others	17
Blank	830
TOTAL	2684

Pcts. 2 & 6 Ballots Cast x 2

DISTRICT 3 COUNCILOR (Vote for Two)	
Dorothy S. Pam	235
George E. Ryan	190
Jennifer Lynn Taub	247
	0
All Others	3
Blank	157
TOTAL	832

Pcts. 4 & 10 Ballots Cast x 2

DISTRICT 4 COUNCILOR (Vote for Two)	
Evan Robert Ross	473
Pamela S. Rooney	479
Anika M. Lopes	595
	0
All Others	0
Blank	420
TOTAL	1968

Pcts. 5 & 9 Ballots Cast x 2

DISTRICT 5 COUNCILOR (Vote for Two)	
Shalini Bahl-Milne	1160
Ana Devlin Gauthier	1102
	0
	0
All Others	26
Blank	1248
TOTAL	3536

Pcts. 7 & 8 Ballots Cast x 2

Unofficial - To be Recounted

SCHOOL COMMITTEE (Vote for Five)	
Peter M. Demling	2498
Irvin E. Rhodes	2290
Phoebe Merriam	1905
Jennifer Shiao Page	2372
Heather Amara Lord	1967
Benjamin Joseph Herrington	2918
Allison Bleyler McDonald	2334
	0
All Others	22
Blank	8904
TOTAL	25210

HOUSING AUTHORITY (Vote for Three)	
Nancy Ellen Schroeder	2118
David W. Williams	1635
Jessica Ruth Mix Barrington	1586
Michael A. Burkart	1903
	0
	0
	0
	0
All Others	13
Blank	7871
TOTAL	15126

LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES (Vote for Six)	
Robert Pam	2448
Farah Ameen	2549
Austin D. Sarat	2448
Lee R. Edwards	2341
Alexandra J. Lefebvre	2436
Tamson M. Ely	2302
	0
All Others	130
Blank	15598
TOTAL	30252

ELECTOR, OLIVER SMITH WILL (Vote for One)	
Carol Jeannette Gray	1827
Sarah A. Marshall	1468
	0
	0
	0
	0
	0
All Others	9
Blank	1738
TOTAL	5042

BALLOT QUESTION	
Yes	3231
No	1709
Blank	102
TOTAL	5042

The public announcement was made at 10:55 pm on November 2, 2021. 5,042 ballots were cast, representing 31.15% of the 16,187 voters qualified to vote in this election.

Attest:

Susan Audette
Town Clerk