



To: Town Council  
Fr: Paul Bockelman  
Town Manager  
Dt: April 21, 2022  
Re: Town Manager Report for April 25, 2022

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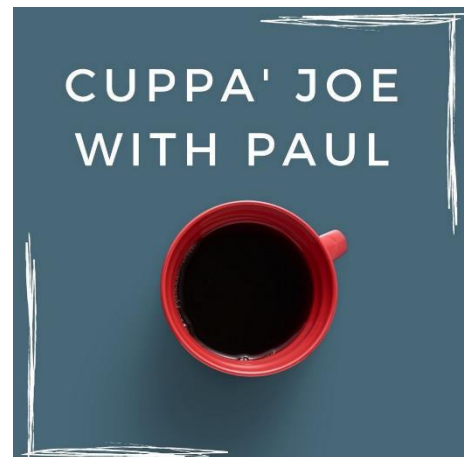
All Town Manager Reports are available on the Town's website here:  
<https://www.amherstma.gov/Archive.aspx?AMID=240>

### **COVID-19**

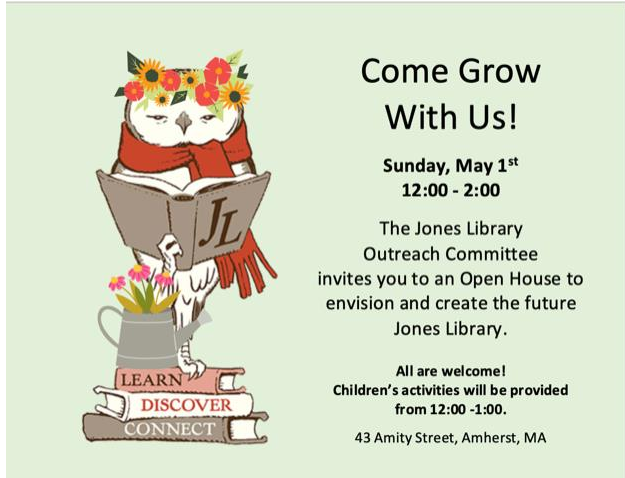
- **Vaccines:** Free vaccines are offered every Thursday from 3:00 pm - 5:00 pm at the Bangs Community Center. This clinic is open for 1st, 2nd, 3rd, or additional booster doses. To schedule an appointment, please click here [www.amherstcovid19.org/vaccine](http://www.amherstcovid19.org/vaccine) If you are coming for a 2nd, 3rd, or booster dose, please bring your vaccination record card or other proof of your vaccination.
- **Wastewater Testing:** The Assistant Superintendent of Public Works, Health Director, and I met with decision makers at the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH), Bureau of Infectious Disease and Laboratory Sciences. DPH agreed to add the Town of Amherst as one of 16 communities that will have their wastewater effluent tested for the COVID-19 virus. Three or four samples a week will be submitted to the State for analysis. This is available until June 30<sup>th</sup> and we are advocating for State funds to continue the testing beyond. This is the best way, in our opinion, to monitor the virus now that community testing has been reduced in Amherst.

### **Outreach and Advocacy**

- **Cuppa Joe with Paul:**
  - We had a very large turnout for our first in-person Cuppa Joe of the year, which was held on Friday, April 15<sup>th</sup> at the Bangs Community Center. My special guest was Earl Miller, the Town's new Director of Community Responders (CRESS) who met with and talked with all of those in attendance. I counted nearly 50 residents in attendance.



- The next Cuppa Joe will be on Friday, May 6<sup>th</sup> at 8:30 a.m. The special guest will be Finance Director Sean Mangano. This session will be held on Zoom so that it can be recorded and shared on the Town’s website and budget pages. We will be available to discuss and answer your questions on Amherst's FY23 Proposed Budget. The session will be added to the [Town's YouTube Channel](#). You may view previous virtual community meetings and chats by clicking [here](#). Guests have the opportunity to ask questions live, or people may submit questions in advance to [sunrydb@amherstma.gov](mailto:sunrydb@amherstma.gov) with the e-mail subject line "Cuppa"
- **Jones Library Outreach:** The Jones Library Building Committee will be hosting its first Community Outreach Event for the Renovated and Expanded Building project. On May 1st from 12-2 the Outreach Committee will provide the opportunity to engage with each other and library staff to be reintroduced to the programming elements for the renovated and expanded library, ask questions, and provide thoughts, ideas, and hopes.
- **ICMA Presentation:** Police Captain Gabe Ting and I spoke at the International City Management Association (ICMA) regional conference on April 7<sup>th</sup>. Our session topic was titled: “Organizational Change in Policing”. There was an overflow crowd interested in the presentation that included presentations by the Police Chiefs from Arlington and Carlisle.
- **Communications Manager Presentation:** Communications Manager Brianna Sunryd will be a panelist at the upcoming National Center for Public Performance Symposium on April 22<sup>nd</sup>. The topic will focus on why government communicates performance, to whom, for what, and how government can determine if its communication efforts are working well and how it learns and improves its communication efforts continually. Ms. Sunryd is the only small local government person on a panel that includes representatives from larger governmental units.
- **Healthy Living Community Festival:** Town staff are supporting the Julius Ford Harriet Tubman Healthy Living Community in Partnership with the Human Rights Commission for a day of music, food, games, basketball tournament, and community on Saturday, May 7<sup>th</sup> from 12:00 pm to 5:00 p.m., at the Mill River Recreation area. All are invited.
- **Spring Clean-up:**
  - The Community Participation Officers are organizing a Spring Clean-up on Saturday **April 30<sup>th</sup> from 10am – Noon**. There will be three “rally sites”, the Jones Library, Groff Park, and the Mill River Recreation area. Numerous Town Councilors have volunteered to help as location captains.
  - Volunteers will report to one of three rally sites. Each rally point will be staffed by a team of captains with area assignments and more details. Supplies will be provided but we do



encourage participants to bring their own work gloves or eye protection. Trash bags and limited other supplies will be available.

- Learn more at [www.engageamherst.org/cleanup2022](http://www.engageamherst.org/cleanup2022)
- Drop a pin for a spot in Amherst that could use some attention from our clean-up volunteers on our [crowdsourcing map](#).



- [Register](#) to help out at the Community Clean-Up Day using the registration form on our [project page](#)
- Have questions, suggestions, or ideas? Email us at [getinvolved@amherstma.gov](mailto:getinvolved@amherstma.gov) or call (413) 259-3002
- Get social: on the day of the Community Clean-Up, share your photos to Facebook and Twitter, tagging us @TownofAmherst and using hashtag #AmherstMA
- **Spring Clean-up Community Celebration:** The Clean-up event will be followed by a community celebration on the Town Common. The celebration will be sponsored by the Business Improvement District and will include magicians, music, food, and drinks for all ages.

### In the Wings

- **Town Attorney:** The Town Attorney will be meeting with the Town Council on April 25<sup>th</sup> to address questions on open meeting law and conflict of interest law that Councilor may have.
- **Budget:** I will be presenting the FY23 Annual Budget and Capital Improvement Program to the Town Council at its meeting on May 2<sup>nd</sup>.
- **Mosquito Control:** The Health Director will be recommending that the Town join a regional mosquito control district which will require Town Council approval on May 16<sup>th</sup>.

### Colleges and University

- **University of Massachusetts at Amherst:**
  - The University decided to change its academic calendar for 2022-2023. Significantly, the change includes extending the winter break and delaying graduation to Memorial Day. For the past decade, it had been held in mid-May.
  - The decision by the University to change its academic calendar to delay graduation next year to Memorial Day, from the current second weekend in May, will have direct consequences on the Town, its staff, and local businesses. This new graduation date would allow for several additional weeks in May where the demands on our public safety teams are heightened and will be a challenge for the Town to sustain.
  - The Town's mission is to ensure the health and safety of all members of our community – students and year-round residents alike – and to ensure that we have enough public safety personnel available to meet the needs of our community. We will continue to meet that mission.

### Racial Equity

- **Community Responders Program:**
  - The new Director has made a positive impact in Town as he continues to meet people, approve job positions, develops scheduling options, and works through the details of the

new department. He will be attending District Meetings, when invited by Town Councilors and is trying to meet as many people as possible.

- He is conducting interviews for an operations person and we will be advertising for the Community Responders in the very near future.
- An extensive profile of Earl Miller was published by The Reminder. It can be found here: <https://www.thereReminder.com/localnews/amherst/miller-reflects-on-path-to-becoming-amhersts-cress/>
- The Town secured a grant of \$2,500 to purchase an Automated External Defibrillator (AED) from the State office of Public Safety and Security.
- Work continues on building out space at the Bangs Community Center to house the new CRESS program. This work was designed and overseen by the Town's Facilities Department.
- The League of Women Voters is hosting a welcome reception for the Town's new CRESS and DEI leadership on May 22<sup>nd</sup> from 2:00 – 4:00 p.m. at Groff Park.
- **DEI Department:** The interview team has reviewed and interviewed candidates for the Director position. A short list was recommended to me for final interviews which took place this week. We are reviewing all of the applicants' information and I expect to make an appointment in the very near future.
- **Community Safety and Social Justice Committee:** The Assistant Director of DEI has been working to find a first meeting date that all appointed members can attend.

## **Department Updates**

- **Finance:**
  - The Finance Department and Town Manager are finalizing the capital and operating budgets in preparation for presenting to the Town Council on May 2<sup>nd</sup>.
  - You can learn more about the upcoming budget [here](#), documents and resources will be added as they become available. You may access current and previous years' budgets at [www.amherstma.gov/budget](http://www.amherstma.gov/budget)
- **Public Works:**
  - **Amity Street Sidewalk:** The Town has contracted to remove and replace the sidewalk on both sides of Amity St between Peoples Bank and Lincoln Avenue. Portions of the on-street parking are closed for the next couple weeks while the work proceeds. Portions of the sidewalk will remain inaccessible periodically during construction.
  - **Proposed Parking Regulations:**
    - The Town Services and Outreach Committee will hold a public hearing on proposed parking regulations on North Pleasant Street, from Hallock Street to Triangle Street on Thursday, May 5, 2022 at 6:30 p.m. via Zoom.
    - The staff proposal is to establish new parking regulations for the spaces that are created on North Pleasant Street between McClellan Street and Triangle Street – other than designated handicapped spaces –and that they be metered and charged at the rate of 50 cents per hour from 8:00 a.m. until 8:00 p.m. and that these regulations take effect upon completion of construction of the parking spaces. The Town Council may want to consider designating some of the spaces as permit-parking spaces, to accommodate residents in the area.

- Pavement Planning: The Superintendent of Public Works and Town Engineer made a detailed presentation on the condition of the Town's roads and the process used to evaluate and determine paving priorities at the most recent meeting of the Town Services and Outreach Committee. The presentation and support material will be uploaded to the Town's website. I encourage members of the Town Council to take the hour to watch the presentation.
- Trees:
  - The Tree Warden has determined that two trees on Sunset Street near the intersection of Fearing Street should be removed. The Public Shade Tree Committee held meetings at the site and recommended that one of the trees not be removed. Members of the neighborhood are opposed to the decision to remove the trees.
  - The property owner/developer wrote to say that he has listened to the neighborhood's concerns for the large tree at the corner of Fearing Street and Sunset Avenue. And, although the Tree Warden believes the tree should be removed, the property owner agreed to work around it during the construction of the project. The Tree Warden has determined that the tree is nearing the end of its life and that it will need to be pruned back significantly to provide it with the best chance of survival. The Tree Warden has also provided advice to the property owner on how to mitigate damage to the tree during construction.
  - The smaller tree further to the south on Sunset Avenue is directly over the Town's antiquated sewer line which the Public Works Department needs to upgrade for the entire neighborhood. Doing this work without removing the tree would be extremely difficult. The property owner will be responsible for the cost to remove the tree, upgrading the Town's sewer, and planting new trees in its place.
  - This is a good outcome to this potentially contentious issue.
- Roads:
  - Northampton Road: Caracas Construction continues to work on road construction along Northampton Road. This project is part of the Massachusetts Department of Transportation roadway reconstruction project that extends between University Drive and South Pleasant Street. This work will be a major disruption to local travel.
  - Snell Street and University Drive South: The developer of the project at the intersection of Northampton Road and University Drive South has begun construction of a new mini-roundabout at the intersection of University Drive South and Snell Street.
- Economic Development:
  - Farmers Market: The Amherst Farmers Market will open its season on Saturday, April 23<sup>rd</sup>! The Market would like to thank the Town Council for its continuing support for a successful Farmers Market on the Town Common.
  - Parklets: Working with the Amherst Business Improvement District, the Economic Development Council of Western Massachusetts awarded a grant of \$80,750 to install parklets to accommodate outdoor dining on Amity Street (Amherst Coffee) and South Pleasant Street (La Veracruzana and Fresh Side). These attractive, professionally built

dining areas will be ADA accessible and support the economic recovery of the downtown area. The BID will be managing this project with support from Town staff.

- Concerts: Sweetser Park will be a happening place this summer. Concerts are planned at Sweetser Park on June 24, June 25, June 26, July 10, July 30, August 19, and August 21. Most will run from 5:30 – 7:00 p.m.

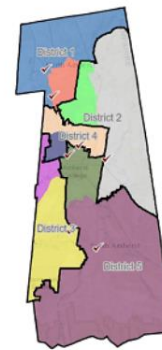
- Public Safety:

- Web-Bear-nar: Town staff, working with Councilor Lopes and the Animal Welfare Officer, has organized a Zoom session on bears in Amherst. There appears to be increased activity of bears in the Town in recent years. The State's Black Bear and Furbearer expert from the Division of Fish and Wildlife will make a presentation and be available to answer questions. The event will be on **May 4<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 p.m.** on Zoom
- Fire Chief Legislation: H. 4356, the legislation that the Town Council submitted to permit the Fire Chief to continue employment beyond his 65<sup>th</sup> birthday, completed a hearing in front of the Joint Committee on Public Safety. We'll continue to work with Sen. Comerford and her office to ensure that after the Senate, when it gets to the Governor, it gets signed (aka crosses the finish line).
- Fire Staffing: Six new firefighters applicants were offered positions with the Town with an expected start date of May 2<sup>nd</sup>. If all pass background checks and accept the positions, this will be a significant new addition to the Department. Some of these position will fill recent vacancies created by retirements or resignations and some are being supported by ARPA funds.
- Ambulance Accident:
  - There was an unfortunate accident on April 19<sup>th</sup> that caused a wheel on a Town ambulance to sheer off in Northampton. Fortunately, there were no injuries.
  - I have asked the Fire Department to look into the cause and review the Town's protocols going forward. I have also asked the Fire Department to re-inspect all Town ambulances to determine if this is a problem that is unique to this vehicle or could happen to another vehicle.
  - As background, the Town maintains a regular inspection and maintenance schedule that includes:
    - All Town ambulances receiving their annual state vehicle inspection in August every year. This vehicle was last inspected on 8/2/2021 and passed.
    - All Town ambulances receiving their state Office of Emergency Medical Services inspection annually in August or September which then relicenses them for another year.
    - All Town ambulances receiving weekly vehicle checks by on-duty firefighters.
  - The Town operates with five ambulances and follows a standard replacement schedule that rotates the oldest ambulances to a back-up position. At the time of this accident, the Town's newest ambulance, purchased four months ago, was out of service as it was being serviced at the dealer necessitating the activation of this ambulance.

- Town Clerk:

- Reprecincting:

- As you know, every ten years, the legislature and local governments must redraw boundaries that take into consideration population, communities of interest, and state and federal constitutional requirements, amongst other factors. Population is determined by the most recent Federal Census. Amherst’s population per the 2020 Federal Census is 39,263 which represents an increase of 1,444 from the 2010 population (or 3.8%).



**IMPORTANT  
NOTICE TO  
REGISTERED  
VOTERS IN THE  
TOWN OF  
AMHERST**

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**CHANGES TO  
VOTING  
PRECINCTS**

- In Amherst, we will continue to have 10 precincts for all elections (no change). The precincts, however, have been renamed to correspond to each district in which they reside. The following chart shows the new precinct names and their voting locations.
    - We have received the Secretary of State’s update of the Voter Registration Information System (VRIS). Town Clerk and I.T. staff reviewed the update for accuracy and returned the file to the State. The State has made the changes in the resident/voter database.
    - The Town Council has voted to confirm the voting locations at an upcoming meeting. With this vote, the Town Clerk has notified all voters that:
      - Pursuant to MGL Ch. 54 §6, the Town of Amherst has changed its voting precincts as a result of population changes from the 2020 Federal Census. For all voters, your precinct number has changed to reflect the renaming of precincts to correspond to their districts.
      - To view updated precincts, voting locations, and maps [click here.](#)

- Town Census: The Amherst 2022 Annual Census Listing has been mailed to all households. The Town Clerk asks all to sign and return this form within ten (10) days, even if NO changes are necessary. Residents may return the census by mail, in person at the Town Clerk's Office, by fax (413-259-2499) or email to [census@amherstma.gov](mailto:census@amherstma.gov).

- Human Resources:

- Town staff were trained in active shooter (“Alice”) training. This training offered by trained police officers prepares Town staff in Town Hall for potential violent situations. Unfortunately, this is important training for our staff and we are planning to offer it at other municipal building locations. This training is available to the Town Council and other committees, if desired.
  - The department continues numerous ongoing collective bargaining negotiations including preparing for collective bargaining for FY23 and addressing impact bargaining rights of the employees as we discuss ARPA premium pay and introducing the new CRESS Community Responder program and Police Resident Oversight Board.

- Conservation and Development:
  - South Landfill:
    - The Town’s capped landfill on the south side of Belchertown Road – across from the current Transfer Station and solar project - has been set aside as conservation land. This is called the South Landfill.
    - The main purpose of protecting the land is to mitigate the impact of the solar panels, specifically on how they may affect the habitat of the grasshopper sparrow, a state-listed threatened species. This was a condition of state and local approvals to have the solar project placed on the capped landfill on the north side of Belchertown Road.
    - This 53-acre South Landfill site will be monitored by a conservation restriction held by Kestrel Land Trust. A small section of the now protected land is carved out for the Town’s new dog park.
    - To move this project forward, the Town is getting ready to install a fence on the South Landfill that will safeguard the landfill cap and protect the habitat of the grasshopper sparrow. This work has been informed by extensive discussions with the Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program and Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection.
  - Planning:
    - Parklets Grant: The Town and Business Improvement District were awarded a Regional Economic Development Organization Grant (REDO Grant) for \$80,750 to install 2-3ADA accessible parklets in downtown Amherst in order to create outdoor dining/retail spaces. Each 36-foot long parklet would take over two on-street parking spaces in front of a restaurant or retail shop. The adjacent sidewalk to each parklet location will be maintained as a pedestrian pathway. This grant is administered through the Massachusetts Office of Business Development and Economic Development Council of Western Massachusetts (EDC).
  - Sustainability: I have finalized the solar bylaw working group and am contacting committees for members.
  - Sheltering:
    - 132 Northampton Road: Valley CDC has begun construction of 28 small studio apartments for low-income individuals, including more than a third that will be set aside for those who have recently been homeless, in March.
    - Conservation: The parking area at Amethyst Conservation Area will be closed on Thursday, April 14th to accommodate the delivery of telephone poles as part of the bridge reconstruction project. The parking area, located at 132 Pelham Road, will be closed from 7:00 AM – 3:00 PM on this day.
- Community Services:
  - Senior Center:
    - The Town is working with staff from Pioneer Valley Planning Commission who are assisting with the Livable Amherst Community Survey Age & Dementia Friendly Community Project. The Town has developed a site on Engage Amherst site for the Age-Friendly and Dementia-Friendly initiative where people can check



for updates and engagement opportunities. It can be found here:

[www.engageamherst.org/agefriendly](http://www.engageamherst.org/agefriendly)

- The Age and Dementia Friendly Community Project Working Group is meeting on April 25<sup>th</sup> at 2:30 to discuss the survey, upcoming listening sessions, and develop plans for in-person community engagement events.
- Veterans Services: The Veterans Services Department will be organizing a Memorial Day parade on Monday, May 30<sup>th</sup>. Assembly for the parade will take place at 8:45 a.m. on the Town Common and Spring Street Parking Lot. The parade will step off at 9:00 a.m. and will march from the Town Common to the War Memorial on Triangle Street. A ceremony will take place at the War Memorial near the swimming pool.
- Recreation Department:
  - Vacation Camp: Prime Time afterschool is running Vacation Camp during school vacation week. Among the events planned are a Birds of Prey presentation, a science museum field trip, and a field trip to Mill River. At Mill River, they will be invited to participate in a street hockey clinic that has been organized in conjunction with the Boston Bruins.
  - Youth Sports: Sports schedules are being finalized. But youth leagues in volleyball, lacrosse, and baseball started practices the past couple weeks. Games begin as early as next week. Other clinic work (basketball, ultimate, track) will begin soon also. I will share schedules when they are finalized and let you know about Sandlot activity also.
  - Fireworks: The Recreation Department will return with fireworks to celebrate Independence Day. The fireworks are scheduled for the evening of Friday, July 1<sup>st</sup> to kick off the holiday weekend.
  - Other Activities: Here are some of the other activities the Recreation Department is planning:
    - April 21<sup>st</sup>: The Roots of Black Music in America Performance at the Jones Library.
    - April 24<sup>th</sup>: Big Brothers Big Sisters Daffodil Run Face Painting.
    - April 30<sup>th</sup>: Town-wide clean-up celebration activities.
    - May 11<sup>th</sup>: Get out and Plan Summer Sports Bag Give-away at Kendrick Park.
    - May 21<sup>st</sup>: Wayfinders SummerFest Barbecue.
    - June 11<sup>th</sup>: Summer Health Fitness Day at Kendrick Park, Groff Park, and Mill River Recreation Area.
    - June 25<sup>th</sup>: Library Flying High Dogs at Groff Park.
    - July 1<sup>st</sup>: Independence Day Kick-off Fireworks and events.
  - Arts: A new group, the *Performing Arts and Education Collaborative*, has reached out to the Town to seek space that would support the artistic endeavors of the member organizations. We have reviewed Town space with the group. Unfortunately, there are no Town facilities that are readily available to accommodate their stated needs. The member organizations include the following arts organizations: Amherst Ballet, Amherst Community Theater, Center Dance,

Hampshire Shakespeare, Pioneer Valley Symphony Orchestra, Rainbow Players, Starlight Youth Theater, and Valley Light Opera.

### **Delegated Authority:**

- Short-Term Event Uses of Town Commons (Section 1a of the Town Council Policy):
  - August 22-29, 2022: Community Fair by Amherst Rotary Club (South Common)
  - May 19-21, 2022.: Plant Sale by Garden Club of Amherst (South Common)
  - October 13-14, 2023: Cider Run by Amherst A Better Chance
- Short-Term Parking Requests (Section 2a of the Town Council Policy):
  - April 24, 2022: Big Brothers Big Sisters for annual Daffodil Fun Run (25 parking spaces on Boltwood Avenue on Sunday)
- Short-Term Road or Sidewalk Closures (Section 3b of the Town Council Policy):
  - April 24, 2022: Big Brothers Big Sisters for annual Daffodil Fun Run includes reserved metered parking on Boltwood Avenue and use of roads for 10k and 5k races including Main Street, North Whitney Street, Strong Street, East Pleasant Street, and North Pleasant Street starting and ending at the Town Common
  - May 7, 2022: Cushman Scott Children’s Center to close Henry Street from Market Hill Road to Pine Street for annual May celebration, 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon.
- Placement of Road and Temporary Signs (Section 3d of the Town Council Policy):
  - Stop sign on Potwine Lane at West Street
  - Yield signs (4) on cut-throughs on South Amherst Common between Shays Street and South East Street

### **Major Capital Projects:**

- Jones Library:
  - As mentioned above, the Outreach Subcommittee is holding a Community Outreach Event for the Renovated and Expanded Building project. On May 1st from 12-2 the Outreach Subcommittee will provide the opportunity to engage with each other and library staff to be reintroduced to the programming elements for the renovated and expanded library, ask questions, provide thoughts, ideas, and hopes the Jones Library Building Committee is meeting every two weeks.
  - The design firm met with the Design Subcommittee to begin developing more detailed plans for the renovated and expanded building.
- DPW Building/Fire Building: Staff are exploring multiple options for a new site for the Department of Public Works.
- Schools: The Elementary School Building Committee is meeting every two weeks. Updates can be found on the project’s [new webpage](#).

### **Projects Update:**

- Dog Park: Construction has resumed on the dog park with fencing installed and topsoil laid. Once seeded, it will take several months
- North Common Restoration/Main Street Parking Lot: No updates.
- North Amherst Library: The bid deadline and opening for the North Amherst Library was held on April 4<sup>th</sup>. Three bids came in to build the addition and make modifications to the North Amherst Library. The bids were significantly higher than the architects projected back in June. We have

analyzed the reasons for the increases and have a list of items that influenced the bids, but the driver seems to be real uncertainty in the labor and supply markets. The bids were: \$1,725,426; \$1,910,180; and \$2,308,250. Earlier projections by a professional estimator were in the \$1.2m range. The architect and I met and reviewed the bids with the anonymous donor. While still interested, we are following up on some questions the donor has raised. As you may recall, this is one of our pre-planned “stopping points” for this project. It is when we decide if we want to move forward with the project or not. The project moves forward only if there are enough donated funds available to complete the project. We have had productive discussions with the anonymous donor and are working out the details to ensure we can move this project forward.

- Hickory Ridge: Town staff are preparing an assessment of the existing structures to determine which are usable and which are not.
- Pomeroy Village MassWorks Grant: Additional design work by the Public Works Town Engineer has addressed most of the concerns of the abutting property owners.
- Solar on the Landfill: Substantial work has been completed on the installation of the solar panels.

### **Upcoming Meetings and Events:**

- May 2<sup>nd</sup> – Town Council meeting
- May 16<sup>th</sup> – Town Council meeting
- May 30<sup>th</sup> – Memorial Day holiday and parade
- June 6<sup>th</sup> – Town Council meeting
- June 13<sup>th</sup> – Town Council meeting
- June 19<sup>th</sup> – Juneteenth celebration
- June 20<sup>th</sup> – Juneteenth holiday
- June 27<sup>th</sup> – Town Council meeting
- July 4<sup>th</sup> – Independence Day