



To: Town Council
Fr: Paul Bockelman
Town Manager
Dt: June 24, 2022
Re: Town Manager Report for June 27, 2022

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

Outreach and Advocacy

- Cuppa Joe with Paul: I hope to be starting up the Cuppa Joe with Paul in July. I have scheduled Friday, July 22nd for the next Cuppa which will feature our new Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. More to come.
- Juneteenth Weekend:
 - Heritage Walking Tour: On Saturday, a first-time collaboration between Ancestral Bridges and the Amherst Historical Society & Museum celebrated Juneteenth. The walking tour explored the unique history and contributions of generations of Black families in Amherst curated and guided by descendants. The tour started at the historic West Cemetery, proceeded to the Emily Dickinson Museum, then the Amherst History Museum which features special immersive events and exhibits by Ancestral Bridges with images, artifacts, photographs, and millinery that animate the essence of the unique Black neighborhoods and first Black families in Amherst, including the Historic Westside District. There was also an immersive encampment by the Peter Brace Brigade on the lawn and a special gallery exhibit of the Museum's special Civil War artifacts and clothing of the period. The tour ended in the afternoon with two important historic churches. Hope Church, the first Black



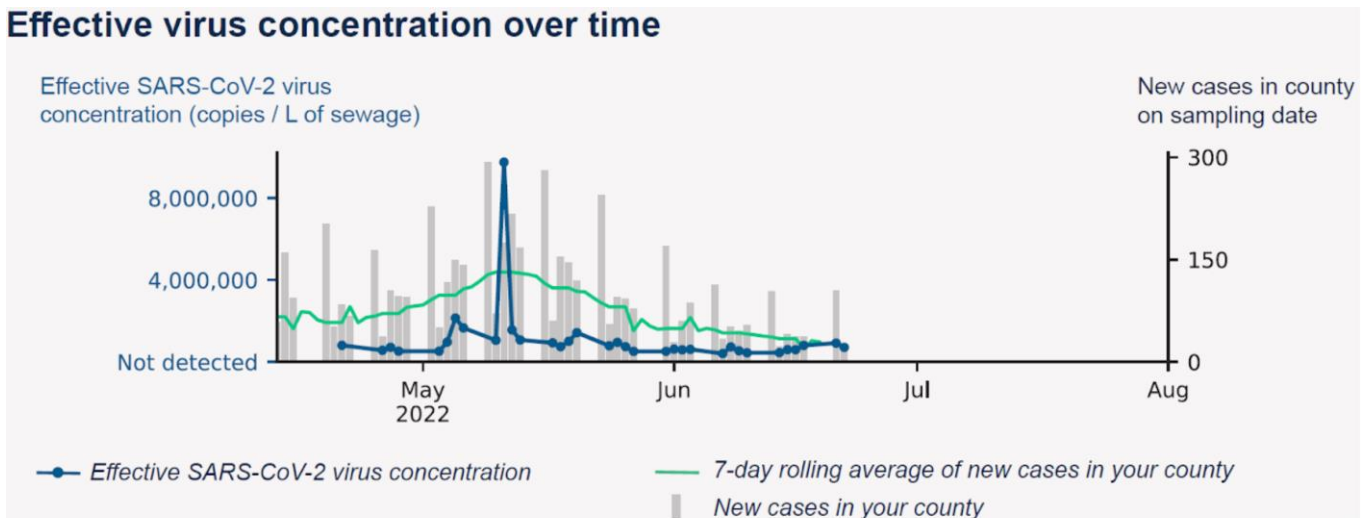
Congregational Church in Amherst. The second church and final stop was the Goodwin Memorial A.M.E Zion Church, the first Black church in Amherst founded by former members of Zion Chapel at Amherst College.

- Juneteenth Jubilee Celebration: On Sunday, June 19th, there was a full afternoon of events on the Town Common beginning at 12:00 noon and continuing until 6:00 p.m. There were performance, food and beverages, and numerous activities.
- Juneteenth Holiday: On Monday, June 20th, municipal offices were closed to celebrate the Juneteenth holiday.
- State Advocacy: The Town is well-represented at the State level where Town officials serve on important advocacy committees. Here are some examples:
 - Councilor Steinberg on the Massachusetts Municipal Association’s Fiscal Policy Committee
 - Councilor Hanneke on the Massachusetts Municipal Association’s Municipal and Regional Administration Committee
 - Town Manager Bockelman on the Massachusetts Municipal Association’s Public Works, Transportation, and Public Utilities Committee
 - Fire Captain Olmstead on the State-wide Opioid Recovery and Remediation Fund Advisory Council
 - Public Works Assistant Superintendent Rusiecki to the State Water Resources Management Advisory Committee

COVID-19

- Wastewater Testing:
 - Testing of the Town’s wastewater – supported by the State Department of Public Health – will continue into the future. It was originally slated to end on June 30th.
 - The information collected – and much more information - can be found here: <https://www.amherstcovid19.org/surveillance>
 - Here is a chart that is on the Town’s website that is updated weekly.

Effective virus concentration over time



Above: Graph from the Amherst, MA most recent sample, to view full reports [please click here](#)

- 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 If you are coming for a 2nd, 3rd, or booster dose, please bring your vaccination record card or other proof of your vaccination.
 - The Public Health Department is preparing to administer vaccines for younger children, who are now permitted to receive the vaccine.

Colleges and University

- University of Massachusetts at Amherst:
 - Orientation: Over the next several years, the University will transition from summer orientation sessions (22 scheduled this summer, 11 in-person and 11 via Zoom) to orientation sessions immediately prior to the first day of class. This schedule matches most other colleges and universities.
 - Lincoln Avenue: University representatives indicated they do not have plans to close Lincoln Avenue at its intersection with Massachusetts Avenue.
- Amherst College: No updates.
- Hampshire College: No updates.

Racial Equity

- Reparations: The Town Attorney is finalizing draft legislation which I will share with the African Heritage Reparation Assembly (AHRA) for review prior to submitting it to the Town Council for its review. Ultimately, this will require action by the State Legislature. I expect to have a draft by July 1st.
- Community Responders Program:
 - Amherst Police & Community Responders (CRESS) Joint Public Forum: On Tuesday, June 14th, the Director of Community Responders and Police Captain held a public forum hosted by the Senior Center. The addressed the questions: What is CRESS? How will this new department impact police service? What will its focus be on mental health and how will it work with the Police Department in its efforts to best serve the community.
 - Operations Assistant: Kat Newman has been hired as the operations assistant and began work on June 10th. She will be key to implementing the CRESS program and brings experience to the Town as the person who designed and implemented our well-regarded Ambassadors program during the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - Community Responders: I have appointed eight new Community Responders after an extensive interview and vetting process. The Community Responders will begin work on July 5th and immediately engage in about eight weeks of training, skills building, and creating their team.
 - Community Responders Office: Work is nearing completion 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. Their oversight and actual work saved the Town about \$50,000 in the process.

- Swearing-in Ceremony: We will be hosting a Swearing-in Ceremony on Tuesday, July 5th at 10:00 a.m. at the Bangs Community Center. We welcome members of the Town Council to attend and meet our new Community Responders.
- Outreach: The Community Responders Team has been conducting community events to introduce the program to the public. There have been events on June 11th at Village Park and on June 23rd at Rolling Green.
- DEI Department:
 - The new DEI Director will begin work on July 5th.
 - We will include the DEI Director and Assistant Director in the Swearing-in program.
 - I, along with the CRESS Director and Assistant DEI Director have been meeting weekly to plan and prepare for her arrival.
- Community Safety and Social Justice Committee:
 - The Committee had its first meeting on May 31st. The Committee elected Allegra Clark and Demetria Shabazz as co-chairs. The next meeting will be in July.
 - The next meeting will be in July after the DEI Director starts her duties.

Department Updates

- Finance:
 - FY23 Budget:
 - The Town Council held a public forum on the FY23 Operating Budget and voted to accept the FY23 Operating Budget as presented.
 - The Town Council held a public forum on the Capital Improvement Program and voted to accept the FY23 Capital Improvement Program as presented.
 - I.T.:
 - The I.T. Department received a significant Community Compact Cabinet Municipal Fiber Grant award of **\$295,925** to extend our municipal I.T. fiber into Pelham to service the Centennial Treatment Plant, and our emergency communications tower on Mount Lincoln in Pelham. The extension will also connect the Pelham Elementary School to the Town's I.T. infrastructure.
 - This is the second I.T. grant we received in the past six months. You may recall we received \$75k at the end of last year for downtown Wi-Fi improvements and expansion.
 - Specifically, this \$295k grant will allow us to run our Town fiber up Pelham and Amherst Roads to Mount Lincoln – our emergency radio transmitter – and connect the Centennial Treatment Plant, pump stations, and the Pelham School to the Town's fiber along the way. This will save the Town about \$12,000/year in Verizon fees and the schools about \$18,000 per year in Verizon fees.
 - This was a joint application with the Town of Pelham and we will have the ability to connect that community's municipal buildings to our fiber which would benefit them, as well, if they so choose. The joint application with Pelham made our application more competitive.
- Public Works:
 - Governor's Appointment: Governor Baker appointed Assistant Superintendent of Public Works Amy Rusiecki to the Water Resources Management Advisory Committee. This is a big honor for Amy and the Town. The Committee is to provide advice and consultation to

the Department of Environmental Protection concerning matters covered by Massachusetts General Law Chapter 21G. The Committee will review the development of standards, rules, and regulations for water resources management and shall supply recommendations concerning methods by which existing water management practices and the laws regulating them may be supplemented and improved and their administration financed. Congratulations, Amy!

- Centennial Water Treatment Facility:
 - The Town Council accepted the \$14 million dollars in loans to fund the construction of the new Centennial Water Treatment facility as part of the State Revolving Fund program.
 - As part of the award, the State has offered to reduce the borrowing rate to a 2 percent to 1.5 percent range for communities that are designated as a Housing Choice community, which applies to Amherst.
 - There is also a possibility for loan forgiveness of nearly 20% as a part of this opportunity.
 - We are now awaiting action by the State Legislature to allocate \$3.5million to the Town for the Centennial Water Treatment Facility. Unfortunately, this funding seems to be tied up on politics on Beacon Hill.
- Roads:
 - Paving: Paving of Bay Road, East Hadley Road, Meadow Street, and Russellville Road is scheduled to begin in mid-July.
 - 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. The contractor switched to working four 10-hour days to ensure there was no construction on Route 9 during the University's graduation. The contractor will continue this schedule to avoid other events in the coming weeks. If this schedule helps facilitate construction it could continue throughout the summer.
 - Mill Lane: Roadway reconstruction on Mill Lane, between Groff Park and West Street has begun. Portions of the sidewalk will remain inaccessible periodically during construction.
 - Snell Street and University Drive South: The developer of the project at the intersection of Northampton Road and University Drive South continues work on the new mini-roundabout at the intersection of University Drive South and Snell Street.
- Projects:
 - West Street Bridge: The rails on the east side of the West Street Bridge at Mill Lane are scheduled to be replaced. Town funds will be utilized. The project is set to be bid with an expected cost of about \$100,000.
 - West Street Sidewalk: The collapsed sidewalk will be replaced with a small bridge. The bridge has been purchased and the project will be going through permitting with the Conservation Commission during the Summer.

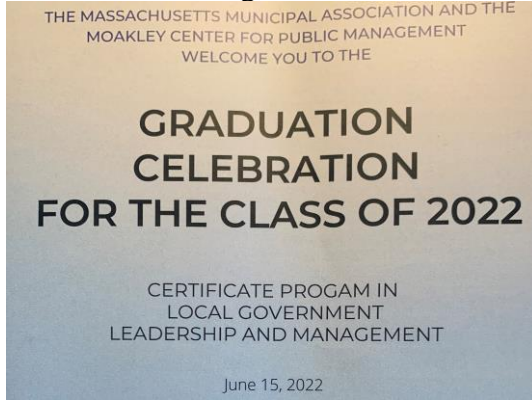
- Economic Development:
 - Grants: The Town allocated \$25,000 to help small, brick and mortar, storefront businesses throughout the Town with project-based grant assistance. There are limited funds and we want to make sure that these funds have a direct impact. A "Project" can be, but is NOT limited to: exterior upgrades such as paint, lighting, or awning replacement; interior upgrades such as paint, shelving, internal branding/marketing; Marketing Technology needs such as branding, logo upgrades, web design, social media training. The program is being managed and overseen by the Business Improvement District
 - Parklets:
 - Working with Town staff, the Business Improvement District (BID) was awarded an \$80,750 grant from the Regional Economic Development Organization (REDO) Grant program. The grant covered the materials, labor, and insurance for two ADA accessible “parklets” to accommodate outdoor dining spaces on Amity Street and South Pleasant Street. The Amherst BID is managing this project with support from the Amherst Planning Department staff.
 - The intention of the “parklets” is to create a pilot program of ADA accessible outdoor dining areas extending out from the sidewalk, at the same level of the sidewalk, and as wide as two parallel parking spaces. We hope these will be received well and that we can extend this program in the future if the community sees value in this program.
 - There was a formal ribbon cutting on June 6th.
- Public Safety:
 - Ambassadors:
 - Staffing of the Ambassadors program has been reduced but extensive work continues.
 - Since March 10th, the program has exceeded its targeted outreach efforts with nearly 2,000 interactions with individuals.
 - The Ambassadors have been supporting initiatives of the Health Department, initiating targeted neighborhood outreach, and weekly tabling at the Farmers Market and Town events.
 - Going forward, Ambassadors will be assisting at Puffer’s Pond, conducting trail-walking conversations, assisting the CRESS program in its outreach initiatives, conducting outreach to underserved/under-connected housing areas, and assisting with the library community engagement initiatives.
 - Fire Staffing:
 - Four newly hired firefighters (below) began their work at the Fire Department on May 23rd.
 - Two firefighters, who had been attending the Fire Academy, were back on shift beginning May 20th.
 - I have appointed a new Fire Captain who was sworn to duty on June 3rd.
- Town Clerk:
 - The FY23 state budget bill passed by the Senate includes language to extend temporary authorizations for remote local government meetings — currently due to expire on July 15

— through Dec. 15, 2023. The [budget bill passed by the House](#) in April does not include a remote meeting extension.

- Conflict of Interest Trainings: The State Ethics Commission is holding seminars July 28th, September 22nd, and December 1st, all at 10:00 a.m. Council member may register for these sessions at www.mass.gov/orgs/state-ethics-commission

- Human Resources:

- Graduate! Congratulations to Clerk to the Council Athena O’Keeffe for graduating from the Certificate Program in Local Government Leadership and Management,



HISTORY OF CERTIFICATE PROGRAM IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

On June 19, 2012, the first class of 24 students graduated from the original MMA/Suffolk Certificate Program hosted at the Natick Public Safety Center. That program was modeled after one developed by Rocco Longo, then the Town Administrator in Marshfield, for professional development for South Shore municipal employees.

Upon retirement in 2017, Rocco became a Senior Fellow and Certificate Liaison for the program until his sudden passing in 2019. The original curriculum was guided by the West Suburban Managers Group working with Nicole Rivers - Suffolk, Paul Bockelman - MMA, and Richard Kelliher who served as the first Certificate Liaison.

Today, we are graduating our 17th and 18th classes. We now have over 450 municipal employees that have graduated from these certificate programs. Please join us in congratulating our latest group who seek to provide the best of services to the residents of the communities in our great Commonwealth.

offered by Suffolk University and the Massachusetts Municipal Association. Athena joins Amy Rusiecki as a graduate of the program.

- The Human Resources Department has been extremely busy. They have been negotiating multiple collective bargaining agreements, conducting exit interviews for people who are leaving and onboarding new employees, recruiting candidates to our many openings, and addressing numerous staff issues.
- Conservation and Development:
 - Amethyst Brook: Conservation staff are working to reconstruct the foot bridge in the conservation area.
 - Disability Access: The Town is working on its FY22 Municipal ADA Improvement Grant.
 - Sustainability:
 - Solar Bylaw Working Group: The first meeting of the Working Group was held this week. Dwayne Breger was elected as chair and Martha Hanner was elected as vice-chair. The Working Group will be meeting regularly to meet its charge in the timeframe they have to complete the tasks.
 - Energy Efficiency in Rental Units:
 - The Town and partner organization, Family Outreach of Amherst, were awarded \$25,000 to conduct tenant outreach to understand renters' concerns and ideal outcomes for their homes regarding energy efficiency in Amherst.
 - The project outcome will be a white paper summarizing the renters' concerns and priorities, which will be used to inform the design of innovative programs or policies in Amherst such as rental efficiency standards.
 - The funding was awarded through the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center's (MassCEC) EmPower Massachusetts Program and provided by both MassCEC and the Department of Energy Resources (DOER).
 - Electric Bus: Town and School staff are investigating funding for a grant under the Authorized by the recently EPA's Clean School Bus Program which provided \$5 billion over the next five years to replace school buses with low- and zero-emission school buses. The first funding opportunity under this program will be the 2022 Clean School Bus Rebates. EPA will offer \$500 million for zero-emission and clean school bus rebates.
 - MassPowerChoice:
 - I signed a contract with MassPowerChoice to procure its services in developing and implementing an inter-municipal community choice aggregation (CCA) plan. I signed as the Town is the "lead community" on behalf of three municipalities – Amherst, Northampton and Pelham – who have spent the last few years researching and investigating the feasibility and potential benefits of developing an inter-municipal electricity aggregation.
 - The program will focus our purchasing and developing power on green energy that will help in meeting local and state carbon reduction goals. Valley Green Energy will address climate change by offering green electricity at a competitive rate, with an emphasis on reducing greenhouse

gas emissions and supporting local renewable energy projects and/or programs.

- MassPowerChoice will work with all three communities over the next few months to strategize community engagement while also developing the CCA application that will be submitted to the Department of Public Utilities (DPU) which serves as the granting authority.
- Sheltering:
 - 132 Northampton Road: Valley CDC continues 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.
 - Craig's Doors Shelter: The Shelter Director and its Board of Directors have parted ways.
- Community Services:
 - Senior Center: The Age & Dementia Friendly Amherst Working Group is hosting listening sessions in the Spring/Summer of 2022 to gather input from older adults and others who are aging in Amherst. Topics include: Aging in place; Home modifications and repairs; Affordability and Accessibility; New housing developments
 - Recreation Department:
 - Fireworks: The Recreation Department will return with fireworks to celebrate Independence Day.
 - The fireworks are scheduled for the evening of Friday, July 1st to kick off the holiday weekend. \
 - The evening will include Independence Day Celebration starting at 5:00 p.m. behind McGuirk Stadium on Stadium Drive. There will be fun for the whole family at this annual celebration. AND FREE parking. There will be live performances, hot air balloon rides, beer garden, games, prizes, food, raffles & more.
 - Fireworks will begin at 9:00 p.m.
 - Salsa at Kendrick Park: The Recreation Department a very successful "Salsa in the Park" event, free and open to the community. A local DJ played tropical and salsa dance music at Kendrick Park and there was much dancing with dance lessons. The next event will be on July 9th at 5:30 – 8:00 p.m. Future dates will be August 13th, September 10th, and October 8th.
 - Summer Camps: With school coming to a close, summer camps are ramping up.
 - Pools: Mill River Pool is open. Lap swim is from 10am-1pm and open swim is 1pm-6pm, both Saturday and Sunday. The opening of the War Memorial Pool is currently delayed due to an unforeseen mechanical issue. Updates on the situation will be announced as they are available.
 - Outreach Events: The Recreation Department has been working with other Town staff to connect with members of the community including:



- Mill River Community Festival on May 7th
- Kendrick Park Summer Sports Festival on May 11th
- Wayfinders Summerfest Barbecue on May 21st
- Village Park Community Engagement on June 11th
- Other Activities: Here are some of the other activities the Recreation Department is planning:
 - June 25th: Library Flying High Dogs at Groff Park.
 - July 1st: Independence Day kick-off Fireworks and events.

Delegated Authority:

- Short-Term Event Uses of Town Commons (Section 1a of the Town Council Policy):
 - Jewish Family Services of Western Massachusetts: July 23
 - Business Improvement District: July 22, 29 and August 5, 12
 - Common Share Food Coop: June 12
 - Community Fair by Amherst Rotary Club (South Common): August 22-29
 - Sustainability Festival by Town Staff (South Common): April 22, 2023
 - Cider Run by Amherst A Better Chance: October 13-14, 2023
- Short-Term Parking Requests (Section 2a of the Town Council Policy):
 - August 24, 2022: First Day Celebration at Kendrick Park (3:30 – 6:30 p.m.) reserve parking on the east side North Pleasant Street from McClellan Street to Triangle Street
- Short-Term Road or Sidewalk Closures (Section 3b of the Town Council Policy):
 - July 4, 2022: Independence Day Celebration (7:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.) close South East Street from Station Road to South Congregational Church
- Placement of Road and Temporary Signs (Section 3d of the Town Council Policy):

Major Capital Projects:

- Jones Library:
 - The nonprofit Friends of the Jones Libraries remitted \$500,000 to the town on Friday.
 - Costs for the \$36.3 million Jones Library Building Project are shared by the town of Amherst, the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC), and the Jones Library Trustees. Last November, Amherst voters affirmed the Amherst Town Council’s decisive 10-2 vote to allocate \$15.8 million for the project. The MBLC has awarded Amherst \$13.8 million. The remainder will be raised through grants from foundations, financial institutions, local, state, and federal grants and private donations through a collaborative capital campaign between the Jones Trustees and the Friends of the Jones Libraries nonprofit organization.
 - The Jones Library Building Project is currently in the building design phase with the town-appointed building committee actively seeking public input for the architectural plans. The renovation and expansion groundbreaking is anticipated in October 2023. When complete, the renovation and expansion will make the Jones Library one of the most climate-friendly buildings in Amherst, restoring most of the original 1928 building, expanding programming space to meet current and emerging needs, while improving the layout to be fully accessible for people with disabilities and more functional for everyone.

- More information on the project is available on the building project website at <https://www.amherstma.gov/3634/Jones-Library-Building-Committee>
- The Outreach Subcommittee has been holding Community Outreach Events for the Jones Library project. The Subcommittee is producing a weekly Newsletter to keep people up to date on the project. The newsletter can be found on the library website but also on the JLBC page on the Town website. Below is a link to the one that went out last week. The next one should be ready to go on Friday afternoon <https://www.amherstma.gov/Archive.aspx?AMID=262>
- The Subcommittee had a session on June 1st to review the updated Schematic Designs and will hold one on June 8th at 7 pm to review Community Outreach and Public Engagement <https://www.amherstma.gov/ArchiveCenter/ViewFile/Item/14739>
- Other outreach efforts included Olympia Oaks and Butternut Farms on May 21st, Village Park on June 11th, Amherst Survival Center every Thursday, Amherst Farmers Market every Saturday.
- **DPW Building/Fire Building:** Staff are exploring multiple options for a new site for the Department of Public Works.
- **Elementary School Building Committee:**
 - Fort River Elementary School was selected as the preferred site for a new elementary school.
 - The committee voted on June 24th to submit the Preferred Schematic Report to the Massachusetts School Building Authority. The very large report can be found here: <https://www.amherstma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/62350/DRAFT-of-Preferred-Schematic-Report-as-of-6-24-2022>

Preferred Schematic Report

Fort River Elementary School

Projects Update:

- **North Common Restoration/Main Street Parking Lot:**
The Town will be making a major announcement about this project the week of June 6th.
- **North Amherst Library:** There was a great ground-breaking ceremony at the North Amherst Library.
- **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
- **Dog Park:** Work is nearing completion and Town staff are hoping to schedule a ribbon-cutting, of sorts, for the end of July



Upcoming Meetings and Events:

- July 4th – Independence Day
- July 18th – Town Council Meeting
- August 1st – Town Council Meeting (if needed)

- August 15th – Town Council Meeting
- September 5th – Labor Day
- September 12th – Town Council Meeting
- September 19th – Town Council Meeting
- October 3rd – Town Council Meeting
- October 10th – Indigenous People’s Day
- October 17th – Town Council Meeting
- November 7th – Town Council Meeting
- November 11th – Veterans Day
- November 21st – Town Council Meeting
- November 24-25th – Thanksgiving Holiday
- December 5th – Town Council Meeting
- December 19th – Town Council Meeting
- December 23rd – Christmas Eve observed (half-day holiday)
- December 26th – Christmas Day observed
- January 2nd – New Year’s Day observed