



To: Town Council  
Fr: Paul Bockelman  
Town Manager  
Dt: September 9, 2022  
Re: Town Manager Report for September 12, 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>

### **Outreach and Advocacy**

- **Cuppa Joe with Paul:**
  - The last Cuppa which featured Tony Maroulis, the Executive Director of Community & Strategic Initiatives at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, was held on August 12<sup>th</sup> at Black Sheep Bakery and Deli. There was an excellent turnout and I appreciate the Town Councilors who took the time to attend.
  - The next Cuppa will feature our Public Health Team, Director Jennifer Brown and new Public Health Nurse Olivia Peters. As we enter the cooler weather and the next stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, we will have an informal conversation and updates on public health trends in Amherst. We will also have free COVID-19 tests to distribute! Meet us on **Thursday, September 15<sup>th</sup> from 8:30 – 9:30 a.m.** in the Large Activity Room at the Bangs Community Center.
- **Civic Engagement:** Community Participation Officers are working on a Civic Engagement class to help residents learn more about the Town's operations with the goal of creating more and deeper public engagement in Town government. The concept is to offer an eight-week course that will include insight into how our local government works. We are now projecting that this program will commence in early 2023.
- **Engage Amherst:** Engage Amherst ([www.EngageAmherst.org](http://www.EngageAmherst.org)) is a central place where residents can find information on the Town's major topics. The top three topics now are:



- Rental Registration: Town staff have worked with the Town Councilor to add information about Rental Registration to its “EngageAmherst” website. It can be found here: <https://engageamherst.org/rentals> Residents and property owners can participate in a survey about the bylaw here: [https://engageamherst.org/rentals/survey\\_tools/community-feedback-on-rental-registration-bylaw](https://engageamherst.org/rentals/survey_tools/community-feedback-on-rental-registration-bylaw)
- Jones Library Building Project: The site provides an easy-to-find link to the Jones Library Building Project page which can also be found here: <https://www.joneslibrary.org/934/Jones-Building-Project>
- Elementary School Building Project: The site also provides a link to the Elementary School Building Project page which can also be found here: <https://www.amherst-school-project.com/>
- Speaking Engagements:
  - International City Management Association (ICMA):
    - I was selected to represent Massachusetts on the Conference Planning and Evaluation Committee for the ICMA annual international conference in Columbus, Ohio. The conference is September 17-21. I will also be the introducing/overseeing two sessions during the conference. One titled “A Community Driven Approach to Police Reform” and one titled “An Introduction to the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency’s Infrastructure Resilience Planning Framework”.
    - Communications Director Brianna Sunryd will be speaking at the ICMA conference on Looking Forward: Using Technology and Communication Tools Creatively to Improve Digital Services and the Civic Experience in Your Community. The session will focus on emerging engagement strategies for staff members tasked with improving digital service delivery and the civic experience for community members. The session will also share examples of creative new ways of engaging the community, including innovative approaches and uses of technology.
  - MMMA Boot Camp: I will be part of a panel at the Massachusetts Municipal Management Association’s (MMMA) “Boot Camp” on September 29<sup>th</sup> in Sharon, Massachusetts. The topic is “Challenges & Opportunities: The Future of the Profession”.
  - MMMA Monthly Meeting: The Director of Community Responders and I will make a presentation to the MMMA at its meeting on October 20<sup>th</sup> in Bridgewater. The topic is “Community and Public Safety: the Origins and Development of Community Responders in Amherst”.

## COVID-19

- Update:
  - As the Town prepares to head into our third winter of the COVID pandemic, it’s time to consider what it means to live with COVID. Epidemiologist suggest we need to set aside the question of whether the pandemic is over and understand that COVID will continue to impact communities, especially vulnerable populations, and we need to continue to adapt, prepare and act.

- Although our situation may seem similar to last year at this time, the COVID landscape is changing. Variants have emerged and subsided, while others, such as the subvariant BA.5, has become more ‘fit’ and transmissible.
- The Omicron variant, or other variant on the horizon, coupled with people spending more time inside with colder weather may mean a surge in cases, but not necessarily the same rise in hospitalizations and deaths due to preventive steps we all can take.
- We know all the mitigations strategies (vaccination, testing, antivirals, staying home if sick, physical distancing, masks, ventilation, and having a back-up plan) so we need to use one, or a combination of measures for specific scenarios. This is what living with COVID looks like.
- Case Count:
  - Total case count as of September 8th is 9,991, almost 10,000. Numbers are beginning to increase as more residents/students return. But, with less PCR testing and most antigen tests that are conducted at home and not reported, this number will not represent the true number of actual cases.
  - Cases numbers may increase this fall as cooler temps move people inside, schools open and people gather for holidays, but due to vaccination, boosters and antiviral medication and additional mitigation steps, hospitalizations and deaths may not rise at the same rate.
  - We will follow wastewater testing for trends, one of the key public health indicators, along with other data such as bed occupancy at area hospitals, monitoring variants of concern and transmissibility, vaccination rates. Amherst continues wastewater surveillance to give us trends in COVID in our community. Click on the following to understand [the Amherst Wastewater Surveillance Program](#) and view reports from DPH and Biotob.
- Vaccine:
  - New Booster:
    - Everyone eligible should take advantage of the soon-to-be-released updated booster. This is a substantial addition to the pandemic response. The updated booster is called a ‘bivalent’ booster, meaning it contains two variants that include the original COVID Wuhan strain, and the Omicron strains BA.4 and BA.5. The bivalent booster is expected to offer higher protection, longer protection and broader protection.
      - You are eligible for the updated/bivalent booster if:
        - You completed a primary vaccination series with one of the COVID-19 vaccines, AND
        - At least 2 months have passed since the last dose of your primary vaccine series or any booster dose.
    - You are eligible for this updated booster no matter how many previous booster shots you have received. The Pfizer bivalent COVID-19 booster is authorized for patients ages 12 and older. The Moderna bivalent COVID-19 booster is authorized for patients ages 18 and older.
    - Amherst will be administering the Pfizer and Moderna bivalent vaccine, the CDC repealed its previous recommendations for administration of monovalent vaccine boosters for persons ages 12 years and older. The new bivalent booster recommendation replaces previous booster recommendations for this age group.

- Updated COVID-19 boosters add Omicron BA.4 and BA.5 spike protein components to the current vaccine composition, helping to restore protection that has waned since previous vaccination by targeting variants that are more transmissible and immune-evading.
    - The Health Department offers COVID immunizations every Thursday, 12:00 – 2:00 in the Amherst Health Department, first floor Bangs. When we receive the vaccine we will have larger clinics on Thursdays, to be announced. To register go to: [Amherst Health Vaccination Office Hours](#).
  - Tests:
    - Rapid Antigen Tests:
      - The State is offering up to 3.5 million free at-home COVID-19 test kits and certain essential PPE to municipalities. Amherst was one of the first communities to apply for this additional material.
      - The Rapid Antigen Tests work with the subvariant Omicron. They are excellent at answering the question “Am I infectious”? When positive you should assume you can transmit the disease to another person. It is not required you use a Rapid Antigen Test to exit isolation after being sick with COVID. Follow this [Link](#) to get information on COVID testing.
      - Rapid Antigen Tests can also be ordered free while this program lasts, through gov <https://www.covid.gov/tests>
    - PCR Tests:
      - PCR tests can be scheduled through your primary health care provider or there are still free PCR test through the State and can be located through the [Testing location search](#). The University of Massachusetts at Amherst provides PCR tests for all students, faculty, staff and members of their households who need testing because they have symptoms of COVID-19 or were a close contact of someone who has COVID-19. These tests are provided through University Health Services.

## Colleges and University

- University of Massachusetts at Amherst:
  - Community Breakfast: The Chancellor held the University’s annual Community Breakfast on September 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Student Union.
  - Schedule: Classes began on September 7<sup>th</sup>. Commencement is May 26-28.
  - Outreach: The University’s Off-Campus Student Center is holding outreach events at three locations:
    - Farview Neighborhood Resource Fair: September 22<sup>nd</sup> at 7:00 p.m. at the Valley Lane cul-de-sac
    - Fearing Neighborhood Resource Fair: September 23<sup>rd</sup> at 7:00 p.m. on Allen Street
    - Grantwood Neighborhood Resource Fair: September 29<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m. on Forestedge Road cul-de-sac
- Amherst College:
  - New President: Michael Elliott assumed the role of President of Amherst College at the beginning of August. The College has scheduled President Elliott’s inauguration for October 29<sup>th</sup>.
  - Schedule: Classes began on September 1<sup>st</sup>. Commencement is May 28<sup>th</sup>.
- Hampshire College:

- Schedule: Classes began on August 31<sup>st</sup>. Commencement is May 20<sup>th</sup>.

## **Racial Equity**

- Reparations: Though still in its early phases, the Town and the Assembly partnered with the UMass Clean Energy Extension to apply for a U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Energy Pilot Program grant that would provide funding to pilot a solar program for Black residents in Amherst as a form of reparations. The Extension is responding to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation call for proposals for policies to build and sustain economic security and wealth for families and communities of color, using the pilot as the subject of the proposal. If funded, the project will work with town government, community partners, university researchers, and the Clean Energy Extension, to form a small business by and for the African American community in Amherst, to develop, own, and maintain a 100- to 200-kilowatt solar project and return the benefits of ownership to the African American ratepayers of the town.
- Community Responders Program:
  - The Community Responders completed their intensive summer training program at Munson Library.
  - The Responders are now headquartered in their new offices in the Bangs Community Center. They are following a program of meeting with community members, assisting where they can, continuing outreach efforts, and respond to calls as requested.
  - The Director of Community Responders and I will make a presentation to the MMMA at its meeting on October 20<sup>th</sup> in Bridgewater. The topic is “Community and Public Safety: the Origins and Development of Community Responders in Amherst”.
- DEI Department:
  - The Director has been developing a strategic plan for the Department, developing a plan for implementing the Police Residents Oversight Board, meeting with staff, and stepping into many levels of management for the Town.

## **Department Updates**

- Town Clerk/Elections:
  - Elections:
    - The State primary was held on September 6<sup>th</sup>. The State general election is scheduled for Tuesday, November 8<sup>th</sup>.
    - Results of the election are attached to this report and can be found online here: <https://www.amherstma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/63200/Official-9-6-22-State-Primary-Results>
    - The Town Clerk has officially certified the election with the State. Town staff have moved on to post-election duties and cleanup before they begin again for November.
    - Early voting was held in Town Hall for five days for the September 6<sup>th</sup> primary.
    - The Town Clerk’s office, working with the University, was present for voter registration at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst on September 1<sup>st</sup> for FroshFest and on September 4<sup>th</sup> for UFest.
  - Ethics: The State Ethics Commission is hosting free, bi-monthly training seminars for municipal employees to learn more about the restrictions imposed under the conflict-of-interest law, G.L. c. 268A. These two-hour seminars present an opportunity for the

Town's boards and committees to receive important training on the on the law. Seminars are conducted remotely via Zoom. The next trainings are Thursday, September 22<sup>nd</sup> and Thursday, December 1<sup>st</sup>. [Register for the December 1, 2022 seminar](#)

- Health:

- Flu Vaccine: The flu vaccine is also now available. You can receive the flu vaccine and COVID vaccine at the same time. You can combine most procedures, screenings, and vaccinations at the same appointment when you get your COVID-19 vaccination. Talk to your healthcare provider if you have questions.
- Monkeypox: The Health Department, through Massachusetts DPH guidance, is prepared to answer questions and support Amherst residents with all aspects of the Monkeypox virus whether it is case management, suspected contact questions, or referring those seeking evaluation, testing and vaccination. The Health Department is in communication with Higher Education Institutions regarding collaborative protocols for this fall as residents as students return to our area, and we will continue to work with our partners in our Public Health traditional role of assisting them to test, treat, isolate, contact trace and vaccinate as needed. For general monkeypox information, visit: [www.cdc.gov/poxvirus/monkeypox/response/2022/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/poxvirus/monkeypox/response/2022/index.html)
- Childhood Immunization Program:
  - The Health Department has started a Childhood Immunization Program. The goal is to serve families who are uninsured and under-resourced by providing required school entry vaccinations at no cost. This allows the child to enter immediately into school. Town staff link the families with services to support their family's health needs – the first and most important referral is to obtain health insurance so children and family start their health relationships with a trusted provider. We have described our service as one part vaccine, nine parts linking to supportive services.
  - The program is open to Amherst residents only. Referrals are only through the ARPS nurses. No walk ins. Vaccine is for ages 18 and younger. Vaccines include required Mass school vaccines:  
TD/TDaP/Dtap/MMR/Varicella/polio/Varicella/MCV
- Mosquitos: Activity in the Amherst area for EEE and West Nile Virus is categorized as "low" as of September 7, 2022. Risk levels can be checked here: <https://www.mass.gov/infodetails/massachusetts-arbovirus-update>

- Finance:

- ARPA:
  - The Town prepares quarterly reports on ARPA funding which are posted online here: [ARPA Quarterly Reports](#)
  - The Town is encouraging applications to the ARPA-funded Resident Aid program designed to assist residents who have overdue rent/mortgage/utilities. Here is the link to the program information: <https://www.amherstma.gov/CivicAlerts.aspx?AID=3172>
  - Family Outreach of Amherst, with funding from the Town, has been allocated \$150,000 from the American Rescue Plan Act, to help Amherst residents with overdue rent, mortgage, or utility bills. These funds will have a direct impact on our Towns' residents, as most everyone in our community has been affected by COVID. Applicants must demonstrate that financial hardships are a result of

COVID or the economic impacts of COVID. A minimum of 50% of the funds will be reserved for BIPOC, women, LGBTQ, or other marginalized communities. Financial ability will also be considered when awarding grants. Grants will be for a maximum of \$3,000 and accepted on a first come first serve basis, until funds are depleted.

- Public Safety:

- Community Safety Day: In collaboration with the Amherst Police, Amherst Fire, and Amherst CRESS departments, the Amherst Senior Center organized a highly successful Community Safety Day on Saturday, August 13th at Mill River Recreation Area. Hundreds of people attended and enjoyed the beautiful day. The Department of Senior Services wanted to highlight how all three public safety branches are working together to support public safety. Events included: Touch-A-Truck with the fire engine and cruisers, a k-9 demo, fire safety demonstrations, Jaws of Life presentation, car/car seat inspections, and more.



- First Responders Appreciation Picnic: Thanks to the Amherst Area Chamber of Commerce for hosting the Town's first responders on September 9<sup>th</sup> at the Mill District. This is the Chamber's "thanks" to the Town's First Responders for the work they all do every day of the year. Our First Responders thank the Chamber for this "thank you" and I thank the Town Councilors who took time to attend.
- 9/11: The Fire and Police Departments will hold its annual remembrance of September 11<sup>th</sup> on Sunday, **September 11<sup>th</sup> at 9:45 a.m.** at the North Fire Station.

Public Works:

- Outreach: Assistant Superintendent Amy Rusiecki presented information on the Town's water system to the residents at Applewood, who were very appreciative.
- Water:
  - The Town's water system continues to meet the demands of water usage.
  - Although Amherst has had recent precipitation events, our area continues to be under drought conditions. The Connecticut River Valley remains in a Level 3-Critical Drought stage, similar to the majority of the state. The Town is closely monitoring the water supply, and the recent data shows we are capable of meeting current water demand. Therefore, the Town is not issuing water use restrictions at this time. However, the Town always encourages residents to be mindful regarding water use and follow the water conservation tips provided at the bottom of this page. The state declaration can be found [here](#).
  - The Town received over three inches of rain on Sunday and Monday. The Atkins Reservoir level recovered by just over 1-foot of water.
  - As always, we will continue to monitor precipitation, water demand, and reservoir levels as well as monitor the state's Drought Task Force recommendations.

- This data is available to the public on our Water Supply Webpage at <https://www.amherstma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/62046/2021-Water-Quality-Report>
  - Information on the status of the Town water system can be found at, [Amherst Water Supply Status | Amherst, MA - Official Website \(amherstma.gov\)](https://www.amherstma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/62046/2021-Water-Quality-Report)
- Water Quality: The Town's annual Water Quality Report for 2021 is now available in print and online here: [www.amherstma.gov/179/water](https://www.amherstma.gov/179/water)
- Household Hazardous Waste Collection Day:
  - The Town's annual public household hazardous waste collection is scheduled for Saturday, September 24 2022 at Fort River Elementary School (70 South East Street, Amherst). All Amherst, Pelham, Shutesbury and Hadley residents may participate. Advance registration prior to **September 13** is required. Participation is limited; people are encouraged to register early to ensure an appointment time.
  - Pre-register on-line by visiting [www.amherstma.gov/recycling](https://www.amherstma.gov/recycling). For those without computer access, paper registration forms will be available at the Amherst Transfer Station. Registrants will receive an assigned appointment window between 9am and 12pm a few days prior to the event.
  - Other information:
    - Participants with small quantities of material are encouraged to team up with friends and neighbors to reduce traffic at the event.
    - Hadley and Shutesbury residents will be responsible for covering the cost of their own hazardous waste at the price of \$25 (for quantities up to 3 gallons or pounds), \$40 (More than 3 and up to 10 gallons/pounds) or \$60 (for 25 gallons/pounds). Cash and checks only
    - A \$20 participation fee will be charged to Amherst residents who do not own a current Transfer Station Sticker. Disposal fees will apply for participants with more than the 25 gallon/pound household threshold.
    - Small businesses and institutions may participate by advance arrangement. Fees will apply.
    - Fees will apply for fluorescent bulbs (\$1/bulb). Cash and checks only.
    - Latex paint will not be accepted
  - For additional details about the event visit [www.amherstma.gov/recycling](https://www.amherstma.gov/recycling).
- Roads:
  - Sidewalks: Work on Kellogg Street sidewalks has been delayed due to supply chain issues with granite. Work will begin soon on sidewalks on Taylor and Gray Streets. McClellan and Chestnut Streets are also designated for work. Roadway reconstruction on Mill Lane, between Groff Park and West Street is nearing completion.
  - Crosswalks: A new crosswalk has been installed from Kendrick Park across East Pleasant Street to provide better access to the new playground.
  - Road Paving:
    - Meadow Street: The Town's contractor has paved Meadow Street (from the Hadley town line to Russellville Road) as well as Russellville Road (from the Hadley town line to Meadow Street).



- East Hadley Road: The Town’s contractor has paved East Hadley Road (from South Pleasant Street to the Hadley town line).
  - Bay Road: The Town’s contractor has paved Bay Road (from the Belchertown town line to Hulst Road). Note the sweet “Thank You” note in the photo taken on Bay Road.
  - 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.
  - Snell Street and University Drive South: The developer of the project at the intersection of Northampton Road and University Drive South will be placing the final coat of asphalt on the roundabout at the intersection of University Drive South and Snell Street on Saturday, August 13<sup>th</sup> from 7am to 5 pm.
  - West Pomeroy Lane: We anticipate this road will be paved in the first half of 2023.
- Bus Stops: Pioneer Valley Transit Authority received \$490,394.00 to improve bus stops including sidewalks, ADA-compliant ramps, crosswalks, pavement markings, signage, shelters, benches, and other amenities at fifteen locations in Amherst, Agawam, Chicopee, Palmer, Northampton, Springfield, and West Springfield. The Town participated with the PVTA in the grant application. Bus stops on West Street are scheduled to be improved for the Town of Amherst.
  - 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. Bids are expected to go out shortly.
    - West Street Sidewalk: The collapsed sidewalk will be replaced with a small bridge. The bridge has been purchased and the project is going through permitting with the Conservation Commission during the Summer.
- Economic Development:
    - Block Party: The Business Improvement District’s annual Block Party will take place on Thursday, September 15<sup>th</sup>. The event will require the closure of North Pleasant Street from Amity Street to Pray Street beginning at 12:00 noon until 10:00 p.m. The Block Party will feature live music and multiple vendors and local businesses. We anticipate there will be a pent-up demand to enjoy the Block Party.
    - Grants: The Town allocated \$25,000 to help small, brick and mortar, storefront businesses throughout the Town with project-based grant assistance. 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

- Economic Empowerment: The Town, in partnership with the Business Improvement District (BID), has allocated \$250,000 of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to support small business empowerment and economic development over the next two and a half years. The program will be created and overseen by the Amherst BID in collaboration with the Amherst Area Chamber of Commerce. The program will make connections with both existing and prospective businesses, the local colleges, and University and work to sustain local businesses, artists, cultural organizations, and entrepreneurs.
- Conservation and Development:
  - Puffers Pond: Due to elevated bacteria levels discovered during routine water testing at Puffer's Pond, swimming is NOT recommended at both the North and South beaches at this time. Learn more and view reports at [www.amherstma.gov/puffers](http://www.amherstma.gov/puffers)
  - Bangs Community Center: Congratulations to Town Staff. The Town was awarded the maximum grant amount of \$75,800 under the FY22 Municipal ADA Improvement Grant Program to eliminate architectural barriers found at the main entrance to the Bangs Community Center, including:
    - Replacement of a broken automatic door control and associated door,
    - Provide an ADA compliant level landing at the automatic door,
    - Provide an ADA compliant clear floor space at the automatic door control,
    - Install signage to designate the main entrance as accessible, and
    - Modify or replace the stairs adjacent to the main entrance in order to provide risers that are ADA compliant height.
  - Sustainability:
    - Solar Bylaw Working Group: The Town has issued a Request for Proposals to hire a consultant who can conduct a community-wide solar assessment. Responses to the RFP are due in the next week.
    - 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).
  - Planning:
    - FEMA Flood Maps:

- Here is the sequence of events thus far this year.
  - February 28, 2022 – Town Council received a presentation from the Planning Department and AECOM on the flood mapping project.
  - April 25, 2022 – Town Council referred the zoning amendments (Article 16 & Official Zoning Map changes) related to the FEMA Flood Maps to the Planning Board and CRC.
  - May 2, 2022 – Town Council referred the FEMA maps and Flood Insurance Study to the CRC for review and recommendations.
  - May 26, 2022 – CRC opened a public hearing on zoning amendments related to FEMA Flood Maps, heard a presentation from Planning staff, held discussion and continued the public hearing to September 8, 2022. Link to CRC agenda - [1-2022-05-26-CRC-Agenda \(amherstma.gov\)](#) At the May 26, 2022, CRC meeting, the CRC also reviewed and discussed the FEMA Maps and Flood Insurance Study, in addition to the zoning amendments related to flood mapping.
  - June 1, 2022 – Planning Board opened a public hearing on zoning amendments related to FEMA Flood Maps, heard a presentation from Planning staff, held discussion and continued the public hearing to September 7, 2022.
- Here is what still needs to be done:
  - CRC to complete public hearing on zoning amendments related to FEMA Flood Maps, and make recommendation to Town Council.
  - CRC to complete review of FEMA Maps and Flood Insurance Study, and make recommendation to Town Council.
  - Planning Board to complete review of zoning amendments related to FEMA Flood Maps, and make recommendation to Town Council.
  - Town Council then needs to hold 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> readings and vote on:
    - Zoning amendments related to FEMA Flood Maps – Article 16, FEMA Floodplain Overlay District and Official Zoning Map changes
    - FEMA Flood Maps and Flood Insurance Study
- The deadline for completing this process is February 9, 2023.
- At this time, the property owners would not have an opportunity to change anything on the maps. The appeal periods have closed.
- The Planning Board and CRC will be held continued public hearings on this project.
- A copy of the letter from FEMA is attached.
- Sheltering:
  - Craig's Doors: On November 1<sup>st</sup>, Craig's Doors will transition individuals from Knights Inn to Lutheran Church congregante shelter.
- Housing:
  - East Gables (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. Valley CDC reports they are making good progress on construction and are looking at July 2023 as a completion date. They project that marketing will begin at the end of 2022 with the lottery likely in Spring of 2023.

- Ball Lane: Valley CDC has a second project in the planning stages. They are seeking funding for an 8-acre parcel on Ball Lane. They hold an option to purchase and funding in hand with closing in August. They have conducted a neighborhood meeting. The project will offer 30 first time homebuyer condominiums that will include 15 duplexes and 10 market rate units. Valley CDC presented its development proposal to the Affordable Housing Trust on Thursday and will be at the District One Neighborhood Association community picnic on Sunday, September 11<sup>th</sup>.
- East Street/Belchertown Road: The Town is working with the chosen developer on a land development agreement.
- Housing: The Affordable Housing Trust and other partners are planning a Community Housing Forum on Tuesday September 13<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 p.m.
- Community Services:
  - Senior Center:
    - The Amherst Senior Center is offering a number of new in-person ways to improve residents' health and wellbeing. Some of the new onsite offerings include:
      - FIT Forward: Wednesdays, 2:00-3:00pm starts 9/07/2022. This (Pilates based) mat class is designed to help you be fit as you move forward through everyday life. Enjoy a moderately paced full body workout to improve overall strength, posture, and mobility. Please bring a mat and a towel. Led by Cathy Lawlor. Call (413) 259-3060 to sign up. Participants must be able to move up and down from the floor independently.
      - "Sampling the Divine"; Belly Dance Inspired Movement: Tuesdays. 5:30-6:45pm, 09/20/22-10/11/22: Sampling the Divine is an expressive dance course, designed to awaken our spiritual, sensual and emotional potential through belly dance-inspired and creative movement. Discover the delicious feel of these easy-to-access moves and experience the magical benefits for your mind, body and spirit! Just bring comfortable clothing, your bare feet or comfortable flats, and be prepared to sample the divine! Seated dancers are welcome! Led by Madelyn Farr, a dancer/choreographer and expressive arts specialist, with a Masters in Dance-Movement Therapy. Call (413) 259-3060 to register.
      - Medicare Open Enrollment begins October 15th if you're turning 65 it's time to consider your options. Medicare can be complicated to navigate so join Greg Keochakian, a specialist in the senior market, as he helps you take the guess work out of your health insurance benefit options. Dates: Tuesday September 13th at 11:00am and Wednesday September 28th at 1:00pm.
      - Mobile Manicures and Foot Care by Sarah: Fourth Tues. of month 9am-3:30pm. Sarah Hassett, a licensed master nail technician specializing in

natural nail care, offers full spa manicures with gentle nail shaping, cuticle care, hydrating massage, and professional polish application. Sarah also provides foot care services and can be booked for toenail trimming and shaping. Reservations required, call (413) 259-3060 to book an appointment, \$25/appointment.

- 30 Minutes Reiki Sessions: Wednesdays from 9:00am-1:00pm Sessions are led by Reiki Master, Bob Nelson, RN. Walk-ins accepted. To schedule, call the senior center (413) 259-3060. Sessions are \$20.
- The full Senior Center Calendar [here](#)
- Improvements to the Bangs Community Center will improve physical access to the Senior Center.
- Recreation Department:
  - 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. Future dates will be September 10<sup>th</sup> and October 8<sup>th</sup>.
  - Halloween: The Department will be offering its annual Halloween Spooktacular on Sunday, October 30<sup>th</sup>. More details to follow.
- Veterans: The Veterans Services Department will work with other Town departments to sponsor a special breakfast for veterans on November 11<sup>th</sup> (Veterans Day) followed by the traditional ceremony on the Town Common.



**Delegated Authority:**

- Short-Term Event Uses of Town Commons (Section 1a of the Town Council Policy):
  - 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):
- Placement of Road and Temporary Signs (Section 3d of the Town Council Policy):
  - Hartford Half-Marathon: November 6, 2022 (From Haigis Mall to Norwottuck Rail Trail)

**Major Capital Projects:**

- Jones Library:
  - On August 23 the Jones Library Building Committee (JLBC) met with the Owners Project Manager (OPM), designer, and the Co-Chair and Manager of the Jones Library Capital Campaign Committee (JLCC). The OPM presented an updated total project budget range of \$43.5M - \$49.9 (\$7.2M - \$13.7M over the original budget of \$36.3M). This updated total project cost reflects \$3.3M in proposed cuts.
  - Value management cuts: The OPM presented \$3.7M of possible cuts to the hard costs of the budget (building site and construction costs). Of that amount \$1.56M were identified as cuts that impact aesthetics but would not alter the programming, functionality, or

sustainability goals of the library. The remaining \$2.1M in cuts were identified as either not probable (due to historic restrictions on the building) or not desirable (due to impacting the sustainability goals of the project and/or jeopardizing possible grant opportunities). The value engineering options will be reviewed and discussed in more detail by the Design Subcommittee on Tuesday, August 30, and a recommendation will be made to the full JLBC.

- Reduction of Furniture, Fixtures and Equipment (FF&E): The OPM identified \$1M in possible cuts from FF&E which is a separate line item in the budget from the hard costs and can be reduced based on purchasing decisions around things like the furnishings, shelving, and the automated book sorter. A \$1M reduction would leave \$1.5M in the budget for FF&E. The proposed reduction would remove the automated book sorter (it could be added at a later date) and require the library to reuse its existing furniture. New shelving could be purchased as well as any additional furniture needed for newly created spaces.
- Reduction of escalation: A typical escalation rate for a project is between 3-4%; however, the market has seen much higher escalation costs over the past year. For this reason, the estimators used a 9-12% escalation rate in the current projected costs. Since the cost estimate completion one month ago, the market has seen a downward trend and a new cost estimate, if completed today, would likely have a lower escalation rate. The OPM identified \$750,000 in potential cuts reflecting a decrease in the escalation costs on the project from 9% to 6%. The true escalation rate will not be fully known until the project reaches the bid phase which is scheduled to be completed in July of 2023. Should the market continue to trend down to more “normal” pricing this could provide significant cost reductions for the project.
- Library Trustees:
  - The Board of Library Trustees voted to fundraise and pledge endowment in support of additional project costs
  - In order to keep the Town appropriation at \$15.8M, the Board of Library Trustees voted to enter into a new agreement with the Town to fundraise the additional cost to complete the project and pledging the value of the Endowment. This agreement would replace the existing agreement the Library has with the Town that pledged \$6.6M of the Endowment if the total Library commitment is not obtained through fundraising and other grants and sources.
- Jones Library Capital Campaign (JLCC):
  - The JLCC presented information on its organizational structure to support fundraising, its progress to date, as well as its plan to proceed with raising the larger amount needed to support the escalated cost of completing the project.
  - The JLCC’s initial target based on the original project budget was to reach 50% (\$3.3M) of the fundraising commitment (\$6.6M) by May of 2023.
  - As of August 2022, the campaign has secured \$3.1M or 93% of the initial target, (9 months ahead of schedule) which accounts for 47% of the initial goal.
  - The JLCC identified several potential sources that were not previously part of the original fundraising campaign plan including a federal earmark of \$1.1M, an NEH Infrastructure Challenge grant of \$1M, and the support of Representative Domb and Senator Comerford to pursue funding through a Massachusetts Bond Bill.

Additional funds will also be available to pursue through the state's Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit program (HRTC). The state program allows up to 20% of the approved construction costs (hard and soft) on historic structures to qualify for HRTC. The increased cost of the project means that the potential HRTC available increases as well. (previously estimated at \$1.6M, now estimated at \$2.5M).

- Repairs to the Library:
  - In 2017, as part of the Joint Capital Planning Committee (JCPC) budgeting process, the Library was asked to determine the minimum repair work required for public safety and building integrity in the event the state did not award the \$13.9M grant. If the grant was not awarded and the proposed renovation and expansion did not move forward, the Library would need to approach JCPC for repair work and it was important to have a cost estimate to project for budgeting purposes. In response, the Library sought a quote for these minimum required repairs.
  - If work is performed on a building that amounts to 30% or more of the full and fair cash value of the building, the entire building is required to comply with accessibility codes. For the Library, the amount of repair work that would trigger this need is \$5,758,800. Since the necessary repair costs exceeded this amount, the Library contracted with Kuhn Riddle Architects (KRA) to determine the additional cost to comply with the accessibility codes. The OPM was asked to assist the JLBC with escalating these repair cost options that were presented to the Town Council in March of 2021 to similarly reflect the impact of the market on the cost the Town would face if the project does not proceed. The first option was priced based on completing the work in 3 different phases over a 6-year period at an estimated cost of \$19.5M (previously \$16.8M). The second option was priced based on completing the work in 2 phases over a 4-year period and prioritizes the HVAC and interior systems at an estimated cost of \$16.2M (previously \$14.4M).
  - The estimates are based primarily on the refurbishment and updating of existing systems and structures. They do not include historic preservation, additional space for programming, or any sustainability measures or energy modeling as these additional measures were not requested by JCPC or Town Council. It is not currently known what the actual additional costs of these features would be or what portion of those additional costs could be offset for the Town through grants or fundraising.
- Additional costs to project due to delays:
  - The costs expended to date on the project are \$401,000 in fees paid to the OPM, cost estimator and design team. The cost to continue with the project to the bid date (where there will be price certainty) would be an additional \$1.4M. In the event the project is "paused" the OPM presented an escalation rate of approximately 1% per month. This means the total project cost would increase approximately \$363k - \$533k per month that the project does not proceed to the next phase of Design Development.
- The JLBC voted to recommend to the Town Manager that the project proceed. The JLBC meets next on September 8.
- DPW Building/Fire Building:

- Staff continue to explore multiple options for a new site for the Department of Public Works.
- We are exploring options of working with the University of Massachusetts architecture department (and former Town Councilor Steve Schreiber) to work with graduate students who will be working on a competition to design a fire station. The competition is sponsored by the Metal Building Manufacturers Association (think “Butler building”), thus the assumption is that the proposed designs will be metal buildings.
- The competition is described here. There is an actual program, which may be slightly different than Amherst’s ambitions.
- Elementary School Building Committee:
  - The Town submitted the Preferred Schematic Report to the Massachusetts School Building Authority on June 27, 2022. 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>
  - The Town met with the MSBA’s Facilities Assessment Subcommittee on August 3<sup>rd</sup>.
  - The MSBA Board of Directors voted to move the Fort River Elementary School into the Schematic Design phase. In the Schematic Design phase, the MSBA and the Town will look at possible options to consolidate the existing Fort River Elementary School and the Wildwood Elementary School and construct a new facility serving grades K-5 on the site of the existing Fort River Elementary School. The next step is for the MSBA to work in collaboration with the Town to produce detailed designs for a potential project.

### **Projects Update:**

- North Common Restoration/Main Street Parking Lot:
  - The Town was selected by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the National Park Service to receive up to \$827,065.50 in federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) grant assistance for the revitalization of the North Common in Amherst.
  - The project will completely transform an approximate 1-acre area of the Town Common bounded by Spring Street, South Pleasant Street, Main Street and Boltwood Ave. The effort is the result of years of public input and will activate the area for residents, visitors, downtown businesses, and the broader community.
  - The work includes adding new accessible walkways, improved lighting, gathering areas with tables and chairs, central space for small performances, a plaza in front of Town Hall, planting of new shade trees, rain gardens/storm water infiltration areas, and spaces for public art.
  - Local funding for the project comes from Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds that have been approved for recreation and historic preservation purposes. Since 2016 the Town has approved over \$1 Million for this project, which is now being used to match the LWCF grant. The CPA funds, voted in phases, have been instrumental in moving this project forward, from initial concept designs and public outreach to paying for construction.
  - The LWCF grant supports construction of the project, which is to begin in spring 2023 and expected to be completed by June of 2024. Currently, the project is in the final design phase with bidding expected late this year. A project webpage on the Town’s website will provide updates.



- The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Grant Program is administered by Massachusetts on behalf of the National Park Service (NPS), an agency of the Department of the Interior.
- The Public Shade Tree Committee held a site visit and a public hearing on the proposed removal of the Merry Maple. The Committee voted to support the Tree Warden's recommendation to remove the tree. I anticipate the tree will be removed in the next couple of months. A suitable recognition of the prominence of the tree in the Town's history will be developed.
- North Amherst Library:
  - Work continues on the renovations to the North Amherst Library.
  - The Library has secured donated space to offer services in the Mill District.
- 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: The Town received bids for the Pomeroy Village Roundabout and associated work. Some work will begin this fall but the real construction will begin in 2023.
- Solar on the Landfill: The fence protecting the South Landfill is being prepared to be installed, which is now scheduled to begin on August 5<sup>th</sup>. This project is part of the permitting for the solar array on the North Landfill and is being paid for and managed by the solar developer.
- Dog Park: Work is complete and a ribbon-cutting was held on July 27<sup>th</sup>.

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

- October 3<sup>rd</sup> – Town Council Meeting
- October 10<sup>th</sup> – Indigenous People's Day
- October 17<sup>th</sup> – Town Council Meeting
- November 7<sup>th</sup> – Town Council Meeting
- November 11<sup>th</sup> – Veterans Day
- November 21<sup>st</sup> – Town Council Meeting
- November 24-25<sup>th</sup> – Thanksgiving Holiday
- December 5<sup>th</sup> – Town Council Meeting
- December 19<sup>th</sup> – Town Council Meeting
- December 23<sup>rd</sup> – Christmas Eve observed (half-day holiday)
- December 26<sup>th</sup> – Christmas Day observed
- January 2<sup>nd</sup> – New Year's Day observed