



To: Town Council
Fr: Paul Bockelman
Town Manager
Dt: March 31, 2023
Re: Town Manager Report for April 3, 2023

All Town Manager Reports are available on the Town's website here: [Town Manager Reports](#)

TOWN MANAGER

- **Outreach:**
 - **Cuppa Joe with Paul:** We had a terrific turnout for the last Cuppa Joe which was held on March 24th at the Bangs Community Center with Councilor Schoen, chair of the Elementary School Building Committee. We were also joined by School Superintendent Mike Morris.
 - **Tibetan Uprising Commemoration:** Town staff supported the annual march to Northampton on March 10th. The gathering and march included support from Community Participation Officers, the Department of Public Works, the Police Department, and the Community Responders for Equity, Safety, and Service Department.
 - **Board/Committee Vacancies:** We are recruiting for vacancies that come due on July 1st AND for existing vacancies. A list of all vacancies on Town boards and committees can be found here: [Board - Committee Vacancy List](#). Residents may apply to serve on a vacancy by filling out a Community Activity Form here: [Community Activity Form](#)
 - **Professional Development Day:** Town offices were closed on Thursday, March 9th from 8:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. so all Town staff had the opportunity to participate in a quarterly training. This training had two sessions:
 - “T.E.A.M: Together Everyone Accomplishes the Mission’: In interactive exercises, we learned the nine key functions of great teamwork, while getting to know our colleagues, we problem solved and tested our engineering skills. Led by Pamela Nolan Young, DEI Director, and Elizabeth Proulx, H.R. Manager
 - “The First 20 Seconds’’: We learned that when meeting a person for the first time, whether at a customer service window or on a co-worker’s first day, the first 20 seconds, 20 words, and 20 gestures are very important. We learned strategies to make a great impression through demonstrations of professionalism and respect. Led by Melissa Loiodice-Walker, H.R. Director, and Jennifer Moyston, Assistant DEI Director & Community Participation Officer.
 - **Legal Decision:** As I notified you earlier, the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court issued a decision concerning the constitutionality of restrictions on public comment. The Court declared that Southborough’s meeting participation policy prohibiting rude and discourteous speech, and requiring polite discourse, was unconstitutionally content based.

This decision has serious implications for public bodies – including Amherst’s - that are required by charter or special act to hold public comment periods at meetings, and for those that choose to hold such public comment periods. While additional analysis about the application of this case is ongoing, the Town Attorney has encouraged the Town to undertake a careful review of existing public comment period policies to ensure that they contain only reasonable time, place and manner restrictions.

○ Communications:

- Communications Director Brianna Sunryd led a workshop at the Massachusetts Digital Government Summit in Boston on April 28th entitled “Leadership Lessons from Women in Technology”
- Staying in Touch: The Town has a variety of ways that residents can stay connected, from emergency notifications to meeting and news announcements, and more. Residents may receive timely emergency and parking ban notifications directly to their email or phone by subscribing to these alerts.
- Emergency & Parking Ban Alerts: The Town can send emergency alerts as well as parking ban notifications. The service sends immediate alerts to community members who are subscribed to the system and have joined a particular group.
- You can sign up for Emergency Alerts or Parking Ban Notification by [clicking here](#) If they wish to subscribe to Emergency Alerts via SMS text messages on their mobile device only, they can text the word Amherst to 38276.
- All users have the ability to customize their notification preferences after signing up. Alerts can be sent via email, text, and/or phone call so you never miss important communication about emergency events. *Messages can also be received in a variety of languages.* It is important to fill out a profile so the Town can target notices to the user’s immediate neighborhood when necessary.

DEPARTMENT UPDATES

- **Administration and Finance**

- Finance:

- State Budget: The Governor released her budget proposal on March 1st. For Amherst, the proposal includes a 2% increase in Unrestricted General Government Aid (UGGA) and a ½% increase in Chapter 70. It also includes a 10% increase in PILOT payments to Amherst related to the Town’s share of State-owned land. You can find a more detailed analysis of the Governor’s Budget Proposal at <https://www.mma.org/gov-healey-releases-fy2024-budget-proposal/>

- Town Clerk:

- Remote Meeting: The State approved a 2023 spending package that included several policy provisions, including extensions of pandemic-related authorizations related to public meetings and outdoor dining. The new law extends pandemic-related authorizations to allow remote and hybrid meeting options for public bodies through March 31, 2025.
- Election:
 - Ballots are being printed and will be sent out to people who have requested mail-in ballots during the first week of April. At this writing, 1,539 voters had requested ballots.
 - The Town Clerk has issued the following election schedule for the May 2nd election:

MAY 2, 2023 SPECIAL TOWN ELECTION - INFORMATION AND CALENDAR		
Tuesday, March 28, 2023	4:30 PM	Last day for Council to notify Town Clerk of any ballot questions [54:42C]
Friday, April 21, 2023	5:00 PM	Last day to register to vote for Special Town Election [51:26/31]. (Chapter 41.110A accepted, so Saturday is considered a holiday. Date falls to the Friday before)
Early Voting - Monday through Thursday, April 24-27	8:00 AM to 4:30 PM	Early Voting Location: Town Hall, First Floor Meeting Room
Tuesday, April 25, 2023	4:30 PM	Last day to publish full text of any initiative measure submitted to voters on the Town Election ballot [Charter Sec. 8.3(e)]
Tuesday, April 25, 2023	4:30 PM	Last day for Council to call Election (post warrant) [54:63]
Tuesday, April 25, 2023	5:00 PM	Last day to request a mail-in ballot (absentee or early) [54:89, 25B]
Monday, May 1, 2023	12:00 NOON	Deadline to apply for an in-person absentee ballot
Tuesday, May 2, 2023	8:00 PM	Deadline for ballots to be received in the Town Clerk's office or ballot drop box to be counted
Tuesday, May 2, 2023	7 AM - 8 PM	Special Town Election [Charter Sec. 7.1]

- Election Equipment: The new election tabulators have been delivered. We are training our Town Clerk staff and will be training election workers in the near future.
 - Unfunded Mandate: The Town will be receiving \$18,850.91 from the State for early voting costs that were certified by the State Auditor's office as an unfunded mandate.
- Human Resources:
 - Health Insurance:
 - We held a meeting of the Insurance Advisory Committee, which is a committee with representation from all of the Town and School unions and non-union employees. The purpose is to review health insurance developments and options.
 - The Committee recommended to the Town Manager that I offer a second HMO plan for employees to choose from which limits the number of health care providers they can access and, in turn, is less expensive for the employee and the Town. I have done that.
 - Open Enrollment for Healthcare, Dental, and Vision Benefits will be held from April 3 - 14. During this time, employees can make changes to their benefit plans (effective July 2023).
 - The Town is hosting a Health & Benefits Fair during Open Enrollment, in order to provide employees with the opportunity to speak with benefit vendors in-person and to gather additional information as to benefits. The fair will take place at Town Hall and in the Regional High School cafeteria.
 - Non-Union Employees: The annual non-union employee meeting will be held in April. This is an opportunity to hear updates from the Town Manager and Human Resources Department and to bring questions or concerns to representatives of the Personnel Board. We will also be using this meeting to kick-off our non-union classification and compensation study.

- Dispatcher Ray Torres handled the call with incredible calm and confidence. The instructions he gave to the parents were clear, precise, and perfectly communicated. Staying on the phone with the parents, he was able to keep them calm and taking action during a very serious time. His dispatch partner, Stephanie Everett, dispatched police and fire immediately to the scene and managed the other incoming dispatch responsibilities.
- Police Officers Dominic Corsetti, Lindsay Carroll, and Scott Gallagher all responded and were first on the scene within minutes. Dominic provided the first response performing CPR to the two-day old child. He quickly handed the infant to the paramedics upon their arrival.
- Paramedics Dylan Tunnell, Stone Khoury, Chris Richiede, and Matt Chipman – along with Chief Nelson – all responded and were there minutes later providing medical intervention to secure a pulse. They then transported the infant to Bay State Medical for further evaluation and treatment.
- We are fortunate our dispatchers responded to the 911 call with such calm and clarity and Police and Firefighter/Paramedics arrived on scene with speed, intervened immediately with a trained response, and worked cooperatively with each other, while comforting the family.
- Fire Department: Two firefighters engaged in an Active Attack Integrated Response (AAIR) Train-the-Trainer course designed to improve integration between law enforcement, fire services, dispatch, and emergency medical services (EMS) during an active attack event. The course provides law enforcement officers with key medical skills based on tactical emergency casualty care (TECC) guidelines, which can be used at the point of injury (POI) to increase survivability of victims. The course also provides a model framework for law enforcement, fire services, and EMS to integrate their response during an active attack through the rescue task force (RTF) concept.
- Police Department:
 - Co-Response: The Police Department’s Co-response Clinician served on a panel with the CRESS Director to discuss “Co-response and Alternative Policing Practices in Amherst” on March 9th. Amherst is the only community in the nation utilizing both a tradition co-response model in policing as well as an alternative dispatch department of unarmed civilians to address mental health challenges and other calls. The two approaches will be discussed and along with the collaboration and difference in the two approaches at the intersection of behavioral health and public safety.
 - New Officers: Three new officers are working their 14 weeks of field training. Four new officers are projected to graduate from the Academy on April 14th. They will then begin their 14 weeks of field training.
 - Retiring Chief: Amherst Police Chief Scott Livingstone announced his retirement after 46 years of service to the Town of Amherst. His last day of employment will be May 27th.
- Community Responders Department:
 - A detailed update on the status of the CRESS Department and its initiatives was submitted to the Town Council and is attached at the end of this Town Manager Report.
 - As mentioned above, the Town’s Director of CRESS & the Police Department’s CSO Co-response Clinician presented to Trauma-Informed Hampshire County on March 9th. The event was co-sponsored by the SPIFFY Coalition. They were discussing the Town’s efforts as the only community in the nation utilizing both a

traditional co-response model in policing as well as an alternative dispatch department of unarmed civilians to address mental health challenges. Our staff discussed the collaboration and differences in these approaches at the intersection of behavioral health and public safety.

- The Department continues to develop its protocols, policies, and to respond to certain requests. we are still in training mode and learning from interactions that the responders encounter. The protocols for 911 calls are being reviewed by the Town Attorney.

- **Community Services**

- Health:

- Interpretation Services: The Health Department is offering a new Interpretation Service funded through ARPA grant money. The Senior Center, Health, Department, and CRESS Department are utilizing this pilot service. It is accessed over the telephone and can be used in the office or in the field for immediate, on-demand assistance. The service has been utilized to support communication with many languages, even seldom-heard dialects.
 - COVID-19:
 - Governor Healey announced that the Public Health Emergency will be ending on May 11, 2023, coinciding with the ending of the Federal Public Health Emergency. This means that any mandates or waivers/flexibilities that were allowed under the public health emergency will be lifted at that time, unless legislative action is taken. The Administration will be filing legislation to extend three public health orders addressing staffing in out-of-hospital dialysis, the Medication Administration Program to provide additional time to come into compliance with regulatory requirements, and ambulance staffing to continue to provide flexibility going forward.
 - With this announcement, and as the disease progressively dissolves into an endemic pattern, it signals the time for the Public Health Department to ramp up plans for the continued health of Amherst’s public.
 - In the coming months the Public Health Department will be addressing many population health issues: access to care is one example. They will be collaboratively formulating plans to address health issues with an equity lens; for example, the Public Health nurse will be joining forces with Craig’s Doors to provide skilled nursing care on site, and in the Bangs, we partner with the public schools to provide under-resourced children with childhood immunizations.
 - On reflecting on the pandemic, the Director of Public Health wrote:
 - “As the Director of Public Health and prior Public Health Nurse during one of the hardest times in our Town’s history, I had a close-up personal view of the inner workings of various departments and staff. The public may not see it all the time, but I witness Town employees working as skilled work teams, more than ‘work groups’ – their individual expertise through coordinated team effort provides a synergy greater than their sum.
 - During the pandemic this resulted in the quality services we all benefited from that reduced disease and suffering, and promoted population health. There are too many to thank here – Amherst Fire Department, Amherst Police, Facilities and Maintenance, the Town Manager and Finance (making sense and use of the various

funding), and of course Public Health staff, all working together to assure residents received skilled, timely and evidence-based care. So many more employees, volunteers and partners who selflessly stepped in.

- As we move forward, I met a work team that inspires me to speak more about employee collaboration and public health matters. I toured the Waste Water Treatment Plant (WWTP) and met two employees and was blown away by their knowledge, scope of expertise and the importance of their work – truly laying a foundation for the rest of us.
- From a Public Health point of view, at the WWTP three things stood out:
 - The elaborate station where waste water samples for COVID surveillance are obtained three times a week, shipped to Jamaica Plain, analyzed, and two to three days later results are posted by the Public Health Department on IT's clear and ever-present COVID webpage.
 - The tall bucket of dense, nasty fats, oils and grease (FOG) that is removed daily. FOG arrives at the WWTP due to unauthorized dumping and disposal of grease. If it arrives at the WWTP it is skimmed off a pond and disposed of. Otherwise, much of it, combined with other non-disposables such as masks, undisposable 'disposable' wipes and dental floss, clog pipes that then cause Sanitary Sewer Overflow (SSO) into our land and waterways. DPW cleans up these messes, lets the Public Health Department know, and proactively makes repairs and improvements. A team made up of DPW, Health Inspections and others in Town Hall are addressing this issue now.
 - The spot where empty nip bottles – single use alcohol drinks - get stuck in a back eddy of effluent that then have to be removed with augers. These nip bottles arrive after tossed on the ground, they are swept into wastewater drains, and believe it or not, yes, they are flushed down the toilet.”
- Senior Center:
 - The Senior Center has secured a grant to re-engage, re-energize, and recognize volunteers. The \$5,000 grant will improve volunteer recognition and retention efforts. The Senior Center will be hosting a volunteer appreciation dinner during the national volunteer appreciation week. Later this spring they will also be doing a volunteer fair for the senior center and our affiliate organizations.
 - The Senior Center has hired a part-time van driver and will launch the Silver Shuttle transit program later this spring.
 - The Senior Center is again offering AARP Tax Preparation on Tuesdays at the Bangs Center. The program is open to tax payers of all ages. Appointments are still available but must be booked in advance. To register call: (413) 259-3060.
 - Senior Spirit: The latest edition of the Senior Center's newsletter can be found here: [Senior Spirit](#) If you haven't reviewed the newsletter in a while, click the link to see the new look with easy to read text and a million activities.

- CR Café: The Senior Center is continuing its weekly CR Café, which stands for “Can’t Remember” café! Every Wednesday from 10am – 12noon, Town residents are invited to the Senior Center to enjoy company, entertainment, and some good treats!
 - Recreation:
 - Pickleball: The DPW painted lines on tennis courts at Mill River Recreational Area for people who would like to play pickleball.
 - Sheltering:
 - Meals: Free meals are available to anyone, seven-days-a-week in the Town of Amherst. This is an impressive offering for such a small Town. Kudos to those volunteers and groups that provide this service to the community:
 - Monday: Survival Center
 - Tuesday: Survival Center
 - Wednesday: Unitarian Universalist Society and Not Bread Alone at the First Congregational Church
 - Thursday: Survival Center
 - Friday: Survival Center
 - Saturday: Not Bread Alone
 - Sunday: Not Bread Alone
 - Permanent Shelter Site: Site acquisition and control has been completed. The Town is now conducting a survey of the site and exploring development scenarios with potential local partners. We expect to move forward with building demolition in the summer of 2023 and the development of a preliminary concept design during the summer/fall of 2023. We have rough estimates of design at \$1 million and project costs of \$8-\$10 million.



- **Conservation and Development**

- Big Night: The Town worked with the Hitchcock Center to welcome residents to the Big Night, the annual spotted salamander migration from their year-round forest territories to their breeding pool.
- Community Survey: Amherst Historic Preservation Plan Community Survey is seeking respondents. The Town has a variety of historic and cultural resources for residents and guests to enjoy. By responding to this 18-question survey, you will help the Town gain insight about what you value most of Amherst's history and cultural heritage. The survey results will inform the update of the Amherst Historic Preservation Plan that is being drafted by the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission in collaboration with the Amherst

Planning Department and Amherst Historical Commission. The survey deadline is April 30th. To access the survey in English or Spanish, please see below:

- <https://forms.gle/qmZ2UYpn7uH5UqHd8> - English
- <https://tinyurl.com/2p8rh3zy> - Spanish

○ Housing:

▪ 132 Northampton Road:

- East Gables, the new development at 132 Northampton Road, is accepting applications for this newly constructed development consisting of 28 studio apartment homes. East Gables homes include off street parking, connecting walkways, covered bike storage area, and on site laundry.
- Information sessions for this development will be held at Jones Library on Wednesday May 10, 2023 from 6:00PM to 7:30PM and on Saturday May 20th from 10:00AM-12:00PM.
- More information can be found here:
<https://www.valleycdc.org/affordable-housing/in-development/>
- And here: https://www.linkedin.com/posts/valley-cdc_westernmass-affordablehousing-massachusetts-activity-7044442987015065601-iAfz?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_desktop

▪ Ball Lane:

- Planning and outreach continue for the development of 30 affordable home ownership opportunities on approximately 8.3 acres Montague Road at Ball Lane. The proposal includes 15 duplexes with concentrated parking on the edges of the development.
- Valley Community Development Corporation has started the application process for a 40B Comprehensive Permit to construct the project. Currently, the application is in the Project Eligibility phase with the submittal of information to MassHousing. MassHousing's review involves an evaluation of the site, the design concept, the financial feasibility of the proposal, and the appropriateness of the proposal in relation to local housing needs and strategies. Also during this time MassHousing is asking for comments from the community about this project. The comments may include information about site, input on the design and past Town actions regarding affordable housing. Comments can be submitted on the Town's website or by contacting Senior Planner Nathaniel Malloy in the Planning Department (phone: 413-259-3322 or email), 4 Boltwood Ave. Amherst, MA 01002. The public comment period is open until noon (12:00 PM) on Wednesday, April 19, 2023. Staff will synthesize the comments in a cover letter reviewed by the Town Manager. All individual comments will be enclosed with this letter when it is submitted to DHCD.
- Valley CDC anticipates applying for a Comprehensive Permit from the Town in the summer. Comprehensive Permits require expert legal assistance and place a high demand on staff.

▪ East Street/Belchertown Road:

- The Town is working with the chosen developer on a land development agreement. The work on the development is moving forward nicely. With the due diligence work and designs well underway, we anticipate submitting the Project Eligibility Letter application to DHCD this spring to move the 40B process forward.

- Other Sites: Town staff are exploring other Town-owned property to determine its suitability for additional affordable housing.
- Sustainability:
 - Festival: The Amherst Sustainability Festival is Saturday, April 22nd from 10 AM – 4 PM. It's our 11th Annual after a two-year hiatus.
 - Solar Assessment:
 - We had over 20 people attend the online presentation by the consultant on March 13th.
 - We had over 25 people attend the March 18th and 23rd workshops at the Jones Library.
 - To date we have over 500 responses to the survey which will be closed on March 31st.
 - Staff support:
 - The Sustainability Director was able to recruit two fellows from the University of New Hampshire Sustainability Institute Fellows program for positions this summer.
 - One will conduct a Municipal Building Inventory (focusing on energy systems) and the other will conduct a greenhouse gas emissions inventory update. Both are to begin in June.
 - CCA: We are making progress on the CCA process with our consultant Mass Power Choice.
 - We anticipate the public comment period to begin at the beginning of May. All three communities must have websites and program materials complete and available for the launch of the comment period. In addition, Mass Power Choice must create the Valley Green Energy website in advance of the launch.
 - Some background and context: The Valley Green Energy Working Group, an inter-municipal body of staff and community advocates, recommended the implementation of a Community Choice Aggregation (CCA) program for the communities of Amherst, Northampton, and Pelham. The Working Group recognized that the participating municipalities, before submitting an aggregation plan to the Department of Public Utilities, would need to enter into a formal agreement to join together and exercise the powers and duties associated with the joint CCA. The group recommended that this agreement be in the form of a Joint Powers Agreement that then enables the establishment of a Joint Powers Entity (JPE). The primary purpose of the JPE would be to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. We chose a JPE because it can do programming targeted at reducing GHG emissions in a way that the CCA can't, unless it receives specific DPU approval. Also, the JPE facilitates decision making and the ability to collaborate more effectively, especially in seeking funding to support regional efforts that benefit more than a single community. Examples would be solar development, heat pump programs, EV infrastructure, etc. In addition, the JPE would be allowed to conduct programming specifically targeted at reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
 - Funds to support the JPE may come from each community as dues or membership, grants, private funding, legislative earmarks, and potentially the CCA.

- Given the legal complexities encountered in developing the JPE, the Working Group has decided to move forward with a CCA application to the DPU to expedite the establishment of the CCA. We – Amherst, Northampton, Pelham – have already executed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to be able to move this forward. The next step is to conduct a 30-day public outreach campaign that includes solicitation of community feedback and a public presentation which will be documented and included in the CCA application to the DPU. The three communities are committed to establishing the JPE while the CCA application is under review by the DPU. Should the JPE become established while the CCA application is still under review, an administrative change request can be submitted to update the documents. Likewise, should the JPE become established after the CCA is approved, the aggregation can be updated through a request for an amendment.
 - The CCA application review process is anticipated to take, at a minimum, a full year upon submission to the DPU.
 - Dashboard: The Town is engaging a consultant to develop a Community Dashboard for the Town’s website that will highlight projects and initiatives addressing climate change and sustainability.
 - Outreach: We are working with Family Outreach and a group of Community Captains to develop and distribute a survey for renters on building energy efficiency. There will be outreach to landlords as well. This initiative is being supported by a grant from the Mass Clean Energy Center.
 - Community Garden: The Fort River Farm Community Garden Circle continues to meet bi-weekly and is discussing the upcoming season with more direct leadership from community members.
 - Air Quality:
 - The Attorney General referenced the Town of Amherst in her call that the EPA Adopt Strict Air Quality Standards to Protect the Public From Harmful Particulate Matter Pollution.
 - Particulate matter is a pollutant emitted from a variety of sources including vehicles, factories and construction sites. Fine particulate matter – particles that are less than 2.5 microns in diameter. This is the largest environmental health risk factor in the country and can lead to serious medical conditions including premature death, asthma, chronic bronchitis, lung cancer, dementia and cognitive impairment.
 - The Town is a part of the Pioneer Valley Healthy Air Network initiative, which is a collaborative partnership with municipal, public health and environmental leaders to provide important public health information and to support communities in a region that has been disproportionately impacted by environmental injustices. The Pioneer Valley Healthy Air Network now allows residents in the Town to monitor air pollution levels in their neighborhood and informs them on how to take action if higher levels of pollutants are detected.
- **Public Works**
 - Wastewater Treatment Plant: As noted above, the Director of Public Health reported that she met a work team that inspires her to speak more about employee collaboration and public health matters. She toured the Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) and met two

employees and was blown away by their knowledge, scope of expertise, and the importance of their work – truly laying a foundation for the rest of us.

○ Roads:

▪ Kellogg Avenue:

- Taylor Davis Construction will begin the sidewalk and road reconstruction on Kellogg Ave and a small part of Boltwood Walk starting on Monday, April 3rd.
- This is a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funded project to improve the sidewalks and the accessibility in this area. The roadway will be resurfaced following the completion of the sidewalk project at a later date.
- Crews will begin working on signage, demolition and layout next week. Construction will occur between 7am and 5pm Monday-Friday and is expected to last several weeks. Portions of the sidewalk will be inaccessible periodically during construction.
- Parking on the northeast end of Boltwood Walk adjacent to Ann Whalen Apartments will be closed for reconstruction and equipment/material staging.

▪ Northampton Road: Caracas Construction will begin construction shortly. This project is part of the Massachusetts Department of Transportation roadway reconstruction project that extends between University Drive and South Pleasant Street.

▪ West Pomeroy Lane: Looking for the road to be paved in the first half of 2023.

▪ Street Sweeping: The Department has begun sweeping the main routes and hills that receive the most sand during the winter months. After completing these areas, the DPW will begin sweeping the various sections of town.

- Below are the areas that will be swept and the order they will be done in:
 - Central – West includes: Amity Street, Lincoln Ave. and all streets in between the boundary of Massachusetts Ave and Northampton Rd. (Allen, Beston, Blue Hills Rd., Cosby, Cows Lane, Dana Pl., Dana St., Elm, Fearing, Gaylord, Hallock, Kendrick, McClellan, McClure, Nutting Ave, Paige, Phillips, North & South Prospect, and Sunset.), Butterfield Terrace, Greenleaves Dr.
 - Central – East includes: Chestnut, High, Canton Ave., Churchill, Clifton Ave., Cottage, Dickinson, Eames Ave., East St. Common, Gray, Grove, Harvard Ave., North Whitney, Hills Rd., Red Gate Lane, Kellogg Ave., Lessey, South Whitney, Spring, Taylor, Mt. Pleasant, Pleasant Court, Pokeberry Ridge, Salem, Seelye, Shumway, Smith, Strong St, Maplewood development, Triangle, Windridge Terrace, N. East St from Main to Strong, Hedgerow, Arbor Way and Wildwood Lane
 - South Amherst. All streets proceeding from Northampton Rd. (south), Bay Rd, Baker, Blakefield, Canterbury Lane, Carriage Rd., Columbia Dr., Country Corners Rd, East Hadley Rd., Elf Hill, Farmington Rd., Glendale Rd., Harris Mt., Hillcrest, Hitchcock, Hulst Rd., Jeffery Lane, Longmeadow Dr., Memorial Drive, Middle St., Mill Lane, Mount Holyoke Dr., Orchard Dr., Pomeroy Lane and developments off Pomeroy Lane, Pondview Dr., Potwine Lane, Rambling Road, Shays St., South East Street from Common

to Bay Road, South Pleasant St. to Snell Street, Stagecoach Road, West Bay Rd., West Pomeroy Lane, Woodside, Walnut and Rte 116 (Snell to Glendale).

- East Side route includes: all of Echo Hill, all of Amherst Woods, Route 9 from Amherst Center to Belchertown town line, Logtown Rd., Hall Dr., Pelham Rd. and all side streets (Jenks, Ward, Thayer, Bayberry Lane) Old Belchertown Rd., Old Farms Rd., Station Rd., Cortland Dr., Iduna Lane, Stanley Street & Misty Meadows, Valley View Circle, and South East Street Rte. 9 to South Amherst Common.
- North Amherst. All streets proceeding from North Pleasant Street (north of the UMass Campus), East Pleasant St. (north of Strong St.), Berkshire Terrace, Blackberry Lane, Bridge St., Cherry Lane, Cows Rd., East Leverett Rd., Fairfield St., Farview Way, Fisher, Flat Hills Rd., Grantwood Dr., Harlow Dr., Harris, Henry St., Hitching Post, Hobart Lane, Leverett Rd., Lilac Lane, Market Hill Rd., Meadow St., Moorland, Old Montague Rd., Old Town Road, North East St. (north from Strong St.), Pine St., Plumtree, Puffer Circle, Pulpit Hill Rd., Rolling Ridge, Rosemary, Russellville Road, Sand Hill Rd., Sheerman Lane, State St., Summer Street, Sunderland Rd., Shutesbury Rd., Valley Lane and Van Meter.
- The DPW asks that you NOT leave large windrows or piles of sand along edge of road. The sweeper cannot pick up these piles. This material may be brought to the landfill on Route 9 – Belchertown Road and deposited at no charge.
- Sweeping operation will continue until the mid- to end of June.
- General Conditions:
 - The condition of roads is a concern throughout the Town. The challenge we have is – quite simply – that there is more need than there is funding. The Town and Town Council continue to work to correct that by adding more and more funds to fix roads. We have increased that funding markedly over the years. Unfortunately, the cost of repair roads – like most things – has skyrocketed, meaning our dollars don’t fix as many roads as they did in the past.
 - Every several years, we conduct a full assessment of every road in Town and its condition through a service that drives the roads and grades their conditions. This is supplemented with information that comes to our attention after the survey is complete.
 - Residents may submit a request for service on the Town’s website or download the app and submit it from your phone in real time. Here is a link to the website: <https://www.amherstma.gov/2113/Amherst-Connect---Service-Requests> These service requests get acknowledged and then forwarded to the appropriate division at the Department of Public Works.

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

- ARPS hosts Multi-Lingual Heritage Celebration on the South Common with performances, small vendors, and some food - April 29th – from 2:30pm – 5:30pm
- Garden Club of Amherst (South Common): May 19, 2023 from 7:00 am – 2:30pm
- Short-Term Parking Requests (Section 2a of the Town Council Policy):
 - Sustainability Festival on April 22, 2023 from 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. to use 15 spaces on southwest side of Boltwood Avenue and 8 spaces on the south east side of South Pleasant Street
 - Garden Club of Amherst on May 19, 2023 from 7:00 am – 2:30 pm for 12 parking spaces on Boltwood Avenue and four spaces in the Spring Street parking lot
- Short-Term Public Way Closures (Section 3b of the Town Council Policy):
 - May Day Celebration – Cushman Scott Children’s Center – May 6, 2023 – 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon – Henry Street from Pine Street to Market Hill Road
 - Western Mass 10 – Hartford Marathon Foundation – November 5, 2023 – 8:30 – 10:00 a.m. – Triangle Street to North Pleasant Street to College Street to College Street to Main Street to Dickinson Street to Norwottuck Rail Trail
- Placement of Road and Temporary Signs (Section 3d of the Town Council Policy):

MAJOR CAPITAL PROJECTS

- Jones Library:
 - Up-to-the-minute updates can be found here: <https://www.joneslibrary.org/buildingproject>
- DPW Building/Fire Building:
 - Staff continue to explore multiple options for a new site for the Department of Public Works.
- Elementary School Building Committee:
 - The Town Council has called for a Special Election on May 2nd and is reviewing the borrowing authorization.

PROJECTS UPDATE

- Hickory Ridge: Work has begun on the installation of solar panels.
- Pomeroy Village MassWorks Grant: Caracas Construction is preparing to restart the construction of the roundabout in the very near future.
- North Common Restoration/Main Street Parking Lot: The Town is putting the final touches on the plans for the North Common with the goal of putting a package out to bid in the coming weeks. Town staff met with local business leaders who own or operate businesses in the vicinity of the Common.
- North Amherst Library: The building is taking shape. Work continues and is close to being on schedule. The weather has proven to be cooperative to allow progress to continue.

UPCOMING MEETINGS AND EVENTS

- April 17th – Patriots Day Holiday
- April 24th – Town Council Meeting
- May 1st – Town Council Meeting
- May 15th – Town Council Meeting
- May 29th – Memorial Day Holiday
- June 5th – Town Council Meeting
- June 12th – Town Council Meeting
- June 19th – Juneteenth Holiday
- June 26th – Town Council Meeting
- July 4th – Independence Day Holiday

From K-P Law:

**Supreme Judicial Court Declares
Public Comment Policy Unconstitutional
March 8, 2023**

On March 7, 2023, the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court issued its much-anticipated decision in *Barron v. Kolenda*, SJC-13284 (“Southborough”) concerning the constitutionality of a select board policy addressing participation during “public comment” periods of its meetings. The Court concluded that the policy, which sought to implement standards of civility for public comment periods by limiting critique and rude or disparaging remarks, violated Articles 19 and 16 of the Massachusetts Declaration of Rights. In short, the Southborough court observed that “[a]lthough civility can and should be encouraged in political discourse, it cannot be required.” This case has important implications for public bodies.

By way of background, in Southborough, the Select Board held a public meeting which included a public comment period. At the beginning of the public comment period, the Chair referenced the Board’s public comment policy, which required, in part, that all public comments be “respectful and courteous, [and] free of rude, personal or slanderous remarks.” During that portion of the meeting, an attendee held up a sign criticizing the Board for violating the Open Meeting Law and spending frivolously, and, when recognized by the Chair, made comments critical of the Board. The Chair requested that the attendee not slander volunteer public officials and informed the attendee that the Board would take a recess if the attendee continued. The attendee then proceeded to twice refer to the Chair using the name of a reviled historical figure. During a meeting recess, a video of the meeting showed an apparent animated exchange between the Chair and the attendee, during which the Chair threatened to remove the attendee. The attendee then left the meeting.

The Southborough court analyzed both the 19th and 16th Articles of the Massachusetts Declaration of Rights, which provide rights analogous to the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. The Court reviewed the history of discourse at public meetings dating back to the Revolutionary War era, noting that such meetings were at times rancorous and discourteous. Article 19 confers upon the public the rights to assemble and petition the government regarding their grievances. In its decision, the Court concluded that the right to assembly and to petition the government extends to persons making statements during a public comment period at a meeting.

The Court further concluded that Article 19’s reference to assembling in an “orderly and peaceable manner” is not the equivalent of a “polite and courteous” discourse. The Court stated, essentially, that regulation of a public comment period can only be accomplished through reasonable “time, place, and manner restrictions” permitted under the First Amendment. The Court also analyzed Article 16, which protects the rights of free speech, and applied a strict scrutiny standard in concluding that the Select Board’s “civility code” unconstitutionally regulates protected political speech. The Court held that the public comment policy also appeared viewpoint-based in that the policy appeared to allow praise of public officials but not criticism.

While this case did not examine the application of the Open Meeting Law, the Court seemed to premise its conclusions on the fact that the Board invited public comment by including “public comment” on its meeting agenda. Once public comment was included as an item for discussion during the meeting, the

Court concluded that constitutional considerations applied to the Board's efforts to regulate public comments.

We encourage municipalities to review the form and practice of their public comment policies, ensuring that there is no attempt to regulate civility, rude or disparaging remarks, or other content-based criticisms of public officials. In our view, public comment policies may continue to regulate, for example, content-neutral time limits for public comments, the duration of the public comment period as a whole, at which part of the meeting the public comment will occur, individual speaking time limits, rules preventing speakers from speaking over others, and acting in a non-peaceable and disorderly manner.

In summary, state law does not require municipalities to provide public comment periods during board and committee meetings. Some charters and special acts do require such public comment periods, however. Each municipality should review its governing documents to determine whether public comment is mandated. To the extent that public comment is permitted, the rights of individuals participating will be protected by Articles 16 and 19 of the Massachusetts Declaration of Rights. For these reasons, following the decision in Southborough, great care should be taken to ensure that any regulation of public comment periods is limited to reasonable time, place, and manner restrictions, rather than mandated civility, or other content-based, restrictions.

The scope and extent of the Southborough case cannot be fully anticipated. This area of law will both rapidly evolve and require ongoing analysis.

To: Town Council

Fr: Paul Bockelman, Town Manager
Pamela Nolan Young, Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Cc: Community Safety and Social Justice Committee
Human Rights Commission

Dt: March 17, 2023

Re: Response to Town Council Request: Update on DEI Initiatives

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In accordance with the Town Council vote of November 14, 2022, please find a detailed response to the Council's requests.

BACKGROUND

At its meeting on November 14, 2022, the Town Council voted that the Town Manager – working with the DEI Director and other staff - provide a report on the actions to be taken and/or progress in addressing the following:

- 1) Propose to the Town Council a plan for community visioning with a focus on public safety and social justice;
- 2) Propose to the Town Council a plan for the creation of a Resident Oversight Board, with possible assistance from and hire, as appropriate, a consultant to help with the development of that plan;
- 3) Organize a review of public safety protocols for responding to and handling public safety calls involving all residents including minors, in order to recommend changes to those protocols, if appropriate;
- 4) Continue to develop protocols for CRESS regarding active engagement by community responders;
- 5) Continue the work already begun on exploring options for a youth empowerment center;
- 6) Provide training regarding racial equity, rights, and other options for training to employees and members of the public; and
- 7) Develop a communications plan to raise awareness in the community about these efforts.

In this memo, the Town Manager and Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion address each of these requests. It is my understanding that this will be on the Town Council agenda on April 3, 2023. We welcome your comments and questions in advance of that date so we can be prepared to address them on April 3rd.

REPORT

1) Propose to the Town Council a plan for community visioning with a focus on public safety and social justice.

The Department of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion has introduced several initiatives including community visioning, community conversations, and establishing a formal structural relationship with a national organization to institute a train-the-trainer program.

Community Visioning: The Department has proposed hiring a consultant to engage the community in the work of community visioning. While the Town Council notes a focus on public safety and social justice, the actions of community during the visioning sessions will determine the focus. It would be ill-advised to predetermine what issues will come forward from the exercises. The Director has had two preliminary conversations with Dr. Barbara Love. Dr. Love has previously worked for the Town and was a suggestion of the Community Safety Working Group (CSWG) and the Community Safety and Social Justice Committee (CSSJC). The determination of the consultant and services provided must, of course, follow the legally required procurement process.

The process envisioned by the Director and Dr. Love would consist of five rounds of engagement:

- Round One: Visioning
 - Round Two: Coming Together
 - Round Three: Sharing
 - Round Four: Collective Visioning
 - Round Five: Strategic Development
-
- Round One - Visioning: The DEI Department would work with a consultant to describe and frame the visioning work. The Department would identify targeted segments of the community, people, organizations, and particular populations to engage in the process of creating a vision of an inclusive and equitable community.
 - Round Two – Coming Together: The Department will work to establish protocol for conducting a set number of meetings with community members and groups identified in Round One. These meetings are the heart of the work. The consultant will train Town staff and community members to act as facilitators to conduct these “town hall” type sessions where participants will create a list of priorities and visions for the Town. In 2020, the Town joined the [Government Alliance for Race and Equity \(GARE\)](#). At that time, some staff formed a CORE Equity Team. Staff members in the group self-identified and self-selected to learn about and promote issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion. The group now includes 17 staff members from the Town Managers Office, Human Resources, Jones Library, the Senior Center, Town Clerk, Conservation, Information Services, Fire, Assessors, Health, Facilities, DEI, and CRESS with additional departments looking to join. The DEI Department is welcoming additional members from all departments. The Department envisions that this

group, along with some community members, will be trained to perform the facilitation of the “town hall” meetings.

- Round Three - Sharing: Select members from Round Two will share the information and visions identified in Round Two. Participants will have an opportunity to hear and ask questions about each other’s visions.
- Round Four – Collective Visioning: Select members from Round Two will be asked to share results from the prior round and to engage in “collective visioning”.
- Round Five – Strategic Development: The Department will work with the consultant to create a strategic plan. The Department will be responsible for prioritizing and implementing the plan.

The Department anticipates that this initiative will begin in late April, taking into consideration the steps needed to meet procurement laws.

Community Conversations: The Department has inaugurated conversation events with community members through bi-monthly diversity, equity, and inclusion events. The Department has named this series *Becoming Beloved Community*.

Train the Trainer: The Department is exploring the establishment of a community chapter of the [National Coalition Building Institute \(NCBI\)](#). NCBI is an international organization headquartered in Silver Spring, Maryland. NCBI offers *Train the Trainer* sessions to community members who are committed to equity and inclusion. The members meet monthly to hone their leadership and facilitation skills. They provide communities with the internal skillset to tackle divisive and controversial issues. They strive to ensure the fair treatment of all people in their community. An NCBI Chapter is usually a team of diverse representatives from government agencies, public and private schools, corporations, local businesses, trade unions, law enforcement agencies, religious communities, and neighborhood activists.

2) Propose to the Town Council a plan for the creation of a Resident Oversight Board, with possible assistance from and hire, as appropriate, a consultant to help with the development of that plan.

The Department of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion has proposed hiring a consultant to guide the community through the process of creating a Resident Oversight Board, also known as a civilian oversight of law enforcement board. The Department acknowledges the prior work of the Community Safety Working Group in the ideation of a resident oversight board and notes that this initiative requires a unique set of skills and a specialized knowledge. The Town Manager has designated funds to accomplish this project.

This work will be complicated because it must take into account the new requirements of the Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) Commission - [POST Commission](#) - which was established as part of the Police Reform Act enacted in Chapter 253 of the Acts of 2020. The POST Commission is charged with implementing a mandatory certification process for police officers, including de-certification, suspension of certification, or reprimand in the event of certain police misconduct; receiving, investigating, and adjudicating officer misconduct complaints and improper use of force; and maintaining and publishing officer information, including certification status, suspensions, and disciplinary records.

Establishing the Board will require that the Town meet its collective bargaining responsibilities with both the Patrol Officers' and Supervisors' unions in the Amherst Police Department and will require adherence to state and federal law.

To move this work forward the DEI Department consulted with three experts in the field to understand the scope and content of the work which might be required to complete the task. The Department has drafted a Request for Proposals (RFP) for this work. The Town will seek a consultant with experience in establishing police work and civilian oversight work, knowledge of the Massachusetts police accreditation process, and proven success in establishing police oversight boards in municipalities, preferably in Massachusetts. The scope of services in the RFP states in part:

The purpose of the work is to establish a model for a civilian law enforcement oversight board that meets the needs of the Amherst, Massachusetts community. The recommended model should have the following outcomes:

- *Acknowledge and expand the work of the Community Safety Working Group;*
- *Develop a complaint process that is accessible to all and where few if any barriers exist to filing a complaint;*
- *Ensure investigations are fair, thorough, objective and without bias;*
- *Improve policies, practices and training through an analysis of data;*
- *Improve the public's understanding of police policy, training and practices;*
- *Promote trust and confidence in the Amherst Police Department;*
- *Comply with all state and federal laws, specifically the Massachusetts's Peace Officer Standards Training legislation.*

The RFP would seek one or more vendors to provide the following consulting services in two phases. A more detailed description follows this list.

1. Phase 1A Design and Implement a Stakeholder Engagement Process: Develop a community-based process to solicit input about public interactions with police and educate the community about options for police oversight.
2. Phase 1B Research and Evaluate Civilian Law Enforcement Board Models for Consideration: Research civilian models operating nationally with an emphasis on municipalities of similar population, number of commissioned officers, and in communities with local colleges and or universities with similar student populations to the Town of Amherst.
3. Phase 1C: Presentation of Findings, Recommendations and Deliverables: The consultant will prepare a report and present their findings to the Town Council, the Town Manager, and other Town staff and committee members.
4. Phase 2A: Oversight of Implementation, Development of Resident Board Policies and Procedures and Training of Town staff and Oversight Board Members: The objective of this phase is to implement the Resident Oversight Board. The consultant will work in collaboration with the Town Manager and Town staff, the Department of Diversity Equity, and Inclusion, and other Town officials and committees to develop board policies, procedures, and forms; select and train the first board members; and assist in the launch of the board.
5. Phase 2B Part B Training of Town Staff and Oversight Board Members: The consultant will use a Train the Trainer model to train Town staff and the initial board members.
6. Phase 2C Part C Presentation of Findings, Recommendations and Deliverables: The consultant will prepare a report and enclose copies of all policies and forms created.

The Department and Town Manager will establish an RFP Review Committee to assist in the selection of the consultant and make a recommendation to the Town Manager. A Review Committee could include the following groups:

- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Department
- Finance Department
- Community Responders for Equity, Safety, and Service Department
- Police Department
- Human Rights Commission
- Community Safety and Social Justice Committee

The Town Manager is reviewing this RFP process and establishment of an RFP review board. The RFP will be published shortly and the solicitation of proposals will begin immediately. We are optimistic a consultant could be hired by May 1st.

3) Organize a review of public safety protocols for responding to and handling public safety calls involving all residents including minors, in order to recommend changes to those protocols, if appropriate.

This work is best suited for the civilian members of the Resident Oversight Board. The hiring of a consultant and creation of a Resident Oversight Board would include processes and procedures to address the review of public safety protocols.

4) Continue to develop protocols for CRESS regarding active engagement by community responders.

After the vote of the Town Council to establish a new CRESS Department, Town staff have worked at remarkable speed to fund the department, develop job descriptions, identify and build-out workspace, procure vehicles and equipment, hire staff, develop training for the newly hired staff, obtain grants, report on grants, and place trained responders on the street serving the Town.

This has been a gargantuan effort by many departments including the Town Manager's Office and the Human Resources, Finance, Facilities, Police, and Fire Departments. Credit to the dedication to the CRESS Implementation Team which included the co-chairs of the former Community Safety Working Group, Assistant DEI Director, Police Chief and staff, Fire Chief and staff, and CRESS Director with support from Dispatch another member of CSWG.

One year ago – March 21, 2022 - Earl Miller began work as the Director of the Department of Community Responders for Equity, Safety, and Service. It must be noted that the progress we have made in building this Department and the Department of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion from nothing to fully-funded and staffed departments is nothing short of remarkable.

The timeline from creation to having trained responders on the street makes CRESS the fastest alternative dispatch initiative in the country.

The CRESS Director has primary responsibility for working with other departments to build further engagement, including dispatch policies which are now being reviewed by the Town Attorney. We anticipate that the consultant hired to create the Resident Oversight Board will also address some of these issues.

Community Responders:

Eight community responders were sworn into duty in July of 2022 and embarked on two months of intensive training. In September, the community responders began their work in the field and continued to engage in additional training. In January, the Department expanded its shift coverage from Monday through Friday, 9am – 5pm to Monday, 8am – 4pm, Thursday through Friday, 8am – 8pm, and Saturday, 10am – 6pm.

The outreach and recruitment of community responders is a signature success both in the quality of the individuals who applied and were hired and in the diversity and life experiences they bring to this important work.

CRESS is a minority-majority Department with a BIPOC director, the only black director of similar programs in the country. 7 of 10 employees are BIPOC. 4 of 10 are women. 5 of 10 are black. 1 of 10 is bilingual (Spanish). 1 of 10 trilingual (Kiswahili and Kikamba). 2 of 10 speak conversational Spanish. 3 of 10 are survivors of the foster care system. Both members of leadership identify openly as having a disability. 8 of 10 worked, lived, or went to school in the Town of Amherst.

Notable Accomplishments

Here are just a few of the accomplishments and milestones that are part of the development of the CRESS Department:

- CRESS was awarded a non-fiscal grant from the Council of State Governments, joining a collaborative of 12 municipalities, including one in Canada.
- CRESS has supported 4 vaccine clinics, helping more than 600 people to become vaccinated against COVID-19.
- CRESS signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Amherst Regional Public Schools, allowing the Department to support parents with issues that the school is dealing with. Special emphasis has been given to helping children of immigrants to attend school while supporting the families to navigate systemic barriers.
- CRESS continues to work closely with the Town's shelter provider, Craig's Door. During the recent extreme cold weather, CRESS was able to support 9 people to access emergency hotel accommodations, including 3 people who had been living outdoors for 2+ years.
- CRESS has supported seniors by making over twenty wellness checks for Senior Center and delivering hundreds of meals to seniors when volunteers were scarce.
- CRESS participated in the Amherst Survival Center's grocery delivery program, delivering to people whose behavior might otherwise preclude them from accessing this service.
- CRESS has transported people to appointments, provided preventative interventions to prevent crisis, collaborated with mental health providers, and responded to calls to the office.
- Two Responders are working with Trauma-Informed Hampshire County on a national childhood trauma initiative.
- CRESS has overlapped with every Town Department in a variety of capacities (for example: supporting the Town Clerk's office by serving as constables at local elections, providing support for Town Council meetings, supporting the Department of Public Works during tree removals, and escorting the Tibetan delegation from Town Hall to the Hadley Town line).
- The Town has incorporated CRESS in the Town's Emergency Management Plan after CRESS staff participated in a FEMA training.
- CRESS staff were positioned at key locations during the recent weekend activities associated with St. Patrick's Day.
- Director Earl Miller presented alongside Town Manager Bockelman at a state-wide Massachusetts Municipal Management Association event, alongside Town Manager Bockelman and Police Captain Gabe Ting at an International City Management Association event, and alongside the Pittsfield Chief of Police at the Massachusetts Municipal Association Conference on the topic of mental health in public safety.
- CRESS has worked with local businesses resolving issues, coordinated with Jones Library staff, local business leaders, and the Police and Fire Departments on community safety issues;

instituted and organized a regular bi-monthly social service meeting (which includes local hospitals, mental health providers, social service agencies, and state partners); partnered with local colleges and universities for course work, student support, community engagements, and internships.

5) Continue the work already begun on exploring options for a youth empowerment center.

Primary responsibility for this initiative was initially given to the Recreation Director. It became evident that this is a project that needed a more specific definition of scope and additional resources. Staff settled on developing a community-based team approach to explore options for this initiative.

The Town Manager is forming a working group to explore youth empowerment that would include a broad representation of the community including the Schools including the Family Outreach Center, High School and Middle School administration; Town departments including Recreation, Finance, Community Participation Officers, DEI, CRESS, Facilities; and community representatives from CSSJC, the Jones Library, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Hampshire County, and others.

The charge to this working group will include the mission to:

- Gather input from stakeholders by way of a community surveys and public forums;
- Synthesize input from stakeholders and investigate feasibility of establishing a Youth Empowerment Center/Program;
- Ensure any proposed infrastructure improvements can be met by local sources unless additional funding is found;
- Design project programming and related operational costs so that they are scalable based on the resources available;
- Prepare a report of findings and recommendations by November 1, 2023.

The Directors of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and Community Responders for Equity, Safety, and Service have agreed to host an AmeriCorps Member whose time will be divided between the two departments. The AmeriCorps member's primary duty will be to assist both departments in outreach to youth, research and development of youth programming, and the provision of services to youth. It is anticipated that those services will include a range of workshops, activities and presentations on DEI topics, legal rights and responsibilities, civic engagement, leadership, organizing, academics, and career exploration. If the departments are successfully matched with an AmeriCorps member, the member will begin in August.

6) Provide training regarding racial equity, rights, and other options for training employees and members of the public.

The Department of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion has conducted workshops for community members and staff, as well as has hosted cultural events that serve both to inform and entertain and has made presentations to several local groups and organizations. These include:

Workshops for community members and staff:

- Presentation for Applewood Retirement Community.

- Conducting two Restorative Justice Circles for CRESS.
- Facilitation Training for the CORE Equity Team.
- Collaborating with the Human Resources Department on four *DEI 101 & Professionalism* workshops for the Department of Public Works.
- Collaborating with the Human Resources Department on *Teamwork* workshops for an all-staff Professional Development Day.
- Collaborating with the Human Resources Department on *Implicit Bias & Microaggression* workshops for an all-staff Professional Development Day.
- Presenting as a co-panelist with CRESS to the Chamber of Commerce Equity Task Force.
- Providing Anti-Racism workshops for Amherst Police Department that begin March 20th.

Upcoming Workshop:

Being an Ally not a Savior

Cultural Events:

Latinx Heritage Festival
 United Nation Human Rights Day
 Kwanzaa
 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
 Black History Month
 Lunar New Year

Upcoming Events:

AAPI Celebration
 Human Rights Commission Youth Hero Award
 Juneteenth
 Pride Month

The highlight of the work in this area to date has been the Town’s participation in the [National Day of Racial Healing](#). An initiative of the Kellogg Foundation that began in 2017, the National Day of Racial Healing follows the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day observance and asks participants to engage in narratives that promote racial understanding and healing. As the foundation states “Racial healing restores individuals and communities to wholeness. Racial healing repairs the damage caused by racism. It facilitates trust, builds authentic relationships, and bridges divides. Racial healing is at the heart of racial equity – the people-work that leads to community, organizational, and systems transformation.” More than fifty people participated in the two events. One was held exclusively for staff at the Jones Library and another for community members at the Amherst Survival Center.

Below are some quotes from the event:

- ❖ *“It was a great event. It was a safe space to have hard conversations, and everyone respected other stories.”*
- ❖ *“I think it was a perfect small group conversation addressing issues of identity. I liked the circle model and felt that the facilitator did well upholding the shared values and agreements. It was helpful to frame as a first event, and not one that would make recommendations for change.”*
- ❖ *“I struggled between sharing what I thought of race as a young person and what I know now after being educated as a social worker. I ended up sharing the fact that I didn't have much diversity where I grew up, but I forgot to share that what I always thought about race as a name for groups who had similar features adapted to where they are from. I did not know it was a social construct until college.”*
- ❖ *“I had no idea what it would be like, and it was fantastic. The facilitator was wonderful, and I loved being in a group with Paul B. There was also a wonderful gentleman whose name I forgot who was both a union leader and an NAACP leader who said he lived/worked in Northampton.”*
- ❖ *“As discussed at the event, it definitely felt like the room was mostly people on board with the idea of racial healing. Would love to see an audience where there is disagreement and work through that.”*

The Department anticipates that it will continue a robust schedule of workshops, trainings, and presentations both for the community and for staff. Community members have been informed at each public event of the willingness of the Department to facilitate conversations and conduct workshops or presentations. The Department has pledged to host or conduct events for the community bi-monthly.

The Department has requested each department in Town government to conduct a DEI self-assessment. The assessment sought demographic composition of staff, information about services provided and public spaces, and desired DEI resources and workshops. Each department head received a copy of the [MA DEI Coalition Guide](#) for municipalities as well as other DEI resources. Each department in Town is unique in terms of skillsets and awareness of staff. As a result, the Department is customizing each DEI workshop accordingly.

7) Develop a communications plan to raise awareness in the community about these efforts;

The Department of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion is committed to providing access and offering engagement of community members by assisting the Communication Director in raising awareness of these and other efforts in Town via multiple modalities and with a responsiveness to language access.

The Department of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion will provide regular updates as necessary to the Communications Director that can then be shared via the Town’s various established information sources, including but not limited to: websites, newsletters, Town Manager Reports, press releases, posting to official social media channels, videos, informational sessions, and more. Based on expressed

need, the team can explore additional or supplemental methods to provide public access to this information.

CONCLUSION

The Town Manager and Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion are committed to assisting the Town in its goal of carrying out its stated vision for a more inclusive and equitable Town.

It is truly remarkable the progress we have made in building the Department of Community Responders for Equity, Safety, and Service and the Department of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion from an idea to fully-funded and staffed departments in just over a year.

CRESS is the fastest alternative dispatch initiative in the country from establishment to operation.

And the DEI Department, as a newly established department less than eight months old, has made meaningful and steady progress internally with Town staff and departments – building relationships, conducting investigations, providing trainings, and supporting departments with specific interventions.

Most important, however, is that the two Directors – along with their staffs – have provided significant contributions to the Town’s goals, culture, values, and initiatives. They are key members of the Town’s leadership team.

The Director of DEI notes that we are on the journey which is a marathon, not a sprint.

And, as Dr. Martin Luther King stated, “Our goal is to create a beloved community and this will require a qualitative change in our souls as well as a quantitative change in our lives