



To: Town Council  
Fr: Paul Bockelman  
Town Manager  
Dt: March 13, 2019  
Re: Town Manager Report for March 18, 2019

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### **Town Manager Update:**

- Coffee with Town Manager: The next “Cuppa Joe with Paul” will be held on Friday, March 15<sup>th</sup> at Atkin’s Flagship Store in South Amherst. My special guest will be Fire Chief Nelson.
- Hampshire College: We are continuing to monitor the situation at Hampshire College. Specifically, we are working with a small group to determine the community impacts on the Town. This is being done in the context of the larger state-wide dialogue about the responsibility of institutions of higher education to their students, staff, and to their local communities.
- Community Participation Officers (CPOs):
  - CPOs are working on a District-centered neighborhood cleanup day in April to be organized in conjunction with the Sustainability Fair and/or Earth Day. These efforts are great community building tools and support the Council’s goals of engaging the public and sustainability. We will be reaching out to you to determine which Councilors are able to take a leadership role in hosting these clean-up efforts.
  - CPOs are working with the Outreach, Communications and Appointments Committee to develop protocols and shared expectations on staff’s role in District Meetings.
  - CPOs have attended two more District Meetings and will be attending another in the coming weeks. Their role has been to reach out to attendees to help spread the word about getting involved in local government. Involvement can take many shapes from serving on a committee to volunteering at LSSE or Town Hall to connecting with community groups.
  - Council Business Calendar: A new, Council-specific calendar has been created and added to Town Council web page. Official meetings of the Council and Council Committees will be posted by the Clerk’s Office on the Town’s main calendar and, simultaneously, will be posted to the calendar on the Town Council page.
  - Council Community Calendar: Events (district meetings/office hours) are copied to this calendar by the CPOs. CPOs will now promote this calendar as a way for constituents to follow all council events and activities. Check out the new web page here and forward any suggestions to the CPOs: <https://www.amherstma.gov/3435/Town-Council>

- The CPOs continue to develop their online presence with a new “Get Involved” website which you can find here: <https://www.amherstma.gov/3462/Get-Involved>
- Speaking: I spoke to a large group of residents at Applewood on Saturday, March 9<sup>th</sup>. The focus was on the new form of government, priorities, budget, roadwork, and Hampshire College.
- Amherst Media: Like many of you, I have been invited to be a guest on the “Byline with Stan Rosenberg” show on March 28<sup>th</sup>.
- Kanegasaki Sister City Delegation: The delegation from Kanegasaki will be in Amherst from March 20<sup>th</sup> through March 24<sup>th</sup>. There is a modest welcome reception on Wednesday, March 20<sup>th</sup> at around 4:00 p.m. in Town Hall. All councilors are invited.
- Jones Library Centennial: The Jones Library will be celebrating its Centennial with numerous events. The celebration will begin in the Woodbury Room on March 20<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 p.m. You are invited to celebrate the Library's last 100 years and toast to its future at this evening reception. Cake cutting at 6:30 PM with remarks and toasts to follow. Information on all events can be found here: <https://www.joneslibrary.org/777/Centennial-Celebration>
- Strategic Partnership Agreement: As we work on negotiations with the University for a new Strategic Partnership Agreement, I am inviting the Town’s representatives to the University-Town of Amherst Collaborative (UTAC) to a meeting to listen to how they think UTAC is working and what we should be envisioning for the next phase of UTAC.
- Public Safety:
  - With March 2<sup>nd</sup> behind us, Fire and Police are preparing for the weekends between Spring Break and graduation. The warmer weather and end of the school year usually brings increased weekend party activity.
  - The accreditation panel passed the Amherst Police Department with flying colors. Congratulations to all who worked on this arduous process and achieved this important distinction.
- Human Resources:
  - We will be initiating a full search for the Director of Senior Services position. This will be a very important appointment.
- Public Works:
  - Tree work will be done on the North Common in the coming weeks. The work will include removing a dying tree NEXT to the Merry Maple. It will also provide the Tree Warden with the opportunity to further assess the condition of the Merry Maple and do required pruning of dead limbs. The Merry Maple is NOT going to be taken down at this point in time.
  - Roadwork will begin as soon as the weather clears. Projects will include road, sidewalks, and crosswalks on West Bay Road, a short stretch of sidewalk on East Pleasant Street (funded by Housing Choice funds), and completing the work on Main Street. This last project will be done after graduation so as not to interfere with local businesses. Work in Amherst Woods will continue, as well.
  - Work on the multi-use path on East Hadley Road will resume once the weather allows. This is an important investment to serve an area with critical need. One of the goals is to create a safe route for users to get to the newly renovated Groff Park.
- LSSE: The Massachusetts Recreation and Parks Association (MRPA) has awarded LSSE its *Agency Award* for the Department’s recreational program outreach. This award recognizes just one department in the State for exceptional and innovative work around recreational program outreach to underserved populations in their communities. The award will be presented at the MRPA conference on March 27, 2019. Congratulations to the staff at LSSE!

## Major Capital Projects:

- North Common Restoration/Main Street Parking Lot: On hold.
- Groff Park: Bids have been received and are significantly lower than the last set of bids and within budget. Work is projected to begin this spring/summer with completion in July.
- DPW/Fire: Developing options for a site for the DPW.
- Schools: MSBA Statements of Interest are on the Council agenda.
- Capital Plan: Work continues to refine the capital plan and interactive tool that will be made available to the public so that anyone can develop scenarios for funding the major capital projects.

## Project Update:

- Station Road Bridge: The Mass DOT has reviewed the plans for the temporary bridge on Station Road. Our consulting engineers and staff have reviewed the comments and are developing options for addressing them. However, we are still awaiting the geotechnical report, hydraulic report, and portions of the plan that are still under review in Boston. We are moving forward with purchasing a bridge and I will have additional information early next week. (We will also update the website at that time.)
- Downtown Parking: Traffic counts will be done in late March. Other outreach efforts will be scheduled. Community outreach will be in April. The report should be finalized by July.
- Puffer's Pond Parking and State Street Changes: The Select Board approved changes to provide more defined parking and to make State Street one-way from west to east. The DPW work will be implemented before the beginning of the busy summer season. Environmental permitting is still required.
- North Amherst Library: The work will now be integrated into the Town's capital plan in a future year. A group of residents has expressed interest in raising funds privately to help pay for this project.
- Downtown Recreation Working Group: No new activity. Designs have been finalized by the Downtown Recreation Working Group and an implementation plan has been developed. Future steps require funding.
- Dog Park: The Dog Park Committee continues its work. Staff met with State environmental officials and environmental permits are being sought. We continue to expect that this project will be completed in 2019, although ample time will be needed to allow the grass to grow and take hold.
- Solar on the Landfill: No new updates.
- Medical Marijuana:
  - No updates.
- Recreational Marijuana:
  - RISE on Meadow Street has been approved by the State Cannabis Control Commission. They still need additional local approvals before opening.
  - Herbology is scheduled to go before the Zoning Board of Appeals on March 14<sup>th</sup>.
  - Herbology's application before the Cannabis Control Commission was marked as complete last week. I have received and signed off on a letter requesting confirmation of municipal compliance in the near future.

- The next issue facing the Town will be social consumption.

### **Finances and Budget:**

- Regional School District Budget: The Council will be reviewing the Regional School District budget separately. There is a public hearing on the budget on Thursday, April 4<sup>th</sup>. Although it is posted as a Finance Committee meeting, all Councilors are encouraged to attend and it will be posted as a full Council meeting, as well.
- FY19 Budget: We anticipate closing out FY19 with a balanced budget. I've been informed that the last snow event caused us to exceed the budget for snow and ice.
- FY20 Budget: Finance staff continue to work on the FY20 budget. The miniscule increase in net State Aid has created a significant gap in balancing the budget.
- FY18 Audit: The audit of Town finances is complete and is posted on the Town's website along with all previous audits. The audit will be reviewed by the new Audit Committee once established by the Council.
- Community Services Funding: No new updates.
- Capital Requests by Residents: Residents may submit capital requests to the Town until March 15<sup>th</sup>. The Joint Capital Planning Committee will review and discuss all requests submitted.

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

- March 14<sup>th</sup> at 4:30 p.m. – Town Council workshop on open meeting, conflict of interest, and public records laws with the Town Attorney
- March 20<sup>th</sup> at 4:00 p.m. – Welcome Reception for Kanegasaki Sister-City Delegation at Bangs Community Center
- March 21<sup>st</sup> at 6:00 p.m. – Jones Library Centennial Celebration Kick-off Reception
- March 22<sup>nd</sup> at 7:30 a.m. – Legislative Breakfast at Jones Library
- April 1<sup>st</sup> at 6:30 p.m. – Town Council meeting
- April 4<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 p.m. – Finance Committee public hearing on Regional School District Budget
- April 15<sup>th</sup> – Patriots Day Holiday
- April 22<sup>nd</sup> at 6:30 p.m. – Town Council meeting