



To: Town Council
Fr: Paul Bockelman
Town Manager
Dt: November 6, 2020
Re: Town Manager Report for November 9, 2020

Town Manager Update:

- **Veterans Day:** Town staff will support a small, socially-distanced tribute to veterans on Wednesday, November 11th. This work is being organized by the VFW and American Legion with support from the Director of Senior Services. In addition, Town staff will be delivering gift bags to local veterans as a small thank you for their service.
- **COVID-19:**
 - **Hot Line:** The hotline is now being staffed during the week and on Friday and Saturday nights from 4pm – 12 midnight.
 - **Ambassadors:** The ambassadors are now fully staffed and in the field.
 - **Governor's Order:** The Governor issued four new orders as follows:
 - **Stay At Home Advisory:** The Administration issued a revised Stay At Home Advisory to ensure residents avoid unnecessary activities that can lead to increased COVID-19 transmission. The revised Stay At Home Advisory instructs residents to stay home between 10 PM and 5 AM. The Advisory allows for activities such as going to work, running critical errands to get groceries and address health needs, and taking a walk. Click here to read the revised Stay At Home Advisory: www.mass.gov/stayhome.
 - **Early Closure of Businesses and Activities:** Governor Baker issued a new executive order that requires the early closure of certain businesses and activities each night at 9:30 PM. The 9:30 PM closure requirement is aligned with the Stay At Home Advisory and together the two new initiatives are designed to further limit activities that could lead to COVID-19 transmission. Effective November 6, the following businesses and activities must close to the public each day between the hours of 9:30 PM and 5:00 AM. [Click here to read the new executive order](#) (including full list of businesses required to close at 9:30 PM).
 - **Face Covering Order:** Governor Baker also signed an updated order related to face-coverings. The revised order requires all persons to wear face-coverings in all public places, even where they are able to maintain 6 feet of distance from others. The revised order still allows for an exception for residents who cannot wear a

face-covering due to a medical or disabling condition, but it allows employers to require employees to provide proof of such a condition. It also allows schools to require that students participating in in-person learning provide proof of such a medical or disabling condition. [Click here to read the revised face-coverings order.](#)

- **Gatherings Order:** Governor Baker also signed an updated order restricting gatherings. The new gatherings order reduces the gathering size limit for gatherings at private residences: indoor gatherings at private residences are limited to 10 people and outdoor gatherings at private residences are limited to 25 people. The limit on gatherings held in public spaces and at event venues (e.g. wedding venues) remains the same. The new order also requires that all gatherings (regardless of size or location) must end and disperse by 9:30 PM. The new gatherings order also requires that organizers of gatherings report known positive COVID-19 cases to the local health department in that community and requires organizers to cooperate with contact tracing. The gatherings order authorizes continued enforcement by local health and police departments and specifies that fines for violating the gathering order will be \$500 for each person above the limit at a particular gathering. [Click here to read the revised gatherings order](#)
- Racial Equity:
 - Community Safety Working Group:
 - The Interview Team - that includes Keisha Dennis of the Residents' Advisory Committee; Matthew Charity, Chair of the Human Rights Commission; Sid Ferreira of the Human Rights Commission and the ABC House Resident Director; Tim Nelson, Fire Chief; Alexandra Monesson-Olson, designated by the Defund 413 group; and Dr. Barbara Love, Professor Emerita, Social Justice Education, University of Massachusetts at Amherst and former chair of the Amherst-Pelham Regional School District – has been dedicating significant time to interviewing all applicants for the Working Group.
 - The Interview Team has recommend six candidates to the Town Manager, which I then appointed and reviewed with the Council's TSO Committee. These six appointments are on the Town Council's agenda for November 9th.
 - The Town has joined the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE). GARE is a national network of government cohorts working to achieve racial equity and advance opportunities for all.
 - I met with the League of Women Voters Racial Justice Task Force to hear about the research they have done in this area. This is a knowledgeable group of residents who have offered to support the work of the Town and the Community Safety Working Group.
- Outreach:
 - Coffee with Town Manager: The next Cuppa Joe with Paul will be on Friday, November 20th.
 - Office Hours: The Communications and Hour and I are working to establish virtual office hours via Zoom. This will allow individuals who would like to meet one-on-one with the Town Manager the opportunity to schedule a time during established office hours. We hope to launch this after Thanksgiving.
 - Community Chats:
 - We have relaunched the weekly Community Chats with special guests Acting Town Clerk Sue Audette and Facilities Manager Jeremiah Laplante and, this week,

with the new Human Resources Director Donna-Rae Kenneally. Next week's Chat will feature new Public Health Director Emma Dragon.

- The Community Chats are every Thursday for 30 minutes...and recorded so you can listen at your convenience.
- In the Community: The Community Preservation Officers (CPOs) are incredible at connecting with all members of the community.
 - The Town offered free flu shots at the Amherst Survival Center with the Public Health Nurse, CPOs, and Town Manager greeting visitors as they were picking up food.
 - The Town offered free flu shots at the Community Breakfast for the unhoused community and others with the Public Health Nurse, Public Health Director, and Town Manager greeting visitors as they were picking up breakfast.
 - Several Town Councilors, the Town Manager, and representatives from Inspection Services and the Police Department participated in a Town-wide knock-and-talk in teams led by our Ambassadors on October 26th. More details of that outreach effort will be forthcoming.
 - The CPOs and I were present at the Mobile Food Markets at the Fort River School and the Mobile Food Market on East Hadley Road.
- Recognition: The Town's Cuppa' Joe with Paul was featured as an example as one of "12 Inspiring Civic Engagement Strategies [Smart Initiatives]" <https://www.civicplus.com/blog/ce/12-inspiring-examples-of-citizen-engagement-initiatives-for-smart-cities> Credit goes to the Communications Manager for developing this site. See the notice at the end of this report.
- Appointments: I continue to seek members to serve on the Agricultural Commission, Disability Access Advisory Committee, Public Art Commission, and Public Shade Tree Committee. Interviews continue with several of these groups.
- Town-Gown:
 - UMass: The Town and University reopening working group meets weekly.
 - The working group will continue to meet weekly until November 20th and then meet in mid-December and early January.
 - Testing: The University and the Town announced that the University will provide asymptomatic COVID-19 testing for the Town's first responders and inspectors as part of their joint efforts to deter spread of the novel coronavirus. Approximately 100 firefighters, police, public works, and inspectors are offered the opportunity to be tested once per week in the University's Public Health Promotion Center at the Mullins Center. The Town will reimburse the University for the costs associated with the testing.
 - Off-campus students: The University is collecting data to determine the number of students who are living off-campus in Amherst and surrounding areas.
 - Halloween: The weekend had 80 parties registered, the highest number of the fall semester. All of the parties were smaller than in previous years.
- Town Staff:
 - Veterans Day: Town staff will be volunteering to deliver gift bags to local veterans on Veterans Day. This initiative has been organized by the Director of Senior Services with the support of the Director of Veterans Services and CPOs.
 - Childcare: With the start of remote schooling, many of our employees have been challenged to meet both the needs of their families and the demands of their work. The

Town is offering childcare services for school aged children through the LSSE Department. I appreciate the cooperation of the School District which has provided access to the Middle School gymnasium for this service.

Departments:

- Town Clerk:
 - Election:
 - The Town Clerk’s office, led by the Acting Town Clerk Sue Audette and Acting Assistant Town Clerk Amber Martin, did a stupendous job of being organized, prepared, and calm as the office conducted a flawless election on Election Day.
 - As I wrote to them both, “Election day (week, month) is behind us and I just wanted to thank you both for doing such a spectacular job under very trying conditions. I admired your planning, preparation, and execution in conducting the election and various ways people voted leading up to yesterday. You both exuded such calm competence that the election workers felt secure that they were in good hands with your leadership.”
 - The Acting Assistant Town Clerk recruited and trained dozens of election workers and had a reserve of several dozen election workers who they were able to call on as the need arose.
 - In addition, Town staff jumped in at various times to support the efforts of the Clerk’s office.
 - Election Information as of October 31, 2020:
 - Amherst Registered Voters: 16,694
 - Total Early Voting In-person Votes: 2,117
 - Total Absentee and Early Voting Mail-in/Drop-off Votes: 6,821
 - Total Early Votes: 8,938
 - Total Percentage of Early Votes: 53.9%
 - The Town Clerk’s office will be conducting post-election tabulation on November 10th at 10:00 am at the Bangs Community Center to tabulate ballots received between November 3rd through November 6th by mail that are postmarked by November 3rd per the State’s election advisory 20-11 regarding post-election ballot counting.
- Public Safety:
 - Hampshire HOPE (Heroin/Opioid Prevention & Education) is a community coalition addressing the opioid crisis. The Town’s Police and Fire Departments participate in this coalition.
 - The DART (Drug Addiction and Recovery Team) program, which is part of Hampshire HOPE, is a free service that supports people who are at risk for an opioid overdose or family members affected by overdose.
 - The director of the DART program who expressed thanks “for another year of the partnership with the Amherst Police Department and the DART program and despite some very challenging health and community circumstances. The collaboration between Hampshire HOPE, the Northampton Health Department, DART program and the Amherst Police Department has been a lifeline we know for some at high risk in our communities and additionally impacted by COVID-19. The role that the Amherst Police Department has taken supporting referrals and outreach

with the increased isolation, reduced access to services and need for referrals, Narcan and overall support is essential.”

- The Team is now working on many different efforts with several initiatives.
 - Ambassadors: The ambassadors program continues its work and is now fully staffed. Staff, wearing bright, yellow shirts, are on the streets and visiting households in the Town.
 - The COVID Hot Line continues to receive calls that are answered in real time during the day with return calls at other times. We are now staffing the Hot Line with Ambassadors on Friday and Saturday evenings.
 - The Police Department received a significant grant of \$400,207 multi-year grant to improve Criminal Justice Responses to Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault, and Stalking.
 - Ambulance and emergency calls continue to be at an all-time low with calls coming in at about half of what they are normally. There have been a handful of ambulance transports of students this semester. Typically, there are 5-10 every weekend.
 - We continue to employ five additional full-time firefighters to support the Fire Department and ensure adequate support staff are available for our critical first responders.
- Human Resources:
 - Donna-Rae Kenneally, the Town’s new Human Resources Director, started her job on October 26th. Many thanks to Human Resources Manager Joanne Misiaszek who had been serving as the Temporary Human Resources Director.
 - Emma Dragon, the Town’s new Health Director, began her duties on November 2nd. Many thanks to Public Health Nurse Jennifer Brown who had been serving as the Temporary Health Director.
- Public Works:
 - Downtown: DPW crews realigned and restriped parts of downtown on North Pleasant Street and South Pleasant Street to create additional outdoor areas. This work is being paid for by the Department of Transportation grant.
- Finance:
 - COVID-19: Between the first round request of CARES funds and this round we have requested a total of \$3,111,385 which leaves \$371,504 remaining on the grant. This is a good safety net to cover anything that FEMA may reject. The Finance Director has been managing these funds and matching the expenditures with the appropriate funding source. In total, with FEMA, expenditures are projected to be around \$4.5 million.
 - Ambulance: You have a request for an appropriation for a new ambulance for the Fire Department. The lead time for ambulances is months long, and we have need to purchase an ambulance sooner than later. We will utilize a grant obtained by the Sustainability Coordinator to purchase a battery-operate system to minimize idling of the ambulance when on site.
- Sustainability:
 - The Municipal Vulnerabilities Preparedness (MVP) Action Grant: The Energy and Climate Action Committee is holding a series of subcommittee meetings with Community Leaders and stakeholders. There are four Task Groups holding a series of three meetings each through September. Additional community outreach meeting was held on October 30th.

- The Town received a \$125,998 grant from the Department of Energy Resources Green Community Division to update lighting at the Munson Library, Police Station, and Town Hall and to implement idle reduction technology for Town vehicles, which will be utilized on the new Ambulance being requested.
- Community Services:
 - Unhoused Population:
 - The Town worked with Craig’s Doors to open a new 24-hour shelter November 1st for those experiencing homelessness. Congratulations to the leadership of Craig’s Doors for working tirelessly to make this happen. Here are details:
 - Craig’s Doors has secured a 24-hour shelter for people in need at the Unitarian Universalist Society of Amherst (UUSA) at 121 North Pleasant Street.
 - Town staff including representatives from the Town Manager’s office, and including staff from the Public Health, Fire, Emergency Management, and Police Departments is assisting with the planning of the shelter, securing resources, and working with Craig’s Doors on operational details. Health and safety protocols to minimize the risk of transmission in the congregate shelter will be in place. Director of Senior Services Mary Beth Ogulewicz and Assistant Town Manager David Ziomek coordinated activities on the Town’s side.
 - The shelter will be staffed 24/7 by Craig’s Doors staff, which plans to accommodate up to 16 guests and will provide on-site meals. Guests will also have access to medical care, counseling, job and housing assistance, laundry services, and case management through Craig’s Doors, who will continue to operate their administrative site on the grounds of the First Baptist Church.
 - The COVID 19 pandemic provided an opportunity to explore new options for emergency shelter services. The new model provides: a safe place to stay; access 24 hours a day/ 7 days a week; case management to find permanent housing; health care support in close proximity.
 - Regional Isolation and Quarantine Shelter: I, along with numerous other chief executive officers in western Massachusetts, are advocating for emergency shelter, isolation and quarantine resources in the region. See the attached letter at the end of this report.
 - Leisure Services:
 - LSSE offered alternative events for Halloween including a Do Your Own Mask contest, Halloween Window Painting, and a Halloween Car Parade.
 - Fall programming includes clinics for youth football, tennis, ultimate Frisbee, cross country, track, and soccer. Staff have also organized a “Girls on the Run” program.
 - Cherry Hill revenues for the month of September were one of the highest in recent history.
 - Town staff are working with the School District to develop additional options for child care under the Governor’s recent order making it easier to provide this essential service to the Town’s staff and community at large.

- The LSSE strategic planning process is coming to a close. They have identified the following as priorities:
 - Communication and interaction with the public, including changing the name of the department to the Town of Amherst Recreation Department.
 - Responding to emerging needs, with a focus on the new reality presented by the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - Improving communication and access to programming, including upgrades to the department's website.
 - Building and maintaining strong collaborations with local organization, recognizing the local organizations complement and expand the work of the department.
 - This work is now being put into a time line for implementation over the next 6-12 months.
 - Senior Center: The Senior Center's new newsletter, The Senior Spirit, is out and has been mailed to all seniors in the Town. It can be found here: <https://www.amherstma.gov/ArchiveCenter/ViewFile/Item/12511>
 - Health Department:
 - The Town offered flu clinics to our employees.
 - Health staff are conducting targeted flu clinics as they have done in the past. These efforts have been complicated by the COVID-19 pandemic but the Public Health Nurse has been offering shots at the Survival Center, Craig's Doors, and the community breakfast for the unhoused.
- Economic Development:
 - Small Business COVID Recovery Grants Program: The Town has been awarded federal funds through the CARES Act to support local small businesses hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. Valley Community Development Corporation will act as Program Administrator for the application and selection process to award one-time grants up to \$10,000 for businesses located in Amherst. Those interested may visit the [Amherst Small Business COVID Recovery Grants Program webpage](#) for eligibility criteria, resources and full details. The online application portal opens for applications on Monday, November 2nd.
 - Alcoholic Beverages Fee Reduction: I submitted a request to the Board of License Commissioners to adopt a one-time reduction in fees for on-premises alcoholic beverages licenses. At its meeting on October 15th, the Board voted a one-time 40% reduction in fees. This will support our local restaurants in these difficult times. The reduction in fees was anticipated in our budget projections.
 - Heaters: Town staff have worked with the Business Improvement District to install heaters at various restaurants.
 - A significant grant from the Massachusetts Department of Transportation was secured to fund the heaters.
 - Town staff installed 12 heaters at six different locations as recommended by the BID based on expressed interest by the businesses: Arigato, Bistro 63, Vespa, La Veracruzana, Fresh Side, and Mission Cantina. The heaters were installed and secured at the restaurants in the public way.

- Fire and Inspections staff met with each establishment to provide an owner’s manual, review safety information, and provide instructions on how to use the heaters safely.
- Conservation and Development:
 - Grant: Working with the Department of Public Works, Chamber of Commerce, and Business Improvement District, the Town was awarded a Shared Streets grant of \$129,472.20. The grant will pay for increased pedestrian and cyclist safety with lighting improvements and ADA improvements, expanded outdoor dining areas and lengthening the time for dining (heaters), promoting bus ridership with customer-activated heated bus shelters, and creating an inviting streetscape with improved landscaping.
 - Emergency Rental Assistance:
 - The Town has dedicated \$250,000 in taxpayer funds to support income-eligible renters in meeting their rental requirements during the COVID-19 pandemic. Information can be found here: <https://www.amherstma.gov/CivicAlerts.aspx?AID=2672>
 - The Town and the Municipal Affordable Housing Trust Fund announced the availability of Round Two for short-term emergency rental assistance available for Amherst renters experiencing a loss or reduction of income due to COVID-19.
 - Rental assistance is available for up to 3 months.
 - Information can be found here: www.communityaction.us/amherstrentalassistance
 - Licensing:
 - On September 10th, the Governor extended the period for outdoor table service by licensees licensed for on-premises consumption from November 1, 2020, for any period up to sixty (60) days after the end of the state of emergency. The LLA may issue extensions automatically to all licensees, or may do so on request from individual licensees.
 - I submitted a request to reduce alcoholic beverages license fees. A reduction in fees was approved by the Board of Licensing Commissioners.
 - ADA Transition Plan: Consultants are finalizing a draft of the transition plan.
- Information Technology (I.T.):
 - The Town is participating on a program, led by the Innovation Institute of the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative (MTC) aimed at local “government innovators”. The program aims to help local leaders understand blockchain and its potential applications in local government. The MTC assesses that, in contrast to higher levels of government, municipalities have greater flexibility to assess and test blockchain applications. I applaud our I.T. staff for being on the cutting edge of this technological advance which may assist the town in promoting economic development.
 - TechTalk: Two members of the I.T. team have introduced a new program for Town staff called “Tech Talk”. Dozens of Town employees are participating in these virtual interactive sessions.
 - I-Net: The Town has contracted with Comcast to continue operating the institutional network which services the Town and school functions. Work will begin on installing the replacement I-Net in the near future.

Delegated Authority (September 2020):

- Short-Term Event Uses of Town Commons: None
- Short-Term Parking Requests: None
- Short-Term Road or Sidewalk Closures: None
- Other: Approved use of Kendrick Park for use by the Boy Scouts of America Troops 500B, 500G, and 504 from November 11, 2020 to January 3, 2021.

Major Capital Projects:

- DPW/Fire: No developments
- Schools: The first meeting of the Elementary School Building Committee is scheduled for October 27th at 7:30 a.m. via Zoom
- Library:
 - July 2021 – The MBLC will award Amherst a provisional grant
 - December 2021 – the date by which the Town will have to vote to approve its share of the project cost – but there is still nothing preventing Town Council from voting on the project before December 2021.

Project Update:

- Kendrick Park Playground: No updates.
- Performing Arts Shell on the Town Common: No developments.
- Parking Structure on Town Land at North Pleasant Street Parking Lot: No developments.
- North Common Restoration/Main Street Parking Lot: Staff are reviewing the plans developed by the architectural and engineering firm to determine if the work can be modified to move forward with an additional appropriation from the Community Preservation Act fund. Staff will make a presentation to the Town Council at its November 16th meeting.
- Hickory Ridge: Work continues on numerous fronts.
- East Street School: No developments
- North Amherst Library: With the Town Council’s positive vote, we have contracted with the architect to move to the next phase of design. We will be utilizing a new form of public involvement to engage the community in a different way, because I don’t anticipate we will be able to have public meetings on this – or any other – project for some time.
- Solar on the Landfill: Slow, steady progress continues to be made as we work through the permitting and interconnection approvals. We are projecting construction to begin in November of 2021 and operation to begin in April of 2022.

Upcoming Meetings and Events:

- November 11th – Veterans Day Holiday
- November 16th – Town Council Meeting
- November 19th – Public Forum on the Budget
- November 26th – 27th – Thanksgiving Holidays
- December 5th – Four Towns Meeting
- December 7th – State of the Town Presentation
- December 7th – Town Council Meeting
- December 21st – Town Council Meeting

- December 24th-25th – Christmas Holiday
- January 1st – New Year's Holiday

Other events:

- October 22nd – District Two Neighborhood Meeting

Letter to Secretary Sudders:

I am writing on behalf of the Western Massachusetts' mayors and town managers noted below to request a meeting with you to discuss the emergency shelter, isolation and quarantine needs facing our communities.

Specifically, we are seeking the re-leasing of The Quality Inn in Northampton for combined purposes: isolation/quarantine (I/Q) for the Western MA region and in a separate area, shelter for people who are not COVID-19 positive but are otherwise extremely vulnerable due to living outside.

As you know, right now the only isolation and quarantine hotel available for people who are homeless is located in Everett, MA, a roughly 200 mile trip from the City of Northampton and much farther for those communities farther west than ours. Our public health leaders from the region have expressed grave concern that many people experiencing homelessness are likely to refuse to get tested or to quarantine - in effect refuse shelter - for fear of being relocated so far from their home community if they test positive or have been exposed to COVID-19. Additionally, if someone who is staying at the shelter is exposed to COVID-19, without an accessible I/Q site, the entire shelter may be required to shut down to keep people safe.

These scenarios pose an extreme health risk to these individuals and the communities in which they live and seriously threaten to spread COVID-19 when our shared goal is to contain it.

Also right now, Northampton is at a crossroads for obtaining additional winter shelter capacity. The site used last Spring at the Northampton High School is no longer available due to the possibility of school reopening and there is not a suitable alternative. The Quality Inn has sufficient space to serve as I/Q space and in an entirely separate and safe area, to provide shelter for Northampton's homeless population. We understand FEMA reimbursement is available for all required purposes and we are happy to work with DHCD to ensure that happens.

Finally, it must be noted that in addition to the space needs, every single region across the state is facing a shelter workforce crisis and Western Massachusetts is no exception. Shelter providers are already experiencing staff shortages and are extremely uncertain of how they will meet the staffing demands in the coming months. This challenge can only be met through a two-part statewide plan that addresses sufficient I/Q and hotel sites with state-sponsored staffing where necessary. We would greatly appreciate an opportunity to talk further and problem-solve with you. We look forward to partnering with you to keep people sheltered and safe with a focus on regional equity which ensures that Western Massachusetts is afforded opportunities and services to meet our unique needs.

Thanks very much for your time and attention. We look forward to hearing from you.

Best,

Northampton Mayor David Narkewicz

Springfield Mayor Dominic J. Sarno

Amherst Town Manager Paul Bockelman

West Springfield Mayor William Reichelt

Chicopee Mayor John L. Vieau

Holyoke Mayor Alex Morse

Easthampton Mayor Nicole LaChapelle

South Hadley Town Manager Michael Sullivan

Greenfield Mayor Roxann Wedegartner

Pittsfield Mayor Linda Tyer

North Adams Mayor Tom Bernard

Cuppa' Joe with Paul featured as example as one of “12 Inspiring Civic Engagement Strategies [Smart Initiatives]” <https://www.civicplus.com/blog/ce/12-inspiring-examples-of-citizen-engagement-initiatives-for-smart-cities>

How to Improve Civic Engagement with These Awe-Inspiring Examples...

7. Cuppa' Joe with Paul, Amherst, MA



Why It Should Inspire You

In Amherst, MA, its leaders are taking accessibility and transparency to a whole new level with their “Cuppa Joe with Paul,” initiative. The town holds regular open sessions where citizens are invited to meet with the Town Manager in a casual setting to discuss community initiatives. Occasionally, special guests are scheduled to attend as well, such as the school superintendent and assistant superintendent for diversity, equity, and HR. These open, causal sessions not only give citizens an opportunity to be engaged with policymakers and take part in local dialogue, they prove that the town values the input of its citizens and that its leaders are accessible, open, and interested in direct feedback.

How to Encourage Civic Participation

How to Encourage Civic Participation

If you’re interested in establishing similar, routine, open forum style sessions with your civic leaders and your citizens, follow the tips below to encourage citizen participation:

- **1. Promote the sessions on your [civic website](#).** For the two weeks before the session, add a banner or prominent advertisement on your homepage to inform citizens of the date and time of the next session.
- **2. Promote on social media.** The Town of Amherst promotes their “Cuppa Joe” events on social media. Posting about the event helps to [amplify the reach of your message](#) and encourages social sharing. In addition, if using Facebook, create an event page that followers can RSVP to directly. Not only will it give you an estimated number of attendees, your event will be seen by the friends and followers of everyone who RSVPs that they are attending, further expanding the reach of your message. Ask your municipal leaders to share your posts on their social media pages as well.
- **3. Contact your local media.** Notify your local media outlets when your sessions will be held. Local reporters may attend and write an article about the event, which will help encourage future attendance. Also, submit your event to your local news outlets’ event calendars to expand your reach.
- **4. Ask your civic leaders to mention the event at relevant speaking events.** In the weeks leading up to the event, encourage your civic leaders to mention to audiences that they have the opportunity to discuss key topics further one-on-one at the upcoming open forum sessions.
- **5. Display posters and distribute postcards.** Promote the event in local offices by hanging posters and putting stacks of postcards on display. Partner with local businesses and ask them to hang posters and hand out postcards as well.
- **6. Include information in bill stuffers.** Including a small slip of paper with event details in utility bill envelopes is an easy way to educate residents about upcoming events.
- **7. Include guest speakers.** As the Town of Amherst has done, invite guest speakers to individual sessions. Depending on their role, they may have significant influence over the number of attendees, and the topics of interest for discussion.