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MEMORANDUM

TO: Athol Board of Selectmen
 FR: Shaun A. Suhoski, Town Manager
 RE: Town Manager Update
 DT: September 15, 2015

Dear Board: Please see the following:

Templeton Rd. (Map 44, Parcel 1)

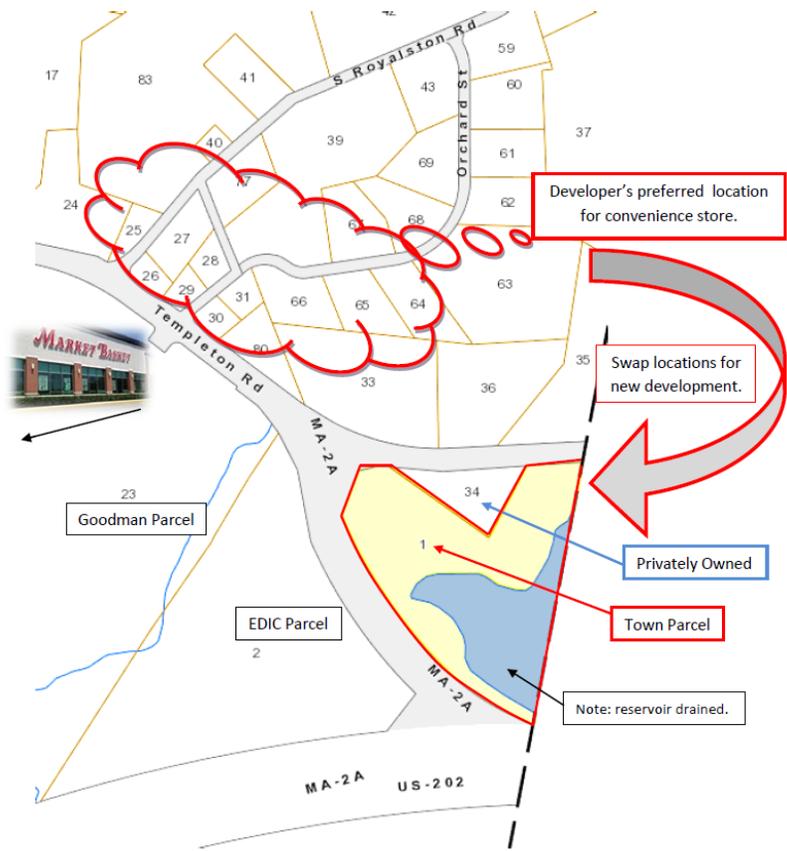
Conveyance to EDIC: The Board has taken a vote in favor of conveying the above referenced parcel to the EDIC to alleviate development pressure in a residential neighborhood while simultaneously providing a boost to ongoing efforts to complete development in the North Quabbin Commons area.

The value to the Town of further development through growth in the tax base, additional employment opportunities, and ancillary revenues from meal and hotel excises far surpasses the debatable value of the land in question. I recommend that the Board vote the following:

MOVE that, pursuant to authority under Article 26 of the June 8, 2015 Annual Town Meeting, the Board of Selectmen approve the

transfer of a 5.6 acre parcel of land on Templeton Road identified as Map 44, Parcel 1 in the town of Athol Assessor's Maps to the Economic Development Industrial Corporation subject to:

- **Sale price not less than assessed value (\$19,000),**
- **Sale proceeds shall be Town general fund proceeds available for Town Meeting appropriation (ideally to the Capital Improvement Plan)**
- **Title reverts to Board of Selectmen if property not sold within 180 days, and**
- **Any other term or legal requirement of Town Counsel**



Elementary School Temporary Bond (For Public Information): As the Board is aware, the Town has issued its second bond anticipation note (BAN) – this one in the amount of \$5,000,000 – to ensure adequate cash flow for the construction of the new elementary school. The low bids (0.55 percent \$2.5M from UniBank for Savings; and 0.60 percent for \$2.5M by Eastern Bank / Cede & Co.) reflect very favorable interest rates.

With this issuance, the Town has issued a total of \$11,000,000 of the total \$43.9 million in authorized debt for the project. Timely reimbursement of the state share of costs through the MSBA have enabled the Town to limit borrowing to this point.

MART Bus and Van Service: As the Board is aware, MART’s funding for Athol and Orange “door-to-door” van service was cut by roughly \$400,000 this current fiscal year. MART therefore is developing a “fixed route” bus service scenario that will continue to serve the two communities. A public hearing on the proposed routes will be held before the end of the month at the Senior Center and MART will present its plans to the Board of Selectmen at the October 6 meeting.

DPW Barn Housecleaning: Attached is a list of items deemed surplus by the DPW Superintendent. I request the Board’s vote to declare the property surplus so that it can be auctioned off. The DPW has utilized the “Municibid” Web application to good results.

Solar Projects Update: Both projects are up and running. I am working to link a monitoring site to the Town’s Web page for the solar field in Hardwick, but, for now, interested persons can go to:

<http://minisite.alsoenergy.com/Dashboard/2a5669735065476a4141454b772b71593d>

to see how the facility is operating in both real time and past performance as well. Following is a screen shot taken from the monitoring Web site this afternoon indicating the field was generating 1.7MW of power. Maximum rating is 1.82MW. On the Web site you can toggle to look at one-day, five-day, weeklong, monthly or lifetime totals.

And, along the right margin are illustrative examples of environmental benefits (eg. to date Athol’s system has reduced the need for 37,704 gallons of gasoline, or 35,328 pounds of methane, or 751,979 pounds of carbon dioxide, or saved 8,633 trees).



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Winter Storm FEMA Reimbursement: You may recall the near record snowfall the Town and region experienced on and about January 26-28, 2015. Because the President approved a disaster declaration the Town is seeking to recoup up to 75 percent of its eligible costs through the Federal Emergency Management Agency.



Under the direction of Fire Chief John Duguay – and with a strong assist from public works and finance staff – the Town has submitted a request for FEMA to reimburse \$45,669.39 in costs from that storm. I am hopeful that the Town will receive the funds within the next six to 18 months.

A huge “**thank you**” to all that helped compile this request!

Urban Tree Planting Grant: Attached the Board will find a letter of support for the Town’s participation in an effort to secure federal funds of up to \$450,000 to develop and implement urban downtown tree planting programs in five central and western Mass. communities. The state Dept. of Conservation and Recreation will match the federal funds with 5,000 trees over three years (valued at \$625,000 total) that would be planted in the participating communities.



The grant is intended to target so-called “environmental justice” neighborhoods which are primarily based upon poverty rate and lower-than-average income. The other cities and towns participating include the cities of North Adams and Gardner, and the towns of Ware and Greenfield.

I was already discussing the condition of Athol’s street trees along Main Street with Tree Warden Travis Knechtel when this grant opportunity – which also provides a coordinator to manage the grant and planting program – was presented on behalf of DCR by the Mt. Grace Land Trust.

If approved, Athol would receive roughly 1,000 trees (estimated 1.5 inch caliper) over the three year period. The plan for locations will be developed through grant funds by graduate students at the Conway School of Landscape Design in close collaboration with our Tree Warden. The grant also funds a monitor to ensure and oversee work and grant administration in the five communities, so, local resources – aside from potential assistance with equipment during implementation – will not be overly taxed. The project is also supported by DPW Supt. Doug Walsh.

An interesting component is that the grant is not limited to Town-owned street trees; private property owners within the targeted areas are also eligible for trees.

Miscellaneous Items: Other items include:

- Continued settlement discussions with US EPA over close-out of the former Rod & Gun Club site cleanup costs (federal costs total \$3.4 million).
- Met with SEIU leadership and departments affected by proposal to restore portion of work hours (on Fall Town Meeting warrant).
- Continued department head and finance team meetings and instituted “safety and development team” meetings to improve departmental coordination.
- Participated in finalist interview for Children’s Librarian position and made tender of employment (verbally accepted; once finalized we will bring her to upcoming BOS meeting for introduction).
- Reviewed Fall Town Meeting warrant.