



**Shaun A. Suhoski**, Town Manager  
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### **MEMORANDUM**

TO: Athol Board of Selectmen  
FR: Shaun A. Suhoski, Town Manager  
RE: Town Manager Update  
DT: May 5, 2015

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Dear Board,

Please see the following update through May 5.

**Group Health Insurance Benefits – Memorandum of Understanding:** Enclosed as part of your packet is the proposed Memorandum of Understanding by and amongst the Town (subject to Board of Selectmen approval) and its four collective bargaining units.

Approval and execution of this MOU will shave \$130,000 from the health insurance premium line item by shifting those costs from the taxpayers to the employees that participate in the health insurance plans. The premise of the agreement is that all current employees (those hired before July 1, 2015) will see their health insurance benefits *reduced* by five percent of the premium contributions.

The Town contribution would drop from 83 percent to 78 percent for the HMO plan, and, from 80 percent to 75 percent for the PPO plan. The MOU further states that any employees hired on or after July 1, 2015 shall receive 70 percent Town contribution to the HMO plan and 65 percent for the PPO plan. In essence, through the shift of current employees, and eventual attrition, this MOU will serve to reduce the Town's contribution by 13 percent for the HMO type plan and 15 percent for the PPO plan.

The efforts of the public works, town hall, police and fire unions to reach consensus were key to this long-term shift in costs and were essential to avoiding layoffs in fiscal 2016. With approval of the MOU, the proposed \$17.9 million FY16 operating budget proposal is balanced. This agreement will pay further dividends through attrition, and, will have a longer-term ancillary benefit of reducing the Town's OPEB liabilities.

I want to thank the Town's union and non-union employees for stepping forward to prevent layoffs or substantial cuts to services. Many employees will see their net pay go down in fiscal 2016 due to the increased health insurance burden. The commitment of the labor force towards the Town is remarkable and worthy of note.

***Suggested Motion:*** *I move that the Board of Selectmen approve the Memorandum of Understanding relative to "Health Insurance Premium Contribution and Plan Design" as presented.*

**Surplus Property Designation:** As part of the Annual Town Meeting warrant there are three town-owned parcels of land that require the Board's declaration as surplus. Each have been reviewed by your departments and are ready for disposition. The two Gulf Road parcels are under negotiation with the Mass. Division of Fish & Wildlife for preservation purposes while the Templeton Road parcel is located adjacent to Exit #18 for Route 2 near the new Market Basket development.

**Town Hall and Senior Center Building Repairs:** The re-pointing and painting project for the Senior Center building is well underway while the contractor for Town Hall began work on the exterior stairway this week. The Town Hall work will alternate between the stairway and cupola with anticipated completion before the end of June.



**Miscellaneous Items:** Some other items include:

- Conducted development review group meeting relative to the next phase of construction at North Quabbin Commons (Marshalls, Dress Barn, Maurice, Olympia Sports and bank branch).
- Met with mayors of Fitchburg, Leominster, Gardner and town administrators from Westminster and Lancaster relative to areas of mutual need and collaboration.
- Attended meeting at ARMS regarding the summer feeding program; issues of concern and areas for improvement.
- Reviewed Annual Town Meeting warrant with Nancy Burnham, Heather Brissette, Christine Mailloux and Town Counsel Mark Goldstein.
- Attended ARRSD strategic plan wrap-up meeting.
- Participated in MART Advisory Board meeting; prepared and forwarded request for continued funding for CTS to state senator and representative; prepared draft letter regarding MART funding per Board of Selectmen request.