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MEMORANDUM

TO: Athol Board of Selectmen
FR: Shaun A. Suhoski, Town Manager
RE: Town Manager Update
DT: October 20, 2015

Dear Board: Please see the following:

U.S. EPA Settlement Agreement – Request for Special Town Meeting: Although we just completed the annual fall town meeting last night, as the Board is aware, the \$275,000 settlement agreement recently negotiated between the Town, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Dept. of Justice associated with the \$3.4 million cleanup of lead-contaminated soil at the former Rod & Gun Club requires a \$100,000 payment this fiscal year.

The Town has received a very favorable outcome given the circumstances and potential financial exposure. The balance of \$175,000 can be funded in the two successive fiscal years. The initial payment is recommended to come from the Town's stabilization fund.

I am therefore requesting that the Board of Selectmen call the special town meeting for December 7, 2015 at 7:00 p.m. (date has been confirmed with Moderator and Town Clerk) and open the warrant through October 28. Your Board will review and approve the warrant at your November 3 meeting. Please see schedule prepared by the Town Clerk attached.

DCR Recreational Trails Grant - \$26,379: The Town was awarded \$26,379 to fund an accessible floating dock system at the Alan E. Rich Environmental Park. The launch will provide a link between Athol and Orange and may be one of the first such accessible linkages in the Commonwealth, according to Dave Small. On October 1, DCR Commissioner Carol Sanchez made the official announcement along with program manager Amanda Lewis. The Town was represented by Mr. Small, Tom Rich and I. Congrats to all involved!



Update on Road Projects: Road and infrastructure projects funded by MassDOT, the Town's Chapter 90 program and the Community Development Block Grant program are winding down for the year:

- 1) MassDOT is currently resurfacing of the washboard **intersection at Route 2A and Daniel Shay's Highway**. The acting director for Region 2 said that crash data at this location may indicate that an engineering review and reconstruction project may be developed.

- 2) DPW Supt. Doug Walsh has reported that Chapter 90 projects in Town are complete for this calendar year. Reclamation and base course paving have been completed on **South Athol Road, Cass Circle and Bearsden Road** (which was the subject of complaints and a newspaper article). The pavement will settle a bit over the winter and final course will be applied when weather allows next season.
- 3) On Monday, final paving for the CDBG-funded improvements in **the Highland and Grove Street area** was completed. This project included water, sewer, drainage, retaining walls, sidewalks and resurfacing and is now at substantial completion. Doug Walsh and I have met with Breezeway Farms (CDBG grant writing and administration consultants) to outline the final application round (due in February 2016) of CDBG that will complete work in this neighborhood, namely, additional infrastructure work in the qualified target area and bringing the improvements down to the Main Street intersection near the Upper Common.



Town-owned Property Auction: The Town is working with Paul T. Zekos to set-up an auction of Town-owned property. Currently, we are looking to finalize a date in December and prior to the holidays. At this time we are looking at nine to 12 total properties including the Maroni Building, two single-family residential parcels, some vacant lots on Exchange Street (both of interest to abutters), a vacant parcel on Maple Street which may be redeveloped and some others. The list will be finalized in the coming week.

Signs, Signs, Everywhere Signs: As a heads-up to the Board of Selectmen – and the community – I have directed the Zoning Enforcement Officer to ramp up efforts to ensure compliance with the Town’s sign bylaws, with emphasis on the removal of “temporary” signs and banners.

Our current bylaw is exceedingly generous; allowing “temporary” signs to remain up for a full year. But even that timeframe is being ignored by at least several businesses that have left vinyl banners in place since before I began my employment over 14 months ago (eg. “welcoming race fans” or selling beer or whatever). The Building Inspector has decided to provide a reminder about the bylaw in hopes of voluntary compliance and is issuing letters to so advise prior to formal enforcement.

In addition to the temporary signage issue, I am beginning to look at reinstating enforcement of existing bylaws concerning the parking of junk, unregistered vehicles on private property. These actions are not “big government” trampling on individual rights, but, rather the local government enforcing what its own citizens have voted as bylaws to ensure a safe, enjoyable community.

Miscellaneous Items:

- Met with property owners regarding status of insurance claim.
- Communicated with state legislators concerning transit funding and participated in public hearing regarding fixed route bus service provided by MART.
- Prepared for and attended Fall Town Meeting.