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MEMORANDUM

TO: Athol Board of Selectmen
FR: Shaun A. Suhoski, Town Manager
RE: Town Manager’s Report
DT: March 8, 2016

Dear Board: Please see the following update for your meeting tonight.

Snow and Ice Deficit Spending Authorization: Even though we have not had the substantial snowfall of a year ago, crews have had multiple icing events where road treatment was necessitated. The current deficit is projected at just over \$25,000 (last year was more than ten times as much) with primary expenses to date being:

Salt	\$160,336	
Sand	\$ 4,410	
Hired equip.	\$ 13,225	
Misc.	\$ 3,911	
Vehicle repair	\$ 9,362	
Payroll	\$ 26,978	<u>\$218,222</u>

A motion to approve the provisions of MGL c. 44, §31D to allow deficit spending for snow and ice removal would be appropriate at this time.

Budget Update: I have been working department by department and page by page on the budget requests. Many of our revenue projections – and several key expenditures – have come into focus, however, lax state revenue collections in February make me a bit wary of the reaction of the House and Senate in their budget plans.

The “better” news is that the Town’s health insurance premium increase will be roughly 8.3 percent rather than what was initially thought to be double-digits. That said, it is still an increase approaching \$200,000. Couple this with a retirement assessment going up \$90,000 to \$120,000, a preliminary regional school district budget seeking an additional \$210,000., and roughly \$80K for every 1 percent wage increase for town employees, and the challenge of meeting all expenses with new revenues becomes readily apparent.

In any event, I will have a balanced budget proposal for the Selectboard and FWAC on April 5.

South Athol Road Demolition Bids – Due March 16: This property was the scene of a fatal fire about a year ago. The Building Commissioner has deemed the site a public safety hazard and, after repeated attempts to have the estate and/or the bank holding the mortgage, remove the remaining debris the task now falls to the Town.

Formal bid documents were issued relative to removal of the fire damaged structure and asbestos-containing material at 2275 South Athol Road. The deadline for bids is March 16 and the Town has already issued a handful of bid documents.

Miscellaneous Items:

- Multiple discussions with Asst. Superintendent of Schools relative to budget planning.
- Continue participation in task force working to develop a new affordable housing program that will impact a target neighborhood and reduce vacancy and blight.
- Participated in conference call to review half-year financial performance of Hardwick solar field costs versus net metering credits received. Grade: \$50,000 to the good!
- Convened a discussion and review of Town Hall security in collaboration with the Athol Police Dept. and all staff.
- Met with ownership of “Union Twist Mill”, private developer and state officials.
- Met with applicable staff and traffic engineer for Global / Alliance relative to development of plans to replace and rebuild a gas station and convenience store.
- Held Department Head meeting.
- Conducted interviews with three finalists for Director of Planning and Development position.
- Held contract discussions with three of four unions.
- Attended MMA legislative breakfast briefing in Belchertown on Friday, March 4.
- Attended and participated in Insurance Advisory Committee meeting.
- Discussed status of Athol home rule petitions (establishment of revolving fund for vacant, abandoned buildings, and, approval of health insurance reforms) with offices of state senator and representative; provided information to Senior Deputy Commissioner of DOR relative to same.