



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: July 21, 2015

Dear Board: Please see the following general update.

Grant\$ Galore! Through the efforts of the Office of Planning and Development the Town was awarded two substantial grants in July: (1) \$363,818 partial CDBG award, and (2) \$72,294 full-funding of a Green Communities grant.

(1) ***Community Development Block Grant*** – Breezeway Consultants (Linda Overring and John O’Neil) were the primary authors of the CDBG application which was partially funded. The grant will allow further extension of the water, sewer, road and sidewalk improvements in the Grove and Highland street neighborhoods together with a couple more units of housing rehabilitation. This was Athol’s “off” year due to funding limits that precluded a full valued application. As such, receiving the partial award that will allow the neighborhood improvements to be further extended is very gratifying. Kudos to our consultants and to our planning staff (Andrea Buglione and Mary Ann Murphy) for efficient administration of the CDBG program.

(2) ***Dept. of Energy Resources (DOER) Green Communities Grant*** – Community Development Director Andrea Buglione was the principal author and coordinator for this successful grant that totaled \$72,294 to fund various energy efficiency projects, including:

- \$8,887 for Millers River Environmental Center—Boiler Booster
- \$11,595 for DPW Highway Garage—Boiler Booster
- \$7,784 for Millers River Environmental Center—Weatherization
- \$3,735 for DPW Highway Garage— Weatherization
- \$5,456 for Fire Station (Uptown)—Exterior LED Lighting Retrofit
- \$34,837 for Police Station—Exterior and Interior LED Lighting Retrofit

Thank you, Andrea, and to the department managers for making these energy savings possible.



Police Department Staffing: Chief Anderson continues to navigate his department through a period of staff attrition. Given the need to bolster the force by filling some shifts with reserve police officers the Chief has recommended – and I have appointed – four additional reserve police officers. These appointments return the reserve contingency to its

maximum of six officers and each of these individuals has sufficient experience, education and maturity to serve the Town well in both Chief Anderson's and my opinion. Subject to successful completion of pre-employment conditions the new reserve officers are:

Ryan C. Sardelis, of Westminster

- Six years U.S. Army Military Police
- Three years experience in Mass. Dept. of Corrections
- Weapons training and qualification

Laurinda R. Dion, of Athol

- E.M.T. Certified
- One year experience in security
- B.A. in Criminal Justice – Fitchburg State University
- Completed reserve police officer academy

Erick J. Fredette, of Athol

- A.A. (candidate) in Criminal Justice – Mt. Wachusett Community College
- Completed reserve police officer academy

Steven L. Adams, Jr., Athol

- B.A. in Criminal Justice – Fitchburg State University
- Completed reserve police officer academy

Also, following past practice which helps to ensure adequate private police details for road projects, at the request of Chief Tim Anderson recently retired sergeants **Christopher Casella, Kent Hager** and **Richard Aucoin** have been appointed special police officers for outside pay traffic details only.

These positions are utilized subject to (a) all full- and part-time officers are offered the detail first, (b) that the individuals maintain – at their own expense – certification in CPR, first responder training, firearms qualification, and any other required training, and (c) that the Town is not responsible for any costs associated with the appointment.

Police Chief Search Process: Chief Tim Anderson has stated his intention to retire in July 2016. While the Town Charter is clear that the Town Manager is the sole appointing authority for the position, I hope to engage the assistance of a five-member Police Chief Search Committee composed as follows:

- Two (2) members designated by the Board of Selectmen
- One (1) member designated by the Finance and Warrant Advisory Committee
- Two (2) members from law enforcement profession designated by Town Manager
- Chief Anderson to serve in an advisory capacity to the Town Manager.

I would like to convene the Search Committee in September and would therefore request the BOS and FWAC to make their designations no later than September 3, if possible.

During the interim, Chief Anderson and I are reviewing the Police Chief job description to ensure it is current and meets the standards expected of the Town for this important position.

Special Legislation re: Group Health Insurance: State Sen. Anne Gobi confirmed to me that Athol's legislation has been filed and is awaiting a bill number from the Senate clerk. Once the number is assigned

and the bill is in committee Sen. Gobi says she will expedite the public hearing. She and Rep. Whipps Lee are working in coordination to move this bill through the Legislature.

Town and Library Solar (standing update until complete): As we seek to close each of these projects out I will keep a standing update on my report so that the Board is apprised of progress.

NextEra has advised that National Grid has delayed their “witness test” of the Hardwick solar field Wednesday, July 22 due to the need for additional equipment on the “NGRID side”. I will be tracking whether the test in fact occurs tomorrow and will also report back the next steps towards commercial operation.

With respect to the Library project, last week the wiring inspector reported “some progress” being made to properly inter-connect the solar panels. I have requested more detail on exactly what needs to occur.

Town Hall Flagpole Dedicated on July 14: A brief ceremony featuring the Pledge of Allegiance – and a stirring rendition of the National Anthem by incoming Athol High senior Olivia Dufour – was held to recognize completion of the flag pole replacement project and to thank the many donors – both cash and through services – that helped bring the replacement to a very successful conclusion.

Light refreshments were served in Memorial Hall following the brief outdoor ceremony that included remarks from me, state Rep. Whipps Lee, and Selectmen Brighenti and Raymond who read the list of donors.

There is a photographic timeline of the project which is a separate .pdf file attached to my email conveying this report. The document includes a listing of all of the known donors to the project.

Congratulations to the community for coming together for a successful outcome that will honor the United States of America and its veterans for years to come.



Miscellaneous Items: Other items include:

- Met with Finance Team and bond advisor to review Town cash flow needs, status of temporary borrowing and strategy to secure permanent financing for water system expansion and next phase of school construction. A timeline towards the general obligation bonds anticipated to be issued in March 2016 is attached to the hard copy of this memorandum.
- Met with Library officials and state DCR representative relative to close-out visit for PARC grant improvements.
- Participated in further discussions with local bank and related stakeholders towards forming a grant-writing partnership to return vacant properties to tax rolls.
- Introduced to new Salvation Army Lt. Michael Buzzard by Selectman Raymond.
- Attended Small Town Administrator’s of Mass. program committee meeting.
- Participated in meeting at AOTV regarding filming of video segments for park trails initiative.
- Conducted interviews of four reserve police officer candidates (report above).
- Held general discussion with DPW Supt., Community Development Director and owners of L.P. Athol relative to infrastructure and other needs key to redevelopment of Union Twist Mill.