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MEMORANDUM

TO: Athol Board of Selectmen
FR: Shaun A. Suhoski, Town Manager
RE: Town Manager's Report
DT: January 17, 2017

Dear Board: Please see the following report for your meeting on January 17:

Lake Ellis Projects Update: Signage - The new signage at the Lake Ellis boat ramp that was donated by members of the Lake Ellis Association has now been installed and the group had a brief "photo op" at the site last week.



The signage includes information about invasive weed control protocols and lists the Town's rules and regulations concerning use. The donated granite and tasteful design really looks good.



New Boat Ramp – The state Office of Boating Access has scheduled design of a new boat ramp and, potentially, an accessible dock for this facility. The Board of Selectmen voted to accept the Land Management Agreement on October 18, 2016 (copy of minutes attached). The Town and Association will continue to work with the state's designers on developing this proposal for grant funding, however, the Office of Boating Access requires the signed LMA to move forward.

Weed treatment - The next challenge will be to secure funding for a weed treatment program to help restore the choked waterway. The DPW Supt. did request an article on the February 6 Special Town Meeting Warrant, however, as of this writing, we do not see an adequate sources of funds for the project that is expected to cost between \$36,000 and \$38,000 inclusive of Notice of Intent, actual treatment of the pond and ancillary costs for mailings, required notifications, etc. Depending upon the amount of free cash that is certified, and the mix of capital projects and priorities, this may be an item for discussion at the Annual Meeting.

Grants / Fundraising – Finally, the Lake Ellis association has advised that they have received state and federal tax-exempt status which will open up additional fundraising and grant opportunities.

Community Compact: There will soon be a round of Community Compact funding both to communities and to regional planning agencies for various projects. Whereas Athol and Orange have similar compact agreements, Orange Town Administrator Diana Schindler and I recently brainstormed some ideas about collaboration (whether true “regional” or “shared services”) surrounding the following topics:

- **Information Technology:** Could Athol and Orange share an IT professional, or, join a larger collaborative (the towns of Barre and Rutland) to assist in maintaining and planning for proper IT infrastructure and security systems.
- **Regional Animal Control Shelter Completion:** Determine whether completion of the regional animal control shelter off Thrower Road would be an eligible grant expense. The expanded shelter’s walls and roof are installed, but, the technical school has yet to finish final drain installation which has delayed pouring of the floor. Interior finishes and equipment still required. Operationally, the partnership with Orange and Royalston seems to be working.
- **Regional Animal Control Second Vehicle:** Similar to above, would a second vehicle be eligible for grant funds. The existing ACO vehicle was already proposed for programming through the capital plan. Currently, we have a full-time ACO and two part-time ACOs with one vehicle. Depending upon the eligibility and priority of the shelter item above this could be a second option.
- **Shared DPW Equipment:** We generally discussed whether certain pieces of equipment (eg. a forestry bucket truck) could be shared between the communities. This is not a new concept. Our Tree Warden only uses the bucket truck for specific purposes and when doing tree work. It is a specialty vehicle that could be shared by two or even three communities. This item requires consultation with DPW leadership on feasibility.
- **Facilities Management:** Neither Orange nor Athol has a true facilities manager with the skill set necessary to effectively organize, plan and implement preventive maintenance, energy efficiency, code, general repairs, building systems repair of our public facilities. In Athol this includes Town Hall, the Library, police and fire facilities, DPW garage, water and wastewater buildings the Senior Center and, currently, former school buildings including the MREC. Such a position would ensure a more robust program of maintenance and likely save costs over time. In a growing number of communities, however, this type of collaboration is being shared between general government and the school departments, which may be a preferred option to explore down the road.
- **Public Safety Dispatch and/or Radio Communications:** We spoke again about public safety dispatch, but, it was re-stated to me that Orange is already part of a regional dispatch center that includes emergency medical dispatch at zero out-of-pocket cost. However, our regional radio consultant believes that there is a solution that would allow Orange and Athol patrol cars to communicate directly. This is being worked on for Athol by Gary

Cromack and Ms. Schindler will request input from Chief Lundgren before any implementation of same. The radio communication is a key point-of-interest for Chief Kleber and Athol's police officers.

- **Building Inspection Services:** This topic has come up previously without much appetite on the part of Athol. However, given that the two towns have historically provided back-up services to each other, there may be a solution that enhances coverage in both towns and saves on cost. Ms. Schindler may seek a grant-funded analysis from the Franklin Regional Council of Governments on a suggested operating model. There would be no obligation for Athol to participate as this would only be data collection.

To be fair, we absolutely do not even have the capacity in terms of personnel to take on all of the above ideas. The purpose of sharing this list is to see where the Board feels there could be an opportunity for success.

Fire Department Grants: The Athol Fire Department has received two grants in the past few weeks to help secure needed supplies and protective gear:

- \$3,220 for EMPG grant from MEMA for structural firefighting gloves, boots and Nomex hoods; and
- \$4,000 state Dept. of Public Health for training and supplies associated with the Town's mass decontamination unit.

Fire Chief John Duguay actively worked on each of these proposals. Thanks, Chief!

Miscellaneous Items:

- Held Department Head meeting; met with Finance Team regarding upcoming budget and cost-saving proposals
- Met with new Building Inspector and Office Manager regarding consolidated operations within Department of Inspectional Services
- Prepared proposed STM articles; reviewed articles requested for STM
- Participated in contract negotiation session with SEIU (dispatchers)
- Attended seminar on New Market Tax Credit Program
- Met with representative of national hotel brand, Town Planner, Chamber of Commerce executive and developer's broker regarding opportunities at EDIC-owned land off Exit 18
- Discussed various department-level budget requests with department leaders
- Scheduled meeting with state MassWorks grant staff to plan for summer 2017 funding round