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MEMORANDUM

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

Dear Board: Please see the following update for Tuesday's meeting.

Appointment of Administrative Assistant: As the Board is aware, I am very pleased to officially announce the appointment of Bridget A. Sullivan, of Athol, to the position of administrative assistant to the Board of Selectmen and Town Manager. She begins her official duties on Monday, October 23.

From a very strong field of 42 applicants with varying degrees of experience, the team of Nancy Burnham, Holly Young and I chose six applicants for preliminary interviews. Three finalists were chosen following this round of interviews (one withdrew) and Steve Raymond, Nancy and I interviewed the two remaining finalists.

Following reference checks and careful consideration I selected Ms. Sullivan for the position based upon her diverse background, superior reviews from prior supervisors, organizational and multi-tasking skills and her more recent position with the housing authority which requires both tact and confidentiality.

Union Twist Mill – Letter of Support: I will be recommending that the Board of Selectmen offer a letter of support, or, at minimum, a letter of non-opposition to the potential siting of a licensed marijuana cultivation facility at 134 Chestnut Hill Ave. The Town has a window of opportunity to bring hundreds of jobs back into this sprawling mill which has been substantially vacant and underutilized for decades.

Just a few weeks ago, the owners were approached by a developer with keen interest in the site. The building is large enough for the entire cultivation operation to be conducted indoors, and, is a secure facility in that it is bordered by the river, railroad tracks and general topography.

Security protocols will be implemented and the proponents will make substantial investment that will create jobs, increase property taxes, reduce of urban blight and generate ancillary benefits from a host community agreement (to be negotiated) that will benefit the entire community. There are no plans currently for any dispensing at this location giving Athol time to develop bylaws associated with same.

Too many times lethargic governments can stifle economic opportunity. The Board's approval of this threshold step in the process will allow the proponents to fully develop their licensure application and their proposed plans here in Athol; all still subject to local zoning, permitting and code compliance.

I have included two forms of signature block on the draft letters in the packet. My recommendation is to authorize the Chairman and Town Manager to execute the letter of support – or non-opposition – so that host community negotiations can ensue immediately while we maintain some leverage with the letter. This will serve to move the process along.

Central Dispatch: As you know, the State 911 Department has responded to the Town’s request of September 19 for an additional 60 days to fully integrate dispatch. The response, dated October 12, 2017, provides what I believe to be the Department’s final accommodation by extending the compliance date to November 1.

Failure to meet this deadline, in my opinion, will result in the elimination of Athol’s ability to answer 911 calls. Having said that, I believe we are moving quickly to finalize the transition and will meet said deadline. The chiefs of the fire and police departments will provide real-time updates at tonight’s meeting.

Assistant Treasurer Search: The Town received about a dozen applications by the priority deadline and the screening will be completed by the Treasurer/Collector and a member of the finance team leadership. We hope to fill this position before the Board’s next meeting.

Miscellaneous:

- Participated in informal pre-development review meeting for proposed marijuana cultivation facility at former Union Twist Mill.
- Held department head meeting; met with Finance Team; met with ARRSD Superintendent.
- Conducted firefighter impact bargaining negotiations; meeting with labor counsel.
- Completed recruitment interviews for administrative assistant position.
- Attended “Manufacturing Day” at L.S. Starrett.
- Greeted president of MWCC for walk-through at Pleasant Street School.
- Participated in de-brief by MRPC on the Route 2 safety analysis (before/after) and preliminary discussion regarding process for potential interchange at Route 2 and South Athol Road.
- Participated in downtown planning panel by the Urban Land Institute and MassDevelopment.
- Prepared for and attended Fall Town Meeting.