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MEMORANDUM

TO: Athol Board of Selectmen
FR: Shaun A. Suhoski, Town Manager
RE: Town Manager's Report
DT: November 6, 2018

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

Route 2A Safety Meeting: There was a strong turnout of Phillipston and Athol officials together with MassDOT engineers and facilitator George Snow from the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission at today's meeting about traffic safety concerns along Route 2A. Issues brought forward on behalf of Athol include (illustrative graphic copied in packets):

- pedestrian safety between Hannaford Plaza to Daniel Shays Highway (no sidewalk)
- traffic speed concerns between Route 32 and Pleasant Street (high school, state police, fire station, hospital – potential 25mph "safety zone")
- pedestrian crossing concerns at Athol High School / Fire Station area
- pedestrian and traffic safety from Route 32 to North Quabbin Commons / Exit 18 (no sidewalk; advance notice of signals)
- traffic safety notably Route 2A westbound entering Ward Hill Road (Secret Lake area of Athol and Phillipston)
- potential new interchange at Route 2 / South Athol Road to reduce longer-term traffic congestion at Exits 17 and 18

Phillipston officials shared concern relative to the entrance to Ward Hill Road (Secret Lake) from Route 2A westbound (no turning lane; access doubles as off-ramp for Route 2 Exit 18 eastbound), as well as seeking safety improvements at their fire station and the Athol Road / Highland Road areas with poor sight lines.

MassDOT pledged to review the concerns for implementation of some shorter-term, lower-cost initiatives and/or for recommendations on how to prepare for longer-term fixes. A couple of interesting takeaways from Athol's perspective included:

- The so-called "safety zone" speed limit legislation is not applicable to any roads with approved, posted speed limits (this includes Route 2A through Athol)
- MassDOT located a speed regulation approved in 1981 that limits the speed limit on the local jurisdiction of Route 2A to **30 mph** from near the high school westbound for 1.08 miles, and then to **25 mph** for 1.19 miles to where the state highway resumes past the South Main Street bridge

- MassDOT will initiate a traffic count update through the developers surrounding Exit 18 (likely in the spring of 2019) to review traffic volume thresholds that may indicate a need for a signalized intersection at Routes 2A and 32

Thus, it appears that the Town can post and enforce a speed limit of 30 mph through the high school, State Police, fire station and hospital zone and a further 25 mph through its downtown. Public safety and public works staff will review and confirm the information gained today before initiating any new postings and enforcement. Any Board policy feedback or direction is appreciated.

MART Senior Bus Fares: While discussing the separate issue of MART bus route changes due to budgetary constraints, COA Director Cathy Savoy also brought forth a request to consider reducing the bus fares for senior citizens from \$1.50 one-way to \$0.50 one-way. Based upon such request I had MART run the costs for both a fifty-cent and \$1.00 fare to see how much it would cost the Town to subsidize a reduction of fares.

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Impact by Fare	Current (\$1.50)	Revenue	\$ Impact	Athol	MART/State
		\$6,379	-	-	-
	\$1.00	\$4,586	\$ 1,793	\$ 896	\$ 896
	\$0.50	\$2,501	\$ 3,877	\$ 1,939	\$ 1,939

noted in the excerpt above (full sheet copied in your packets), should your Board wish to reduce the bus fares for senior citizens to \$1.00 one-way, the cost to the Town is less than \$900 annually, and for the \$0.50 fare just over \$1,900 annually.

In my opinion, the minimal loss of revenue (to be incorporated in the Cherry Sheet assessment) can be absorbed for the balance of the current fiscal year and in the FY20 revenue projection without impacting any other town budgets or services.

Miscellaneous:

- Attended MART public hearing regarding proposed modifications to bus routes (MART has amended the proposal based upon public input for Board review November 20)
- Met with DPW Supt., Planning Director and CDBG consultant regarding potential projects for next grant round
- Attended Collaborative Workspace Program grant awards where LaunchSpace, Inc. received \$105,000 towards HVAC improvements at the former Pleasant Street School
- Held briefing session with acting Police Chief Craig Lundgren and Lt. Ron Cote
- Attended 50th Anniversary of MRPC including sustainable energy presentation
- Held pre-planning meeting with BSC Group, public works, planning and other staff relative to downtown master plan