



**Shaun A. Suhoski**, Town Manager  
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### **MEMORANDUM**

TO: Athol Board of Selectmen  
FR: Shaun A. Suhoski, Town Manager  
RE: Town Manager's Report  
DT: March 5, 2020

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Dear Board: Please see the following updates for tonight's meeting:

**Proposed Daily Closures – Crescent Street:** On Tuesday, I reviewed an email dated Monday, March 2, from Jim Rivest of Northern Construction (the general contractor) wherein he advised to "daily closures" of Crescent Street beginning on March 9, from 8am until 4pm, on weekdays only. Further inquiry resulted in learning that the daily closures are contemplated throughout the month of March and until the permanent closure occurs for the bridge reconstruction.

I shared this information with DPW, police and fire officials. The Fire Department utilizes Chestnut Hill Avenue bridges through a waiver granted several years ago. The Police Chief opposes the closure. DPW Supt. Doug Walsh spoke further with MassDOT officials to express concern and it is my understanding that a project engineer will be present to discuss this with the Board tonight. Doug will also attend.

This afternoon I spoke by phone with Mr. Rivest who offered the following: (1) closures are limited to 8am to 4pm weekdays weather permitting, (2) pedestrian access will be maintained until permanent closure, (3) the contractor can allow emergency response access, and (4) this preparatory work by the general contractor will greatly aid in meeting the expedited schedule. I told Mr. Rivest about tonight's meeting and that MassDOT may attend and advised him that the "daily closures" in advance of April 1<sup>st</sup> were never discussed with staff or when the Board of Selectmen authorized an expedited construction schedule.

If good weather holds, it is anticipated that Exchange Street will be open by the end of March. **The information that we have all been working with from the start is that work on Crescent Street would not commence until Exchange Street was re-opened OR April 1, 2020.** We will of course follow-through with whatever policy guidance or directive the Board wishes after tonight's discussion.

**Streetlight Conversion Project:** Doug Walsh, Dick Kilhart, Jennifer Shaw, John Barrett and I have been working with project manager Real Term Energy, the Metropolitan Area Planning Commission (MAPC – grant administrator to Dept. of Energy Resources) and National Grid to advance the acquisition and conversion of Athol's streetlights to more efficient LED fixtures.

Town Counsel has reviewed the NGRID documentation and the project costs will be funded on budget through a tax-exempt lease purchase over three years as documented by an investment grade audit.

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The net total project cost to replace approximately 800 fixtures is \$231,408 inclusive of acquisition costs and \$72,000 in utility and state subsidies. ***The project will result in savings of over \$2.7 million over 20 years with an initial return on investment of 2.1 years.*** The excerpt below is may be hard to read so I've attached the one-page IGA summary to this document.

#### Energy and Cost Savings

Parameter (Annual):	Before Upgrade	Post Upgrade	Savings	Savings (%)
Energy Consumption (kWh)	348,825	110,746	238,079	68%
Annual Facility Charges	\$98,004	\$0	\$98,004	100%
Annual Electricity Delivery Charges	\$18,823	\$10,737	\$8,086	43%
Annual Electricity Supply Charges	\$30,592	\$9,712	\$20,880	68%
Annual Maintenance Cost	\$0	\$19,320	(\$19,320)	N/A
<b>Total Street Lights Expenditures</b>	<b>\$147,418</b>	<b>\$39,769</b>	<b>\$107,649</b>	<b>73%</b>
Average Cost per Fixture	\$183	\$49	\$134	73%

#### Payback and Net Project Savings

Project Payback: 2.1 years  
20 Year Net Project Savings: \$ 2,702,425

There is currently a May 31 deadline for the subsidy program. RTE has issued the purchase order based upon the fixture inventory to Arden Energy (installation contractor). We are awaiting an update on the lead time to acquire the fixtures themselves as the installation work will only take a few weeks.

**Hotel Site Update:** Participated in conference call with Athol EDIC Chairman and MassDevelopment to review findings of preliminary hotel market study and to discuss next steps. The study found that the market can support a 70 to 80 room, midscale, nationally-branded hotel at the site off Exit 18.

There remains about \$8,000 total from the \$20,000 advance in funds to be directed towards updated wetlands delineation and development of site access driveway concepts and estimates. I anticipate that MassDevelopment will engage the BSC Group (who has worked with Athol on downtown planning and on the MVP planning grant) to complete this phase of work.

#### Miscellaneous

- Conducted final inspection of Pleasant Street School HVAC improvements with the Building Inspector, Plumbing and Gas Inspector, and LaunchSpace staff; issued final \$3,500 retainage payment as work is complete.
- Completed contract formalities for the demolition contractor and the \$24,500 grant from the Attorney General's office for 1128 Main Street. DigSafe complete with demo estimated in April.
- Met and spoke with Athol Golden Agers at the Senior Center.
- Held meetings with public safety team and finance team.
- Met with Senate and House co-chairs of the Rural Legislative Caucus, and with Rep. Whipps, at the State House on issues relating to Athol and rural communities generally.
- Attended STAM program committee, Athol Solar Zoning Working Group and MVP core team meetings.
- Attended open meeting/public records and social media municipal law forum with Chairman Bialecki.
- Met with Bob Legare, Dick Kilhart and Brian Bruso regarding Town Hall roof and cupola project.
- Met with Verizon and Fire Capt. Andy Soltysik to discuss double pole inventory and removal process; with clarity on process and the online tool utilized by the utilities I anticipate better communication and progress going forward. Athol Fire activated its account for the online inventory.