



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 7, 2017

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Dear Board: Please see the following report for your meeting on March 7:

**FY18 Budget Development:** The FY18 budget development has been initiated. The Finance Team and I have reached a tentative **revenue projection of \$19.15 million** for the next fiscal year. This is in contrast to initial department **requests of \$19.3 million** inclusive of the reduction in the retirement assessment. Obviously, not every request will be funded. Note, however, with the recent election to move to a new health insurance trust the budget will come into balance though final numbers and assumptions are still being calculated.

The all boards meeting will take place on March 13 after which I will seek to “wring out” the budget requests into top priorities and generate a workable framework for presentation to the Board of Selectmen, Finance and Warrant Advisory Committee and the Capital Planning Committee on April 4.

The guiding principles of the FY18 budget are to balance the allocation of one-time adjustments in the retirement and health insurance line items into:

- Plug immediate budget / service gaps of departments
- Support reserve funds (eg. stabilization fund; capital stabilization fund)
- Initiate recurring OPEB line item to meet long-term obligation
- Propose a “taxpayer relief” article on the Annual Town Meeting warrant

I will look forward to the discussion on April 4 and the budget process as it may evolve through the FWAC review and BOS suggestions as to how best achieve the above.

**Central Dispatch and Next Generation 911:** Further to the Board's policy vote on February 21, Chairman Brighenti, Selectman Raymond, Chiefs Duguay and Kleber, Lt. Heath, Deputy Chief Parker and I met with Monna Wallace of the State 911 Department to discuss the steps required to implement central dispatch at the police station.

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The meeting was very productive, and, the Town learned that the timing of the implementation (including emergency medical dispatch training) would complement the State 911 Department's deployment date for "Next Generation 911" dispatch consoles for the Town. In short, the DRAFT correspondence to the State 911 Department prepared for the Board's review and requested signature is the next step in moving towards implementation.

With this document filed with State 911, the Town can initiate impact bargaining as may be applicable with the unions, and formalize dates for training and any administrative tasks. The Next Generation 911 equipment includes upgrading two (2) video monitors from 17-inch to 24-inch screens (one for 911; one for mapping locations) and ancillary equipment. The State 911 Department will deploy the new equipment on September 14.

Under the proposed timeline with State 911, our dispatchers will receive all required trainings (both in Next Generation and Emergency Medical Dispatch) over the summer (July and August) before going live in September. Details will need to be worked out in the coming month or two with the unions, but, we now have a clear target date.

After implementation, Athol will have two state-of-the-art dispatch seats at the police station. The issues surrounding the radio system upgrades are not part of this procedure, but, will continue to be researched for best options for a long-term solution.

**Assistant Treasurer:** I am pleased to announce that Liz Berquist, current the fiscal manager for the CDBG program grant, has been appointed as the Assistant Treasurer effective on March 21. Liz was advanced through the internal SEIU union process and has excellent on-the-job references through both the planning department and also the fire department where she was a part-time clerk. Welcome!

#### **Miscellaneous Items:**

- Met with Capital Planning Committee
- Met with auditors from Melanson & Heath during Town's annual audit process
- Continued program of outreach to top businesses/employers in Athol (eg. Athol Hospital; Starrett; Whipps, Inc.; etc.) to enhance communication
- Participated in MART Advisory Board meeting
- Held discussion with DPW Superintendent relative to substantial capital projects (eg. \$2M Exchange Street Bridget; \$500K highway barn roof replacement; \$500K design/engineering for "Five Points" reconstruction)
- Attended preliminary development review meeting organized by Town Planner including multiple departments and potential developer of gas station/convenience store at Exit 18
- Met with EDIC chairman regarding disposition planning for school buildings other than Pleasant Street School
- Continued meetings with Finance Team relative to FY18 budget development
- Ongoing work with Housing Task Force and Town Counsel relative to code enforcement for multi-family properties