



Shaun A. Suhoski, *Town Manager*
Email: ssuhoski@townofathol.org

Heather J. Brissette, *Administrative Asst.*
Email: selectmen@townofathol.org

MEMORANDUM

TO: Athol Board of Selectmen
FR: Shaun A. Suhoski, Town Manager
RE: Town Manager's Report
DT: April 18, 2017

Dear Board: This report will provide summary updates on key ongoing matters to help bring the new members up-to-speed. Rather than re-type the entire history of items, I would note that all of my historic reports are online at www.athol-ma.gov and any particular questions can be emailed to me, or, discussed at your convenience in the office. Thank you!

FY18 Budget: The \$19.15 million FY18 operating budget proposal was filed on April 4 and I will be participating in tomorrow night's meeting of the Finance and Warrant Advisory Committee to respond to questions. The budget is balanced and sustainable within a conservative revenue projection, and eliminates the use of non-recurring revenue sources.

Elementary School Disposition Update: Please see my March 21 report, and the recommended disposition scenario report dated August 2, 2016, for more background. Following is current status:

Pleasant Street School: The Reuse Committee has been actively engaged in developing a recommendation which will be presented at tonight's meeting. Pursuant to the Board's prior direction, I have submitted "placeholders" for Annual Town Meeting warrant articles relating to: (1) authorizing disposition and/or future use to be vested in the Board of Selectmen, and (2) seeking accepting of a portion of the current school driveway as a public way. The details still need to be developed.

Note that I have been party to some informal discussions about retaining ownership of the land by the Town for future school or municipal use including an athletic field complex and/or space to help alleviate constrained conditions in Town Hall.

Ellen Bigelow / Riverbend: I am developing a "Request for Qualifications" (RFQ) style of procurement which would allow the Town to select a preferred developer / partner with which to plan future reuse of these buildings. As previously reported, there are at least two agencies that have interest in the property. The draft RFQ will be presented at your May 16 meeting.

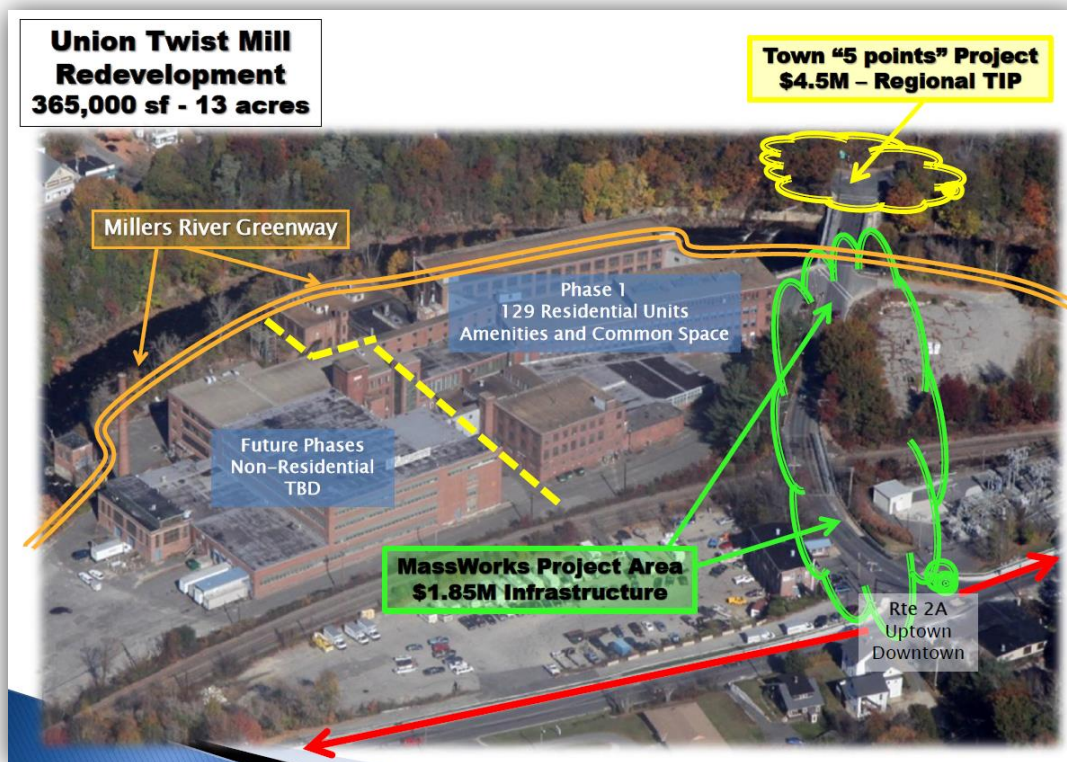


Sanders Street School: As reported previously, in February the EDIC voted to accept conveyance of the property for disposition purposes (similar to the conveyance of the property at Exit 18 as the EDIC has more flexibility in land dealings under statute). Based upon feedback (primarily from the predecessor Board) it appears this is a logical option.

The next step is initiating work between a registered land surveyor and our title examiner to develop an updated metes and bounds description of exactly what portion of land should be conveyed. Because the Town Meeting disposition vote was based upon the assessor's plat only, an updated plan will need to be filed with the Board of Planning and Community Development and ultimately returned to Town Meeting for additional authorizations.

Grove Street and Main Street Extension: You may have noticed that Borges Construction has begun work in the Upper Common as part of the CDBG-funded infrastructure project along Grove Street and Main Street Extension. Weston & Sampson Engineers are managing the \$295,137 project with local oversight by Breezeway Consulting and the Asst. DPW Superintendent.

MassWorks Infrastructure Funding: DPW Supt. Doug Walsh and I met with state MassWorks staff and the owner/developer team for the Union Twist Mill project. The meeting was to review last year's application (which was not funded due to readiness-to-proceed concerns) and to strategize about the upcoming MassWorks round in the summer of 2017.



The meeting was very productive and the state officials had an opportunity to see the development team, preliminary architectural renderings and the structure itself as well as gaining a better understanding of the needed water line and roadway improvements. With the second allocation of state historic tax credits recently released by the Secretary of the Commonwealth (now totaling \$800,000) this project is poised for success and will certainly provide more competitive leverage for the infrastructure improvements.

Central Dispatch: As the Board is aware, notices related to the implementation of central dispatch with a September 2017 “live” date have been issued to the impacted collective bargaining units. Discussions with have begun with the firefighters and dates are being exchanged with SEIU to start the dispatch talks.

Meanwhile, Chief Duguay has coordinated the work of Tom Smith in reviewing both fire and police radio equipment with an eye towards improvements. Funding for the initial phase of radio upgrades is included via a proposed free cash transfer on the Annual Town Meeting in June. A separate report and cost estimate will be presented to this Board as soon as available.

As of this date we have not received any response from the State 911 Department to either the March 7 or March 21 letters relative to central dispatch and regional dispatch, respectively, as sent by the prior Board of Selectmen. Although it has been a month, I was waiting to confirm our EMD training dates (slated for August) prior to re-engaging with State 911 on the matter. Under Chief Kleber’s direction, Lead Dispatcher Isakson and Lt. Heath are finalizing the training dates for Athol’s dispatchers (Deputy Chief Parker has gathered all requisite information). Our public safety dispatchers must be EMD trained and certified before the operations are consolidated. *(A copy of the correspondence dated March 7 is attached for reference as this is the directive that the chiefs and I are diligently pursuing.)*

MRPC Route 2 Studies: The Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC) has been collecting various data in support of the following two initiatives:

- A feasibility study for a **new interchange at South Athol Road and Route 2**, and
- A “before and after” look at **Route 2 safety improvements** and crash data along a longer stretch of Route 2 that includes Athol.

Representation from public works, fire, police, planning, selectmen and MassDOT were present at in initial discussion late in 2016. The MRPC will work with local officials and the scope of work will yield various alternatives for consideration and there is no pre-determined outcome. I would anticipate another planning session being scheduled within 60 days to update the community.

Board and Committee Appointments: Heather Brissette and Nancy Burnham have initiated the yearly updates and mailings associated with committee appointments. Your Board has a couple on the agenda tonight and I will soon be making my annual appointments.

Board of Assessors – The vacancy on the Board of Assessors generated six letters of interest. The screening team (principal assessor, town accountant, treasurer/collector) have scheduled interviews with four candidates and I anticipate a recommendation and appointment within the next two weeks.

Miscellaneous

- Met with EDIC Chairman and Director of Planning and Development regarding ongoing economic development initiatives
- Met with applicant for a downtown utility pole to be located on Exchange Street (a taller-than-average pole for WiFi and cellular densification downtown); the petition is on the May 2 meeting agenda
- Met with DPW Supt., Parks Foreman and Alan E. Rich park committee concerning 2017 season
- Attended Board of Assessor meeting to negotiate potential solar PILOT agreement
- Held department head meeting; attended Housing Task Force meeting with town counsel
- Attended creative economic development seminar and Friends of COA “Founders” recognition