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MEMORANDUM

TO: Athol Board of Selectmen
FR: Shaun A. Suhoski, Town Manager
RE: Town Manager's Report
DT: June 6, 2017

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

Town Counsel Appointment: *Tonight I seek the Board's ratification of my appointment of Attorney John B. Barrett to serve as Town Counsel for an initial term effective immediately and expiring on June 30, 2018.* An additional two-year extension of the appointment can be implemented upon mutual agreement of the parties.

Mr. Barrett has extensive experience serving as municipal counsel including over 20 years as City Solicitor or Assistant City Solicitor in Fitchburg. As you can see from his resume, Mr. Barrett also has a breadth of civic involvement in his hometown of Townsend including participation in the parks commission and zoning board. Since 2015 he has served as the elected Town Moderator.

Mr. Barrett's appointment is recommended by the screening committee composed of Selectman Raymond, Selectman Young and Chief Duguay and I fully endorse the decision. In addition, Mr. Barrett worked closely with Athol's former town counsel during his time in Fitchburg and has a keen awareness of the similar (though smaller scale) code compliance issues that we face here in Athol. His breadth of experience fits the needs of our community and he has agreed to represent the Town on essentially the same terms of our former counsel with attendance at most Board of Selectmen meetings during the initial term of appointment.

Mobilitie LLC – Right-of-Way Agreement: Please see the final Right-of-Way agreement between the Town and Mobilitie which incorporates the conditions voted at your May 16 meeting. The document is in final form for execution and, you will recall, was reviewed by Attorney Goldstein.

Community and Economic Development Update: Recently I had the opportunity to discuss the status of some key projects in Athol with staff from the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development. Following is a synopsis:

Union Twist Mill and MassWorks: the DPW Superintendent and I met with our civil and structural consulting engineers today to review the conditions at Chestnut Hill Ave. in preparation for the next MassWorks round for improvements to leverage Phase 1 renovation of the Union Twist Mill. The companion project would renovate roughly half of the 360,000 square feet into 129 housing units with further phases being mixed use. The public project would replace the aging water main and provide future sewer capacity for the redevelopment amongst other access improvements. I will keep the Board apprised.

South Athol Road Jobs Corridor: the Town has reserved the \$25,000 appropriation for master planning the corridor and future uses of the Town-owned, 100-acre "Bidwell" site. The undersecretary for EOHEC spoke with me recently and provided me with links to some potential funding sources that our local match could help access. I would like to start actively working on the master planning by September as the regional planning commission's feasibility study for a new interchange at Route 2 advances and helps inform the possibilities.

North Quabbin Commons: this development area will soon have several new additions. As previously reported publicly, Heywood Healthcare's urgent care facility and medical office building is nearing completion. Site work for the 55,000 sf anchor store (Hobby Lobby) for Phase 2 is underway and building plans are being developed and discussed with the Building Inspector for the eight-screen movie theater and additional retail spaces including a pet supply store.

The neighboring development site (Athol LLC / Goodman's group) is clearing MEPA review and a Wendy's restaurant along with two medical/dental office buildings are planned together with other retailers. The Town of Athol and its EDIC helped assemble public and private parcels abutting Exit 18 (across from North Quabbin Commons) where a new convenience store / gas station is being designed.

All of the foregoing will only help the ongoing and promising efforts to secure a quality hotel on Athol EDIC owned land.

Downtown Athol: the planning department secured a Mass. Downtown Initiative grant through DHCD and Eric Smith is coordinating a resurgent "downtown vitality committee" to work through this project that will include a market needs study. In the fall, as a result of a meeting I had with Secretary Ash and principals at MassDevelopment, the town will participate in the Urban Land Institute's TAP program through MassDevelopment. We are simultaneously completing "slum and blight" documentation for an appropriate designation by DHCD so that future CDBG funds and other assistance can flow to restoring the luster of our downtown district. A Program Income request before the Board tonight will help complete that task.

Miscellaneous

- Participated in the following: Pleasant St. School Reuse Committee, central dispatch planning, union negotiations, farmer's market vendor, DPW project planning, Finance Team and personnel-related meetings
- Lake Ellis Pump House: Doug Walsh says demolition should be complete before Summerfest!