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MEMORANDUM

TO: Athol Board of Selectmen
FR: Shaun A. Suhoski, Town Manager
RE: Town Manager's Report
DT: August 8, 2017

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

Community Development Block Grant Program Award and Update: Selectman William Caldwell and consultant Linda Overing of Breezeway Consulting travelled to the State House in Boston recently for the Governor's announcement that Athol was awarded a \$706,748 Community Development Block Grant. These funds will be used to complete infrastructure improvements on Winter and Wilder streets, completing a series of road, sidewalk, water, sewer and drainage enhancements throughout the Grove Street neighborhoods.

Notably, Athol's application this year ranked first in the state, exemplifying yet again the unique ability of Linda Overing and John Ryan of Breezeway Consulting to "marry" the extremely complicated world of CDBG to Athol's local needs.

Linda will be present tonight at the beginning of the meeting to provide a brief synopsis of the ongoing and planned CDBG work.

Pre-development Planning Grant - \$25,000: While on the topic of grants, I am also very pleased to report that the Executive Office of Administration and Finance has approved my request for master planning assistance with a \$25,000 grant. These funds were facilitated through the Town's Community Compact agreement with the Commonwealth and the Town's primary best practice to effectively plan and promote housing and economic development.

These funds were leveraged by the Town Meeting appropriation of \$25,000 last year for the same purpose and, together, will allow the Town to retain a qualified consultant with expertise in planning, engineering and/or community economic development to provide master planning and preliminary design for:

- Infrastructure and traffic improvements to South Athol Road,

- Concept level plans for the development of the 100-acre Town-owned “Bidwell” parcel, and/or
- Preliminary design for infrastructure and access improvements to Chestnut Hill Ave. to facilitate housing and mixed-use redevelopment of the “Union Twist Mill”.

Currently, the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission is collecting traffic and crash data and reviewing prior studies for feasibility of a new interchange with Route 2 at South Athol Road. I am also working with other agencies to expand resources available for the Bidwell parcel including, potentially, the Site Readiness Program through MassDevelopment. The convergence of these planning funds will allow for a thorough and informed public discussion on how best to proceed which I anticipate will occur in the late 2017 and into early 2018.

FY18 Town Manager Goals: Based upon discussion at your last meeting I have slightly revised two of the proposed goals under Municipal Operations and Services (namely, recurring all staff meetings, and, revised language regarding police and central dispatch items). After the Board approves the goals I will then work to align the agenda with our departments.

Treasurer/Collector Office: With the input and participation of the Treasurer/Collector, finance team, SEIU unit and line staff, the Town will staff the office on an interim basis using existing bonded Town Hall employees together with a temporary employee hired this week (also bonded). The search for the next Treasurer/Collector has yielded over a dozen applicants thus far and Melissa Murphy has offered and agreed to remain in that role on a part-time basis as the search process continues. This arrangement will allow for continued training and cross-training of staff as well as a more efficient year-end reconciliation between the Treasurer/Collector and the Town Accountant.

This week I hired a bonded temporary assistant for the department (Catherine Levreault, of Athol) who will provide much-needed counter coverage while our regular employee is out on medical leave. Ms. Levreault has substantial banking experience working with cash drawers and the general public. The active participation of our Town Hall staff cannot be overstated as they have all offered to step up and help in any way possible during the transition period.

Miscellaneous

- Collaborated with DPW Supt., Director of Planning and Development and L.P. Athol to complete and submit a 2017 MassWorks grant proposal for \$2.315 million for infrastructure improvements on Chestnut Hill Ave. (bridge strengthening, new and larger water line, road improvements and “underpass” to improve access to Union Twist Mill site).
- Participated in public forum regarding future use of Pleasant Street School.
- Met with police, fire, dispatch staff and State 911 Department staff regarding steps to centralize dispatch and install Next Generation 911.
- Held department head meeting and public safety team meeting; attended Nat’l Night Out.
- Attended MassDOT “Complete Streets 101” training (pre-requisite for funding under state program of same name).