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MEMORANDUM

TO: Athol Board of Selectmen
FR: Shaun A. Suhoski, Town Manager
RE: Town Manager's Report
DT: September 19, 2017

Dear Board: Please see the following update for your meeting tonight.

Appointment of Treasurer-Collector: I'm pleased to announce that Tammy M. Collier, of Athol, has accepted the position of Treasurer-Collector for the Town of Athol effective on September 26. Ms. Collier has over 12 years of direct experience as a municipal treasurer in Ashburnham, Harvard and Templeton, and, has served in the dual collector role since 2013. She is a certified treasurer through the Mass. Collectors and Treasurers Association and has completed initial coursework to obtaining certification as a collector. She is a part-time treasurer for the Narragansett Regional School District and had excellent references from throughout her career.

Her candidacy emerged from over a dozen applications and she was one of two highly experienced candidates that were brought in for interviews with the Town Manager and Town Accountant. Ms. Collier was brought back for a follow-up discussion that also included Selectman Raymond.

I believe that we have found the right candidate to bring in-depth knowledge, the ability to train staff, and the breadth of experience to effectively manage the department. We look forward to her start date.

THANK YOU TO TOWN HALL STAFF: I also want to be sure to publicly thank the staff at Town Hall who selflessly stepped forward to assume varying roles during the transition period. The Treasurer's office is a busy, multi-faceted operation and it really took our whole team to participate in carrying the workload. As well, I wish to thank the general public for their understanding during this time of flux.

Central Dispatch: When you convene tonight, the transition to Next Generation 911 technology and combined police and emergency medical dispatch will have been initiated at the Athol Police station. In preparation, our public safety chiefs, dispatch staff, collective bargaining units, police and fire personnel and our partners at the State 911 Department having been working diligently on a number of fronts including training, staffing, equipment and policy development.

While great progress has been made, full transition of fire service dispatching will require installation of additional infrastructure and completion of additional training. The chiefs and I have conveyed this to State 911 Dept. staff that have been assisting throughout the process. In your packets tonight is a proposed "thank you" letter to State 911 which also includes a request for 60 additional days to install the balance of communication and security equipment and to allow staff time to cross-train on fire dispatch.

Following is a bulleted snapshot of where we stand at this time:

Personnel:

- Marie Long, a part-time dispatcher in Athol, was promoted to full-time status effective on September 3 with a 60-day trial period per the collective bargaining agreement.
- Chief Kleber, Becky Isakson and Selectman Bialecki interviewed several qualified candidates for the position of Lead Public Safety Dispatcher on Monday and discussions with the leading candidate were held today in my office.
- Christine Russell has been hired as a new part-time dispatcher effective September 18 when she will begin her training with a certified dispatcher.
- Chief Kleber has proposed bringing part-time dispatcher wages in line with the market to attract and retain qualified candidates. An article to effectuate this is on the proposed Fall Town Meeting warrant.

Equipment:

- New radio equipment (portables and vehicles) for the Fire Department has been ordered following issuance of specifications and receipt of quotes. Chief is awaiting a firm delivery date.
- New phone systems for the Fire Department and Police Department were lawfully procured and have been ordered. It is anticipated that the FD system will be installed within the next 14-21 days with the PD system to follow shortly thereafter. These are not for emergency lines.
- The Fire Department has been operating with personal computers and a Verizon internet link (think tin cans and string). A contract with Charland Technologies, of Hubbardston, has been approved for IT upgrades (including the network connections required for the VoIP phone system and a future Fire Department server).

State 911 / Next Gen 911:

- State 911 and General Dynamics were embedded in the communications center yesterday and today installing equipment, testing and completing the actual cutover to the Next Generation 911 consoles, monitors and hard drives. The existing "Vesta" system will remain on stand-by for a few weeks to ensure smooth roll-out of the new technology.
- As noted above, State 911 Department is aware that the Town is now "live" with centralized police and emergency medical dispatch, but that full integration of Fire Department dispatch will require more training and time to integrate (within 60 days).

Collective Bargaining:

- Impact bargaining discussions with the SEIU (for dispatchers) and IAFF (for firefighters) are continuing. This is the subject of an Executive Session update tonight.

As noted above, the Town has made exceptional progress in a compressed schedule to comply with the State 911 Department timeline. Monna Wallace of State 911 has been in Town on several occasions to meet with administrators and staff and to help troubleshoot the cutover to NG-911. I have prepared a draft letter to the State 911 Department for the Board's review and requested execution. I believe – given the substantial progress to date – that the State will assent in good faith to the Town's request for up to 60 days to complete the fire dispatch training and integration.

Building Inspector Receives Certification: Building Inspector Robert Legare has achieved certification as a Mass. Building Commissioner by the State Board of Building Regulations and Standards effective on September 6, 2017. Mr. Legare began his duties on January 2, 2016, and the position requires such certification within 18 months of appointment. I'm pleased to join the Board in extending our congratulations on this notable accomplishment.

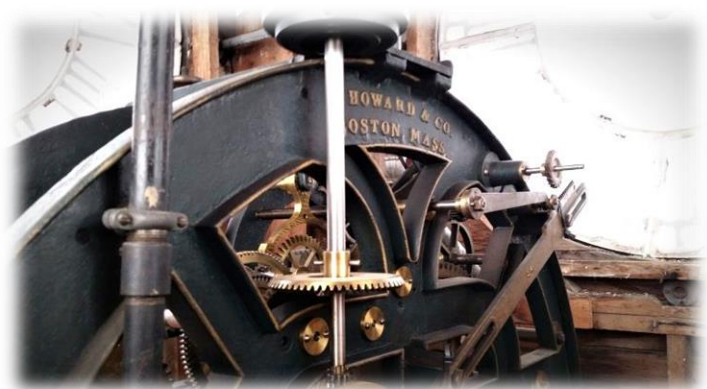


Fall Town Meeting: It should be an interesting Fall Town Meeting with several tweaks to the zoning bylaws, potential removal of part-time police officers from Civil Service provisions, and some money articles required for the high school and central dispatch plans. The warrant is on your agenda and in your packets including:

- A series of proposed zoning amendments concerning revisions to the filing process for site plan approvals by the planning board, creation of a mill revitalization overlay district and a series of amendments that seek to improve permitting controls and set-backs on new solar facilities.
- A request to appropriate or transfer \$24,110 for Athol High School feasibility study (roof, windows, doors, heating through MSBA accelerated repair program – 80% state reimbursement)
- A request to appropriate or transfer \$25,000 for additional central dispatch equipment costs.
- A request to appropriate or transfer \$50,000 to \$60,000 for additional dispatcher center personnel costs.
- A request to amend the wage bylaw to increase hourly rate for part-time public safety dispatchers to meet current market demand and attract and retain qualified employees.
- A request to re-purpose \$35,000 from the FY13 capital plan from Pleasant Street School “boiler” repair to Pleasant Street School general capital improvements.
- A request to authorize Board of Selectmen to petition state legislature for special legislation to remove part-time police officers from the provisions of Civil Service

Clock Tower Repair and Maintenance: I was able to arrange for an assessment and repair of the jammed Town Hall clock tower by Gardner jeweler Brian Tanguay with assistance from Dennis Kimball.

Mr. Tanguay – who is also president of the Narragansett Historical Society and restores tower clocks – returned on Monday to oil the mechanism; refusing any payment for the work.



He observed that the clock has a mechanism to also sound a bell, though he found no evidence of a bell itself in the tower. He also said that the clock and tower is one of the cleanest he has seen.

Miscellaneous:

- Joined Selectmen Steve Raymond and Holly Young to attend ceremonial groundbreaking for planned Wendy's Restaurant (opening targeted before Thanksgiving).
- Retired police chief Tim Anderson has been appointed to the non-union, non-benefitted, part-time administrative assistant position for the Chief of Police.
- With building commissioner, fire department and attorneys, enforcement activities are continuing relative to Hancock Motors re: (1) pending Court compliance issues with respect to fire code, and (2) recent notice from building commissioner regarding compliance with town's junkyard regulations in the absence of a valid Class II license.
- Met with two groups proposing potential uses at Pleasant Street School. Both parties presenting information to the PSS Reuse/Disposition Committee on September 19. There are promising options.
- Attended lunch meeting with Senate President Stanley Rosenberg and principals of LP Athol.
- Conducted Department Head meeting and brief meeting regarding ongoing developments.
- Attended moving ceremony to remember the victims and first responders of the 9/11 attacks.
- Attended to various personnel matters.
- Met with COA Director regarding congregate meal program funding and COA formula grant.
- Attended meeting with National Grid and regional town managers, emergency management directors and fire and police chiefs regarding new emergency coordination process (Chief Duguay is Athol's lead as Emergency Management Director).
- Prepared for and participated in various collective bargaining sessions.