



## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Board of Selectmen

**FROM:** John C. Curran, Town Manager

**CC:** Susan Aker, Cathy O'Dea

**SUBJECT:** Town Manager's Report, October 28, 2019

**DATE:** October 25, 2019

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### **Household Hazardous Waste Day**

The town had a debriefing meeting to assess the issues that arose at the bi-annual Household Hazardous Waste Day. There were over seven hundred people that came through on that Saturday. This is a similar count from the previous October except that hundreds of people were turned away this October when the collection ended at 1:00PM. Additionally, the previous May only 300 residents came through. The staffing from Northeast in October was based on an anticipated count of 300 residents. The situation was further exacerbated by the fact that the previous collection in October was processed at the two sites – the DPW and the Iverson Ford Site. The Town also expanded the amount of appliances and white goods that could be dropped off and it was also free. It was able to be offered free because of a grant the DPW received to offset the processing costs.

In lieu of these events the Town will be conducting another appliance and electronics drop-off day on November 16<sup>th</sup> from 9:00AM to 12:00PM at the Marshall School. No hazardous waste will be collected on this day but the Town will be collecting waste oil on the same day at the DPW site. This is the same collection that is always offered on the third Saturday of each month. The appliances and electronics will be collected for free just as they were on October 20<sup>th</sup>. The one change will be that there is a limit of one for drop off of the following items: appliances, lawnmowers, snow blowers and water heaters.

### **Yankee Doodle Bike Path Meeting**

The 25% Design Public Hearing was held on Wednesday, October 2<sup>nd</sup> at 6:30PM in the Buck Auditorium. The presentation outlined the design process, and elements for the project and is posted on the town website

The project advertisement will be in the winter of 2024. State Representative Lombardo spoke in favor of the project, understanding that as the design advanced, some of the concerns that have been raised will be resolved. Selectman Burns asked for the design team to evaluate the use of a HAWK signal system instead of RRFB at the roadway crossings. A number of meeting attendees asked questions about the project. Some the comments are listed below:

- a. Astrig Way residents asked for alternative routes be considered, or separate the cyclists from the roadway users
- b. Orchard Road traffic has increased in volume and speed. Crossings should consider that
- c. Separate bridge for the path over Route 3 instead of using the Elliot/Orchard Road bridge
- d. Avoid Astrig way by putting the path on the ring road around the Marriott Hotel
- e. Concerns were raised about the speed on Orchard Rd and Tech. Park Drive
- f. Parking at the bottom of Richardson Road was a concern
- g. Design should connect into other trails in the area
- h. The existing signal at Concord Rd at Middlesex has a phase for the approach from the Cabot property that isn't used
- i. There was a question about the path north of the high school outside of the project limits
- j. Abutters on Sterns Way were concerned about the path coming too close to their property, and asked for a follow up meeting on site to review the path locations
- k. Comment on plowing during winter months was raised
- l. There was a comment on access onto the HS property during school hours
- m. Parking locations during daytime hours need to be determined

### **Pinehurst Fire Station**

Town Meeting has approved the funding for this project. The Design Team is moving ahead with full design. The first step is to conduct land survey, geotechnical investigation and hazmat testing. The temporary station will be located on Town property on Grove Street. The Town is assessing whether it is more cost effective to rent a structure short-term or to purchase one and repurpose it at the end of the project. The Town is exploring repurposing it down at the Water Treatment plant in the future. The temporary structure is scheduled to open next April of 2020 and be repurposed in September of 2021. The memorial plaque will be relocated at the Temporary site and returned to permanent location by the Fire Department.

### **Howe School**

The RFQ was advertised on October 7<sup>th</sup> for a designer for the project and was available on October 16<sup>th</sup>. Thirteen firms requested the RFQ. There is a designer briefing at the Howe School on October 30<sup>th</sup> at the site. RFQ proposals are due on November 13<sup>th</sup>.

This office met with BATV and their legal counsel to discuss next steps. BATV would prefer to enter into a lease which would have to be put out to bid. The town will work with counsel to advance this request. In the interim I have provided BATV with a draft agreement for their review. The BOS will need to approve the lease. This office will forward a working draft document to the BOS in the next month. BATV Counsel expressed concern about financing their portion of the project and that a lease would be advantageous for financing purposes.

### **Peggy Hannon Rizza Park Project**

The RFQ for Designers for this project was put in the central register on October 14<sup>th</sup>. RFQs were available to designers on October 23<sup>rd</sup>. A designer briefing is being conducted on November 6<sup>th</sup>. RFQ proposals are due on November 20<sup>th</sup>.

### **Vining**

This office will be meeting with appropriate offices to shut down all utilities in the Vining with the exception of an electrical supply for security purposes.

### **Allen Road at Boston Road**

This project is substantially complete and the Traffic Lights are operational. Mass DOT is going through the punch list items..

## **Whipple at Andover**

New traffic lights are ready to be installed at this intersection soon, after the lights go up there will be a period of time when the lights will set to flash only before they are turned on live, please use caution in this area. The Town is still waiting on delivery of these lights.

## **New Website**

The Town's new website launched early last week. The website is mobile friendly, reorganized, and has a few new features. Buttons are now located on the front screen with topics that were frequently searched in the past. One of the new buttons that is prominently featured is "Questions? / Report a Concern." Over a dozen residents have already taken advantage of this new feature. It sends an email directly to our office and then we connect the person with the appropriate department head / staff member over email. The Town has responded to pothole inquires, brush cutting, address change request, and a few other miscellaneous things. We have also placed a section for Town Manager's reports on the front page. This will be an easy place for residents to click and stay up to date with all sorts of on-going projects in Town.

In addition to the buttons we have placed a "How Can I?" section that includes topics that people specifically looked for in the past on the old website. Some of these include Town By Laws, Water Issues, My Taxes are Incorrect, Interactive Maps, and excise tax information. **It also has a "News You Can Use" section. This section was made for people who do not utilize social media.** This way they still can receive all of the updates posted on Facebook and Twitter, just on the website instead. It also includes a calendar with public meetings on it.

## **Streetlights**

This office is quickly progressing forward with the LED Streetlight project. The Town will officially buy the streetlights from National Grid at the end of the month. We have agreed to a contract with Daigle Electric to be our maintenance vendor during the installation of the LED Streetlights. The Town will now be taking all streetlight outage requests instead of National Grid.

Tanko Lighting has also completed the initial streetlight audit. Over the next few weeks they will be plotting the information they found on an interactive GIS Map to have a better understanding of the Town's lighting. After that they will be looking at the resident request and Police Department request to see if any new lights are warranted or needed.

The next step for the Town is to choose a lighting fixture and procure the materials. We have met with Burlington about their experiences and plan to take a field trip after daylight savings time to multiple surrounding Town's to find a fixture that will suite us. We have also met with CINCOM a smart lighting manufacturer previously based in Billerica. The Town is exploring these smart options for certain areas of Town. Some of these include traffic counts, noise detection, pavement head index, WIFI connectivity, and many other programs. I will keep you updated as we move forward in the process.

## **New Hires**

The Town has recently hired a new Assistant Recreation Director and a new Board of Health Director. Our new Assistant Recreation Director Anastasia, Lecuivre comes to us from the Town of Amherst where she is currently serving as the Program Director. We were drawn to Anastasia due to her work with special needs and ADA, skills that were currently lacking at the Recreation Department. She also developed, planned, and organized multiple Amherst community events including their 4<sup>th</sup> of July and Halloween Fest. We look forward to her bringing some fresh new ideas to the Recreation Department.

Our new Board of Health Director, Kristel Bennett is currently serving as the Chief Environmental Health Officer at the Watertown Health Department since 2008. She currently supervises the Health Inspectors, Food Consultants and Animal Control Officers. She received her Master's in Public Administration from Suffolk University. Along with that she has received multiple certifications including Registered Sanitarian, Certified Food Safety Professional, Licensed Lead Determinator, and Animal Inspector. We look forward to welcoming Kristel to the team!

### **Polling Places**

The Vining School can no longer be used as a polling place. Consequently, the Town is exploring other options prior to the April election. We hope to have an alternative in place around the new year.

### **Eagle Scout Project**

The Town would like to thank Matt Sweeney and Corban Walsh for their service to the Town in regards to their Eagle Scout Projects. Matthew Sweeney built the artifact case that is now housed in the Fire Department. The case is beautifully done and we thank him for his work. If you have a moment I suggest you take a walk over and see his incredible woodworking skills. Corban worked with the Conservation Department over the past few years. His work has lead him to being awarded the Hornaday Award a prestigious national level award. I wanted to take a moment and recognize their efforts and service to the Town.

### **Veterans Office**

#### *Medigap Insurance Summary*

As of July 2019 the Veterans' Department began running insurance coverage analysis for Medigap Insurance, Drug Coverage Plans and Mass Health Program to ensure that Veterans are receiving all entitled benefits. The Veterans Chapter 115 Program currently has 45 active cases of which all of them are entitled to have assistance paying for any and all healthcare costs to include premiums, co pays and prescriptions as the primary examples. Many of the Billerica Veterans so far have adjusted their Medigap programs to a new program that has a monthly premium with no co pays. This program allows for the Veteran to receive healthcare anywhere in the nation. The premium cost for this plan is \$220 per month. Most of our veterans were in plans that had a premium cost of \$198 per month. This increase is nullified with one \$50 co pay on the old plan – the average case visits a variety of doctors multiple times a month. This does not include the \$100 co-pays for any hospital visits and even larger co-pays up to \$1000 for multiple overnight stays. The new plan is a flat rate of \$220 per month. This plan also reduced the processing by Veterans and Accounting of individual copayments by 75%.

#### *Drug Coverage Summary*

Very few Veteran cases were found to have a prescription plan. These premiums range from \$14 - \$75 per month depending on the drugs needed. After analyzing the prescription lists of the Veteran we then found a plan that covered most if not all of the drugs needed and signed them up for coverage to be paid for by the Chapter 115 program. In at least 7 individual cases so far we have found that the office was paying a range of \$500 to \$1900 per month for medications that could have been covered by a drug plan costing between \$14 and \$75 per month. This also saves processing time for multiple individual drug bills being consolidated into one or at most two invoices per case monthly.

#### *Mass Health Eligibility Analysis*

The Chapter 115 program requires that the Veteran attempt to use all other means of healthcare coverage as they can before submitting invoices to the Chapter 115 program. Mass Health has many different programs that will help cut down the costs of medical bills. Ensuring that all of our Veteran Cases explore all Mass Health options will save the town from paying complete invoice amounts in some cases. This do not cost the Town anything but the initial minimal time invested.

### **Pavement Management / Sidewalks Report**

At this time all roadways have been inspected. The computer analyzing program RoadBotics has also completed its inspection. The data has been delivered back to BETA who is currently working on the final deliverable. Hopefully we will have a report early in the new year. Work is also being done on the sidewalk management plan. Most sidewalk field inspections have been completed. The final inspections are being completed this week. Once the data collection is completed a report will be drafted.

### **Parks and Tree's Department / Irrigation Systems**

This office is requesting that the BOS recognize the outstanding performance of Mike Haines for all the great work he has done with the Parks and Tree's Department. The Department did a fantastic job this spring, summer, and fall season. The Town heard nothing but compliments on the conditions of the fields. Many of the issues that were expected to come up never arose because of Mike and his team's due diligence and dedication. Mike also made sure that all irrigation systems were winterized. This has been contracted out in the past but the skills existed within the department. Mike and his team did all the work in house and saved the residents of Billerica a great deal of money.

### **Cable Contract**

The Contracts for Verizon and Comcast are expected to be ready for the November 14<sup>th</sup>. Both contracts will remain at the 5% franchise fee cap and the Comcast contract is a 10-year contract with \$450,000 capital grant and a \$40,000 I-Net Buy out. The Verizon Contract will include \$22,000 and \$36,000 annual capital grant payments for an approximate total of \$290,000 over five years. The attorneys are still working out final language.

### **Marijuana Use**

Community Care Collective will be submitting to the Planning Board for the October meeting. Their application is currently pending review by the Cannabis Control Commission.

### **Middlesex Turnpike A-Cal Construction Lay Down Area**

#### **MBTA Right-of-Way**

I reached out to Mike Twidle from the MBTA about the Right-of-Way behind the High School separating Alumni Field. He requested a valuation of the property. I will be requesting some information from the assessor and get back to him.

#### **Cidermill Property**

In 2015 the BOS asked me to inquire on this property and I did but never received a response. However at the time, the Community Development Director had informed me that Four Kicks had made an offer on the property that was not accepted.

I was able to get in touch with Jerry Liang at the Sunrise Corporation. He is going to get back to me with the right contact information.