

Town Administrator Report, April 10, 2023

- USDA.
 - Equipment for project 2 (Wheelwright Plant) is out to bid and will just stay out until notice to proceed from USDA has occurred.
 - RCAP is working on rates and Betterments. We met on April 3rd with Laurie Stevens and she presented a PowerPoint presentation for a possible alternate rate structure. She will be back at our April 24th meeting with a Betterment structure, hopefully.
 - Joe Delbove, my contact at USDA, calls frequently and wants to see rates adopted before the second project goes out to bid
 - I am still researching RFP's for oversight.

New:

- We were made aware of an issue regarding several employees retirement deductions not actually making to the Worcester Regional Retirement Board (WRRB). When our payroll system, Harpers, was originally set up, there was a stop at a particular count. Although deductions were being withdrawn correctly through payroll deductions, they were sitting in the liability account within Town funds. When this was revealed, the Treasurer called WRRB to report the issue. WRRB then requested the funds be sent over and deposited into the individual accounts. We spoke with WRRB on several occasions. They have indicated that in approximately 2 years the amount of interest that should have accrued will hit our assessment. I have asked exactly how much that will be and am waiting for the answer.
- Gilbertville mill update from January 20: I've asked for another update yesterday but have yet to hear back. The project is going on as quickly as things can be done. AS you might have seen, windows are going in. Outside site work is pending finalization of our move of the Clam Shrimp. Natural Heritage has approved the plans as well as the place for relocation. That should hopefully get done by March. Power remains an issue. The full powerup of the property, about 6,000 AMPS is 18 or more months out because of the inability of the utility to source the transformers needed. . We will have 1200 AMPS in the coming months which should be enough to get the first floor done and operating. We have paid the entrance fee to the Water Commissioners to supply the project. We do not plan to drive a well. We have met with the water, sewer and fire people, located the lines and come to agreement as to how each of the services will be accessed. The water department did manage to get an old valve to operate so we have enough water for construction purposes.
- That's about it for the moment. George wants to get this up and running as soon as possible. We appreciate all of the cooperation from the various town departments. Feel free to let me know if you have any questions or want to take a walk through.
- I attended a meeting with Lt. Gov Kim Driscoll on Saturday, April 1 for Selectmen of Rural Town's. The conversation was regarding the Governor's Office's announcement of the creation of Director of Rural Affairs. The intent is to serve as an advocate for rural communities. This is the first time that a staff is dedicated to rural policy. We do not know yet who it is or where their office will be. There were several topics of discussion emphasizing the struggle that rural communities face, in particular, the western part of the state. We are hopeful that this new position will be an advocate for better policy and funding allocation to make it more equitable across the commonwealth. This is a strong focus for us on the STAM legislative committee.
- I have a STAM by-law committee meeting on Tuesday, April 11. We hope to submit changes to STAM by-laws soon so they have time to review before the annual meeting in June
- Our EV charger at Town Hall is broken and needs replacement. I am waiting to hear back with a quote.

- Met with Hardwick COA. It was encouraged that they meet at the same time as the Barre COA to try and make it more comfortable for everyone at the center. They will be looking to formally combine into one Board. We are gathering legal information before bringing to Barre and Hardwick BOS. I have begun attending all of their meetings along with going for coffee on the first Wednesday of the month with the police from Hardwick and Barre
- Construction has begun again with Ludlow Construction and MassDOT on Main Street in Gilbertville. Expect delays.
- I am working on a MVP action grant. We haven't selected the project yet. I am awaiting feedback from Conservation and EMD
- Nancy Lamb has returned to the library. I will be attending their meetings from now on
- Board of Health was noticed by the Town Clerk that they should not use the procedure they have followed for adopting new fees and should be more transparent. We had some food vendors complain about their fees and procedure and believe they will have a large meeting on Thursday, April 6 to complain to the BOH

Ongoing:

- MIIA, the Town insurance agency, will be coming out in the next couple of weeks to inspect buildings worth over \$500K. I am hoping Marty and Scott can accompany them.
- Town Hall boiler update: All of the walls had to come down in the BOS/Conservation office. The entire wood floor needed to come up in the play group room. There is a small amount of mold in the Treasurer/Collector office. The subfloor needed to come up. We are not working in ideal conditions, but we are making the best of it. It's been a long 6 months. The restoration company has measured all new materials for floors, walls and ceilings. We can see the light at the end of the tunnel. Unfortunately, the Green Community grants now cap at \$200K. The boiler will be approximately \$1mil. I am looking at other grants and funding sources. I've reached out to BEC and to RJ McDonald for repairs in the meantime so it doesn't happen again.
- Tuesday, March 7 we had Guardian Energy come in to assess the Municipal Office Building, Fire Station and Highway. Through the Green Community grant we are applying for, Town Hall, Fire and Highway will be getting weatherization. I am waiting to hear back for the absolute plans. There was some miscommunication with the field employee and the support staff that I spoke with.
- Vacant town owned parcels; White Building; Paige Building; Ruggles Hill School. What shall we do? I recently insured them, as there has been none on the properties. RFP? Auction? We had a Capital Planning meeting Monday, March 27 at 3PM begin discussion. It was basically introductions and we should have another meeting soon.
- Council on Aging are holding office hours once again. 12:30PM at Quabbin Estates and Municipal Building (Town Hall) at 10:00AM. Please come down and check out all of the services they have. Snacks served! Eileen and/or Brenda will be at each location on the last Wednesday of the month for an hour at each place unless otherwise necessary.
- DLS submitted Financial Policy manual. I will be forwarding as soon as I can go through so I may answer any questions you may have.
- Accountant; Shared services.
- Water Commission: We have received the water meters to upgrade technology and researching surrounding towns for rates, as well as exploring regulations and procedures. Most meters have been installed. We need to schedule training with Ti Sales and East National Water.
- Website is live as of February 27. Julie Murkette is working out some tweaks with Civic Plus
- I have begun attending coffee hour at the Hardwick/Barre Senior Center the first Wednesday of the month. Please come join me for a conversation or if you have any questions or concerns.

As always, please feel free to reach out to me anytime. My email along with work and cell numbers are on the website, and my door is always open.