

Report of the Town Administrator

January 12, 2016

1. Personnel Updates-

- a. Ed Kukkula Highway Superintendent- Ed is here before you this evening to update you on Highway operations, winter storm operations and to give a specific update on our new winter road treatment operations. Ed's monthly report is enclosed.

- **Board Action Requested-** None.

- b. Building Commissioner Memorandum of Agreement Renewal-The Board has previously voted to enter into a MOA with Commissioner Hanks regarding his stipend for work related to the new high school. You have voted that the MOA would be for three years and would renew annually. It is that time. I have for you a revised MOA with the new yearly dates for your consideration.

- **Board Action Requested-** If it would please the Board, a vote to execute the previously voted MOA with Mr. Hanks.

- c. Mileage Reports- There appears to be an existing policy directive that mileage reports be filed by all who either have a town vehicle or submit for mileage reimbursement. What I have seen is that the forms being used are not at all consistent and oftentimes confusing. I intend to create one uniform sheet for all to use going forward.

- **Board Action Requested-** None.

- d. Retiree Life Insurance Policy- I have been advised that we have a long serving and now retired employee who has been paying for a \$20,000 term life insurance policy through the town. I am further advised that while he has been paying the money for the premium that there have been no payments made on the policy since April. The policy has since been cancelled by the vendor for lack of payment and they will not reinstate it. I am engaged in trying to get the person rewritten but if for some reason that is not possible, we have liability here and the right thing to do, in my recommendation to you, would be that we seek a town meeting vote to self-fund this benefit. My hope is that it won't come to that but I wanted you to be advised.

- **Board Action Requested-** None.

- e. School Resource Officer- I was very surprised to learn that we do not have a School Resource Officer (SRO) in our schools. Apparently there was once an SRO but the position was cut. Interim Chief Barrieau and Lt. Giacotti have met with School Superintendent Landers to begin discussions about rectifying this matter. I note that I have found an electronic document position description for an SRO dated March 2015 that appears to have been drafted by former Chief Marshall. This indicates that it has at least been on the radar recently. I will keep you posted.

- **Board Action Requested-** None.

- f. Communications Supervisor- As earlier advised, I have posted for a month to month Interim Communications Supervisor/Police IT position. Interim Chief Barrieau felt very

strongly about the need to fill this position, even if just as an interim until a permanent Chief can review staffing across the board. It is imperative to keep the technology up and running in the department. After the requisite 10 days I will have a recommendation for you to consider for this short-term fix.

• **Board Action Requested-** None.

g. Police Chief Screening Committee- The committee met again this past Friday morning at 10:30 am. Committee Chairman, Boxborough Police Chief Warren Ryder, our own Fire Chief Mark Boynton, Badgequest's Bob Pomeroy and me. By way of update I offer the following:

1. We received x applicants in total
2. We selected 10 to provide answers to 10 police specific essay questions
3. We narrowed the field to 5 based upon the essays submitted and that is where we are now.

Originally it was expected that the next step would be to have the five go through the assessment center with a shortlist of 3 forwarded to the Board of Selectmen for consideration and appointment.

As a committee, however, we are putting forward a change of plan.

Tonight we'd like to announce the introduction of a public participation piece of the process. Accordingly, we'd like to invite any Townsend resident to submit a letter of interest on or before 4:00pm January 19, 2016 to the screening committee c/o my office if they would like to be considered for inclusion on a public interview panel.

We plan to select 7 people representing a broad representation of the town to join the screening committee in interviewing the currently identified 5 candidates. After the interviews we will solicit the citizens input and it will be factored into the final evaluation of the candidates as they make their way through the rest of the process.

So, if you are interested please submit a letter with-

- your name
- the segment of the community you believe you could represent (i.e. business owner, stay at home parent, senior citizen, etc.)
- a brief statement describing why you are interested, and
- two sample questions that you'd like to ask the candidates.

• **Board Action Requested-** None.

2. Financial Updates-

a. FY16 Budget- As everyone is no doubt aware, the FY16 budget is not in very good shape at all. I have been advised by our town accountant that the budget presented and voted at annual town meeting back in May was never a balanced budget. I am not referring to the use of \$80k+ in one time revenues from the stabilization fund to fund recurrent operating expenses (although that is greatly concerning in itself), but rather that there was a \$100k+ error/oversight in the prior

Town Administrator's master spreadsheet, known as the "Inflow-Outflow" sheet. This sheet was apparently relied upon to keep track of the total FY16 expenditures and while the warrant articles and associated votes were accurate their total did not tie into the spreadsheet bottom-line.

Moreover, there were issues pushed out to an anticipated fall STM to be addressed once free cash was certified and as you are further aware, free cash has not yet been certified due to our inability to close the FY15 books.

The inability to close the books is driven entirely by a lack of work product having been delivered from the prior Treasurer Collector. Our newly contracted Treasurer Collector is working very closely with our Town Accountant to catch up on this work but the work is slow given issues like a failure to reconcile cash and a failure to have reconciled bank statements.

This leaves us two choices- we can continue to put off the STM until free cash is known or we can call a STM and utilize our only other available source of funding---stabilization---to address needs with the intention of backfilling stabilization dollar for dollar in the spring with free cash.

While it is entirely your call, my inclination is to NOT use stabilization as a bridge but to instead identify areas within the budget to make cuts now to keep the operating budget in the black and to wait on any one-time expenses until after free cash is in hand.

Why do I recommend this course? The logic is simple while the work will not be. We currently have a structural deficit in the FY16 operating budget (\$100k error, \$80k stabilization, \$40k veterans and other budgets lines are tight if not expended already. Until we get this structural deficit worked out we should not be considering additional spending.

Again, this is just my opinion and recommendation and I will look to you for policy direction.

Board Action Requested- If it would please the Board, I'd appreciate your thoughts and guidance.

3. **Project Updates-**

a. **Police Station and Town Hall Locks and Cameras-**

- i. **Police-** I have been advised that the key fob lock system in the police station has been largely inoperable since a lightning strike/power surge last October. As of last week Interim Chief Barrieau has received a quote to repair/replace/update the system with technology that will interface seamlessly with the new system at the fire station headquarters. The cost is \$10k+/- . We have a claim out with our insurance carrier.
- ii. **Town Hall-** I am advised that there was an authorization of funds to install a key fob system in the Town Hall and to install security cameras as well. We are proceeding with that project.

Board Action Requested: None.

- b. **Tennessee Gas Pipeline-** Pursuant to your earlier vote, we filed just last week to officially become recognized as a legal Intervenor in the legal process of the siting of the Kinder Morgan pipeline.

Board Action Requested- None.

4. **Miscellaneous Updates-**

- a. Open Meeting Law Complaint- I am enclosing two Open Meeting law Complaints for review and vote.

Board Action Requested- Please review and be prepared to discuss and vote.

- b. Public Comment Section on the Agenda- A citizen emailed asking to have a Public Comment section placed on each agenda. I wanted you to be aware of the request and to let you know that I will be reaching out to each of you over the next week to get your feelings on the matter.

Board Action Requested- None.