



TOWN OF EAST LONGMEADOW

Town Manager's Report

August 25, 2020

Good Afternoon all:

In the absence of a formal meeting this week, I wanted to give you a quick update of what's happening in Town Hall.

The Finance Department is working on the closing procedures for FY 20 so that a report may be available to you on September 8, 2020. Once these year-end issues are resolved and completed, the audit for FY 20 will be scheduled for mid-September. This audit will include the examinations required by the bylaw as a result of the departure of the former Finance Director and the former Town Clerk which have been pending for a bit. The Town's response to the management letter from FY 19 has been sent to the auditor.

We have also begun the review of the outstanding approved, but unfunded, capital projects as well as existing bonds to determine whether any bonds could be refunded. This analysis is the first step to clarification and potential consolidation of the financing of many outstanding projects to capitalize on the current low interest rates.

The Department has not yet filled the existing vacancy which continues to hamper the ability to bring various pending matters to current status. There are numerous payroll deduction issues which continue to be discovered, the resolution of which take considerable time and effort.

The Director is also in the process of drafting financial policies and procedures for all Departments. This financial guidance, once memorialized, will be posted on the Town's website.

The Human Resources Department continues to post job vacancies, conduct exit interviews with departing employees and work with Department Heads to assist them with many personnel questions which arise. Counselling sessions with employees and guidance to Department Heads on application of Cares Act legislation and various other types of leave are continuous. For example, three employees presented situations today, questions regarding available accommodations which may be necessary due to Covid-19 and which require individual attention and response. The pandemic presents new HR considerations for employees and the Town and requires time consuming research of appropriate options.

Our new HR generalist has taken over coordination of all Workers Comp, FMLA and COBRA matters. She has been very helpful in this effort to organize and streamline the procedures in the department.

The TEU recently voted to establish two new bargaining units, professional and non-professional, under the auspices of United Public Service Employees Union, UPSE. Elaine Grimaldi and I met with the Union representative to determine the identity of new officers and to coordinate the desired process for future communications.

Recreation, ELCAT and COA are collaborating on a special event for Thursday, 8/27/20 at 2 p.m. This event is an Intergenerational Program, designed to bring different age groups together to talk and socialize with senior citizens. The content will be a discussion of what it was like to grow up during the depression, war years, 9/11/2001, significant world events experienced by the seniors. Children of elementary school age, high schoolers and senior citizens will be in the discussion group. The meeting will take place outside of the ELCAT studio at the high school with proper Covid compliance.

Recreation and DPW have also been working with the Rotary Foundation and the local EL Rotary on a beautification project at Heritage Park. The Rotary has donated \$4,500 to purchase shrubs and flowers and will also make an in kind contribution by helping to design the layout and assist with plantings.

Work continues on finalization of the Open Space Plan to become part of the Master Plan as well. The Recreation Department provided a wonderful opportunity this summer for the children who participated in the camp sessions and Donna and Geordie continue to work extremely well serving the needs of the community while short staffed. Financial policies applicable to this Department (private fund raising etc.) are under review as is the onboarding process for their seasonal staff.

The Health Department has also been tracking the community status with regard to EEE virus and of course, the statistics regarding Covid-19. Any and all significant information is posted on the Town website and Facebook page of the Health Department.

Progress on the Shared Health initiative with Longmeadow has slowed due to the review and comments of legal counsel regarding the proper form of organization. Allocation of the respective financial responsibilities is also under review.

The Public Safety Departments, PD, FD, DPW and I conferred last week with representatives of National Grid to analyze and critique the utility's response to the August 4, 2020 storm. Down time of line crews, work assignments by National Grid within the towns in the same geographic zone and analysis regarding prioritization of calls were the major topics discussed. The utility took the local suggestions for improvement under advisement.

DPW continues work on a number of infrastructure projects, while also responding to emergencies. There was a water main break last week on Wendover Lane requiring immediate repair. The grant application for a MassWorks infrastructure grant is almost ready for submission and details will follow shortly.

Planning is still anticipating the award of a grant from PVPC to pursue the development of an updated Master Plan and is working on several other issues, housing, permitting etc. and the pending litigation over past Planning Board decisions.

The Library Director reports that the Department has conducted a very successful virtual summer reading program, over 10,068 hours of reading by 795 participants; the program ran from early July through August 15, 2020 and included readers from early childhood through adulthood.

The Clerk's office has been very busy with voter registration, early voting ballot requests and conduct of the August 22-23, 2020 early voting. Jeanne and her staff have been working diligently to accomplish these significant duties. There were 3,193 ballots requested and sent out by the office, 1,510 were returned so far. Also, 120 people have voted in person to date.

Our Zoom schedule of meetings for Council, Boards and Commissions has caused overload on our IT Department. We have but one license so I've authorized Ryan to obtain pricing on a second license. If we obtain that license, he can train others to efficiently host meetings going forward. I will forward an email which was sent to Department Heads regarding the resumption of in-person meetings for your information and review.

Plans to seek a new COA Director are underway. However, furloughs continue in Assessors, Library, Health, ELCAT, COA and Recreation Departments. Recreation, Building and Finance have vacant positions and our HR Director continues on a part time schedule. All are working diligently to continue to get the Town's work done efficiently and professionally.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary E. McNally
Town Manager