



TOWN OF EAST LONGMEADOW

Town Manager's Report

August 10, 2021

Good evening:

The last few weeks have been devoted in large part to the Town's participation as a member of the Eastern Hampden Veterans District. The District hired Michelle Barrett as the Veterans Service Officer in late July after interviewing several candidates for the position. The administrative details regarding her employment will take a few days to complete, however, she will schedule office hours in East Longmeadow at the Senior Center on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays between 9-2 (which began August 6) and will be available by phone and email at other times when needed. When those contact details have been finalized, they will be published on the Town's website. Michelle was introduced to the COA personnel and shown the office space and file information on Wednesday of last week. She will have some period of orientation but I expect that the transition will be done expeditiously. I will invite Michelle to a future Council meeting so you can meet her, at least virtually.

The Westcomm Board met on August 6, 2021. The District continues to move forward on renovations to the newly acquired site in Chicopee, however, the estimates for renovation came in several million dollars higher than anticipated. Alternate grant funding is being investigated as is the revision of renovation plans. The architectural firm retained by the District made an extensive presentation of the concepts and needs of the structure to adapt it to the intended use. Once renovated, the site will house up to 27 dispatch positions. Several dispatchers attended the National Night Out in East Longmeadow on Tuesday, August 3, 2021. They told me how much they enjoyed working with the Police and Fire personnel in East Longmeadow. The event was well attended and provided an opportunity for the community to meet many Town employees.

Labor Union negotiations continue with the Clerical and Professional Units of the Municipal Union as well as the Police Union. I have also been conducting the annual performance review of each of the Department Head to discuss their progress, challenges and achievements for the past fiscal year as well as their needs in the current year. One example of those challenges is the current lack of any administrative assistance in the Assessor's office. Both staff positions are vacant presently, so I am asking for the public's patience until the recruitment and hiring process is completed. This was the situation in the Recreation and Finance Departments during all of FY 21. Other Departments have struggled as well with staff absences or vacant positions but managed to achieve objectives due to hard work and dedication.

The above comments are what lead me to advocate for electronic improvements wherever possible in our systems for recordkeeping and other operations. Record retention and retrieval when necessary is often a time consuming and frustrating task, especially for the Town Clerk and Planning Departments. We have a major need to upgrade our storage capabilities and facilities. For example, the significant rain in July impacted the basement of Town Hall where many valuable, necessary historical records are stored. The environment is not climate controlled or large enough to properly store these important records. Planning has records in five or six different locations throughout the building which are not catalogued. Searches take an extraordinary excess of time which is at a premium for Departments with only one person on staff. We can and should do a better job with this issue. I will be looking into opportunities to improve on this problem as the year progresses. In light of the turnbacks referenced below, I think the resolution should not wait until the next fiscal year.

Another need which I believe should not be deferred any longer is the replacement of the boiler at the COA. DPW personnel will be available to explain the problem in detail. I will have documentation on this problem for your review at a future meeting. This is a project that is on the Comprehensive Capital Plan but was not approved as part of the FY22 capital budget. In the near future I will seek approval to move forward on the necessary repairs (replacement) on an emergency basis. The removal of the old boiler and its predecessor, a coal fired furnace, will create approximately 300 square feet of storage space in the basement of the COA building. As stated, that need is dire.

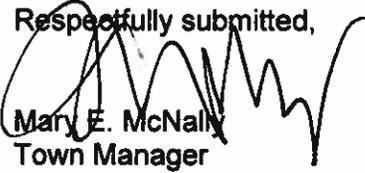
The Finance Department report which you have for review tonight itemizes the Department turnbacks for fiscal

21. I want to emphasize and impress upon the Council and the taxpaying public how significant these savings are. These savings, combined with the various grants and Federal programs I have been reporting on in recent months, should put the Town in good position for future growth and implementation of operational improvements.

We have begun the internal review of financial policies and procedures and expect to have additional grant support in the Town Manager's office in September.

I have appointed Ken Hancock to the Historical Commission. During his interview he expressed a deep appreciation of civic pride and heritage. He is an advocate for the promotion, preservation and enhancement of the Town's history. I think he will be a valuable resource to the Commission.

Respectfully submitted,



Mary E. McNally
Town Manager