



TOWN OF EAST LONGMEADOW

Town Manager's Report

December 14, 2021

Good evening:

The Town Health Department welcomed its new Director, Tammy Spencer, on November 15, 2021. Tammy has made arrangements for a vaccine clinic on the afternoon of Dec. 21, 2021 from 1-4 at the Senior Center. The details about the clinic are published on our website. All are welcome to participate.

Veterans Day events were held on November 10 at the COA and the parade and wreath laying ceremony was on November 11, 2021. The COA affair was a drive through luncheon with music and welcoming remarks by State representatives Puppolo and Ashe, COA Director Erin Koebler, Veterans Memorial Chair, Terry Glusko and me. It was well attended and well done by the organizers. The Veterans Day parade event was also very well done, a moving tribute to those who have served the country, organized and hosted by the VFW post.

The Veterans District has received conditional approval from the Commonwealth's Veterans Services Office to operate through January 30, 2023. This approval will allow VSO Michelle Barrett to obtain the training and access to software that she needs to serve effectively. The building renovation at the Senior Center to accommodate her office should be completed by year's end, the necessary hardware for the new access door is expected by December 17, 2021.

The Police Department sponsored a "Stuff the Cruiser" toy collection event on Saturday, December 4, 2021. The response by the community was very generous, two cruisers and a flatbed trailer were filled with gifts which were donated to the Toys of Tots campaign in Western Mass. Officer Jeff Niznik was a chief organizer of the affair and put great effort and energy to the task. The community response was very gratifying.

On November 22, 2021, several Town officials, namely, Councilor O'Shea, Sarah Truoiolo, Bethany Yeo and I met with the Civics classes in the High School auditorium to participate in a question and answer forum with the students regarding civic engagement and the function and operation of Town and School offices.

Negotiations continue with three of the five labor Unions in Town. Hopefully ratification votes will be forthcoming on all of these pending Union matters by the end of the month.

I have recently received the School Department's Capital Plan requests for FY23 and shared that document with members of the TM's Capital Advisory Committee in anticipation of their meeting at future dates next year. I have also asked Connor O'Shea and Rich Frechero to sit on this committee and they have accepted.

The Westcomm Board of Directors met on November 24 and December 10, 2021 to discuss ongoing administrative matters. One such matter is the decision to borrow in order to finance the renovation of the new dispatch site at Shawinigan Drive in Chicopee. Notice of the intent to borrow has been given to East Longmeadow as a member municipality, but no action by this body is necessary for the transaction to proceed. The District voted to accept the Town of Ware's application to join the District.

The Town has hired a new Benefits Administrator, Christopher Lizotte. Chris has his Masters degree in Business Administration and joined our staff on December 6, 2021. The resignation of our former Benefits Administrator has revealed some serious capacity issues that must be addressed by outsourcing certain tasks, the ACA reporting is an example. This coming FY budget hopefully will consider additional staff in the Human Resources Department in order to adequately address the volume of work required to properly manage the needs presented by the Town's workforce, the School Department employees and the benefits for the Town's retirees. I cannot overemphasize this need and the ACA matter is included in The Finance report which you will receive later during this meeting.

The Town's ability (i.e. actual physical staffing capacity) to be responsive to the demands of residents and the genuine desires of Departments to operate and perform at the highest level is top of mind as I prepare to leave the Town's service. As an example of, and in response to that issue, the Recreation Department and Department of Public Works made a presentation to the T/M's Capital Advisory Committee regarding the development of Heritage Park. This presentation was designed for two primary reasons. The first reason was to provide guidance and direction to the Recreation Department which has been overwhelmed with demands of Town residents for more and better facilities for children who participate in a number of sports and other activities. The Department has recently been scheduling activities at third party venues, which of course, come with a cost. Development of Heritage Park will not solve Recreation's issues but it will provide a path forward by virtue of the additional resources that would become available through the advancement of this project. . The second reason for this presentation to the Capital Committee was to stimulate consideration and discussion of whether or not to move forward with the project at all. Funding for this endeavor was first passed at Town Meeting in May, 2015. There has been little progress since. My hope is that the Committee will recommend the funding source for the engineering costs in this fiscal year.

Other financial matters, with potential options based on free cash use, are pending as well. The issues were delineated in a memo to you from the Financial Officer with explanation of how and why we feel they are reasonable expenditures at this time.

The Town was awarded a Community Compact grant applied for and submitted by Karen Korpinen for an IT project which Ryan Quimby will oversee. The Town was awarded \$114,000 of an initial \$138,000 request for a disaster relief backup system. Karen is also working on reviewing and updating the Town's Hazard Mitigation Plan with Chief Morrissette which is due to expire in January of 2022. We have requested the assistance of the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission through a grant to complete the update. There is also the possibility of obtaining some funding from the MGM Community Mitigation Fund. Karen and Bethany, working again with PVPC have identified a way to establish a Business Resource Portal for the website to support local businesses. This project may qualify for this funding, which would allow for a consultant to develop a resource page to help by businesses identify information and processes related to regulations and permitting.

Respectfully submitted,



Mary E. McNally
Town Manager