

Town Manager Report to the Board of Selectmen – Mon., April 27, 2020

Now entering week seven with Town Hall closed to the public and reduced presence within the building. Town Hall staff and other employees remain mostly positive, with many having expressed an eagerness to return to work. Our employees remain mostly productive though challenged in the new working environment. Many are doing project work from home, when they are not in the office and others are having calls and emails forwarded to their cell phones or home phones to continue to serve residents who come in looking for assistance.

Currently, the Governor's shelter advisory and non-essential work orders remain in effect until May 4, but there is some expectation that those orders will be extended at some point this week. Once those orders are lifted, they will likely be lifted with additional guidance to continue maintaining social distancing measures for some period of time, such as wearing masks in buildings, limiting the occupancy of buildings and other measures.

We'll be sure to share these measures publicly through the town's website and social media platforms as soon as we have them.

- COVID 19 webpage for Hamilton. The town has established webpage for COVID 19 information for Hamilton residents on our town website. Currently there is a banner at the top of the page that provides access to the page by clicking on it. Town Hall staff will continue to update and refresh the information on his page throughout the pandemic. The page includes all local health and Board of Selectmen orders issues through the pandemic and links to websites for information etc.
- In anticipation that the current pandemic may lead to a brief reduction in collection of various town fees, permits and other revenues, the administration and department heads have enacted a spending freeze and reduced unspent budgetary line items, to ensure that the town does not spend more than it takes in in the current FY 2020 year. Additionally, as we know that the town is being forced to spend resources in certain areas as part of our pandemic response and as those expenses were not intended in the FY'20 budget, we have requested and received approval for spending in excess of budget for key line items and departments that have had to ramp up their services in response to the COVID=19 public health crisis. Those departments include but are not limited to Public Health nurse, Police, Fire, Public Works and facilities. We are tracking these additional costs and will utilize any finding or receipts we receive from the state or federal government toward these line items as they are realized.
- The state continues to wrestle with new revenue projections for the state budget for FY'21. In anticipation that the continued closure of the economy in response to the COVID 19 pandemic will continue to impact the town's revenue streams and the economy in general, the administration has begun meeting with department heads to revise our FY'21 budget proposal downward. Those meetings will begin to include Finance and Advisory Committee liaisons this week, in the hopes that we will be able to conservatively develop a new FY'21 budget proposal in advance of any amended Annual Town Meeting schedule.
- This tumultuous period has also seen several positive developments as well. The Hamilton Foundation and the Accord Food Pantry, which both do wonderful work in the best of times, have stepped up their activities in helping to provide for the less fortunate

in our community during this time. Both Acord and The Hamilton Foundation are heavily dependent on volunteers to serve the residents of Hamilton and Wenham who require their assistance and both organizations continue to exhibit the best of our nature in seeking to provide food, clothing, and other vital assistance to residents who are being particularly challenged during this time.

In order, to continue to meet the needs of Hamilton's less privileged I'd like to urge those who have time to spare or resources to have to contact or connect with the Hamilton Foundation and Acord Food Pantry to make sure these organization have what they need to continue to help.

- We are exploring options to hopefully allow the town to consider a June 20, 2020 Annual Town Meeting. Bearing in mind that we may need to be prepared – and residents may feel more comfortable – with continued social distancing measures at Town Meeting, we are looking at the possibility of renting a tent and chairs for the football field behind HWRHS. We hope to have information ready for the BOS to consider at an upcoming meeting in May. Clearly, this would be dependent on the removal of the state's order against gatherings of more than 10 people and some kind of ability to seat town meeting members at least six feet apart under the tent. There will be more to come soon.
- While the town continues to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and simultaneously prepares for an eventual Annual Town Meeting, we are also working on other on-going projects behind the scenes. Some of those projects and where they stand are listed below:
 - The Department of Public Works and the Planning and Inspections Department participated in a virtual review of the Chebacco Road project with staff from the Department of Environmental Protection, which was established to partly confirm if DEP permitting would be needed for the pavement project, as well as discuss and get guidance on the underlying and associated environmental issues that are likely to come up.
 - The town received a shipment of 15 new, young trees from the Institution for Savings, which is now celebrating 175 years in business. IFS awarded new trees to every city and town here they have a branch located. For now the trees sit in a makeshift tree farm on the DPW lot behind Town Hall. We will arrange for a public acknowledgement of the gift with the Board of Selectmen, when we determine where and when to plant the first of the trees later this year.
 - The town has received its shipment of compost from Brick Ends Farms for town resident usage. As always there is a limited supply so we are asking each resident who comes to Town hall to pick up compost to limit themselves to one 5-gallon bucket per household.
 - The town has completed all of the paperwork that was needed and will soon be receiving a check for \$163,325 from FEMA, as part of the Bridge Street culvert project, which was completed in FY 2018. The \$163,000 is a reimbursement for an approved overage on the project and will balance the town's account on this line item. These were funds that had already been spent by the town and they now go back to the general fund.
 - Energy Manager Vicky Masone is completing the town's application to the Green Communities fund for grant awards in the coming fiscal year. Vicky and our department heads have identified a couple of projects that will help the town save energy and as a result also save money, if the projects are funded completed.

We'll keep you informed about the status of thru grant application and highlight the projects, since we know if they've been approved.

- One energy project that should begin to take place in the coming days or weeks is the installation of an electric charging station in the Town Hall parking lot, adjacent to the Town garage building. The facility is being built almost completely with grant funds and the town will only have a small annual fee to pay to maintain and keep the station active. This will be the town's first publicly available charging station and will allow the town to consider the purchase of EV vehicles for some town departments in the future.
- Finally, we continue to monitor with Recreation Director Sean Timmons the status of resources like the town's summer camp program and town pool. The Governor's decision last week to close all public schools to the end of the academic year and to also keep closed all child care and afterschool except those serving emergency workers and their families, means that the summer program will not begin until July at the earliest. We also continue to review the situation with the town pool, as the state DPH will be required to release guidance on how to open public pools, once the response to the COVI 19 pandemic abets. It is too early to say whether or when we will be able to open the pool for the summer months.