

2018



TOWN MANAGER REPORT

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It has been my privilege and pleasure to serve as Town Manager of Hamilton for the past 8 years. Together with committed community volunteers and an exemplary team of professional staff, the Town has made great progress on many fronts.

Some of the most noteworthy accomplishments include:

- **Resolving long-terms labor contract disputes.** In April 2010, several labor contracts were expired 1-2 years prior to my arrival and the Fire Department had been bargaining for their first employment agreement with the town for at least 5 years. Both the Police and Fire unions were in the process of filing for arbitration and overall employee-employer relationships were poor. Within a few months, expired AFSCME contracts were resolved, and the Police union had withdrawn their request for arbitration – that contract was settled a few months later.
- **Financial Accomplishments.** Town employees provide a tremendous service to the residents of Hamilton and operationally their service comes at a bargain for the high quality of work that they do. Hamilton’s per capita spending on services is some of the lowest on the North Shore among peer communities and tax rate growth (excluding cost of education) has been very low. Through strong fiscal management and tight operational controls Hamilton has accrued healthy financial reserves that will ensure financial and operational stability for years to come. Achieving and maintaining Standard & Poors “AAA” Bond Rating for the past 4-5 years is no small accomplishment and further evidences the town’s strength. With the cost of health insurance skyrocketing, I worked closely with employees through their insurance advisory committee and with the Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee to migrate from a top tier health care plan. This effort reduces health care costs by more than \$110,000, and the town was able to offset increased deductible costs to employees by providing 25% of the savings back to them for the first two years.
- **Landfill Capping Project.** While the Hamilton Landfill was closed for more than three decades, the landfill remained uncapped and the town was under increasing pressure by regulatory agencies to complete the process. If the town delayed in pursuing this project, it would likely have been confronted with an administrative consent order that would compel the town to cap the landfill under current standards which call for a costly synthetic membrane. By acting quickly, the town was able to install an earthen cap for \$2 million – a far cry from the cost of a synthetic option.
- **Energy Efficiency Projects.** Hamilton should be proud of its Green Community status and associated efforts to conserve energy and reduce costs. Projects that fall into this category are improvements to lighting and upgrades to heating and electric which include state-of-the-art controls on boilers in town and school buildings. Another key project was the replacement of the streetlights to newer LED technologies – the \$500,000 cost of this project was funded through a state grant, and reduced annual costs to the town of approximately \$40,000. A 4-5 acre solar array project [at the landfill] is expected to be completed by the end of 2018 and anticipated annual revenues of more than \$30,000.

- **Patton Park** is true gem and community asset. I enjoyed working with the Hamilton-Wenham Mothers Club and the Patton Playground Committee on the amazing improvements to the play area, with the Little League and Flag Football league on the many improvements and programming that they provide. And of course, working with our partner town, Wenham, a new \$2 million community pool opened last year. Memories of the towns' youth enthusiastically pedaling their bicycles to the pool continues to bring a smile.
- **Water Enterprise.** With Town Meetings strong support significant improvements to the water distribution system have occurred. At the start of the program, roughly 1/3 of the water mains in town averaged 60-70 years in age and with perhaps eighty percent of the \$10 million in bonds expended, the town has made considerable progress in modernizing and upgrading the system
- **Website/Social Media.** The Town has made considerable strides in providing greater and timelier access to information. Over the past 18 months, a new, award-winning website was rolled out, and social media is used on a daily basis to push important news and information out to the public. A new public address system, CodeRED, was rolled out in the past year, and the Town has only scratched the surface in terms of utilizing this powerful technology to keep residents informed.

There has been considerable debate over the past few years regarding construction of affordable housing and by all appearances this debate will carry on for several more years until true progress can be made toward reaching state mandates. Challenging topics can and do bring out the best and all too often worst in a community and the debate over affordable housing in Hamilton has certainly done both. The Town has passionate residents, agreement is not always reached. But know that I have listened and have made decisions based on input from the Board of Selectmen and the community, with state/legal mandates at the forefront, with best practices in town management as a guide, and the best interest of the Town of Hamilton foremost in my heart. Recent deliberations have posed personal challenges for me and it is unfortunate a few weak individuals can hide behind anonymous mailers filled with misleading and flat out false information in order in an attempt to prevail in their own self interests. The true casualties to such a campaign are, unfortunately, the department directors and employees of the town whom work tirelessly to provide services and programs that enrich the quality of life for Hamilton residents. To them I owe a debt of true gratitude and thanks for their professionalism and aplomb.

Key activities/projects for the Council on Aging: March 28, 2018

- Director attended Senior Care Breakfast at the Gloucester House March 16th. to support Meals on Wheels on Cape Ann. SeniorCare currently delivers Meals on Wheels to more than 550 elders each day. Annually, this means 136,216 home-delivered meals and 39,250 meals served at dining sites in Beverly, Gloucester, Essex, Manchester, Rockport, Ipswich, Hamilton, Topsfield, and Wenham.
- Director attended meeting at the Beverly Senior Center March 22nd. Local COA Directors met to discuss the anticipated loss of SNAP benefits and the changes to the regionalized SNAP application in Essex County. In addition, we confirmed the protocol and deadline for being reimbursed for food loss for those on SNAP who suffered a loss of food during our recent extreme weather in the last 30 days.
- Selectman Jeff Hubbard will be conducting a Great Estates tour on May 22nd. at 3 or 4 estates in Hamilton in partnership with Ann Chivakos, the COA Trip Coordinator. The tour will end with lunch at Myopia Hunt Club.
- The COA Director will be going to the Ipswich “Y” to meet with Director 3/28 to discuss a discounted and/or per diem and/or per activity rate for Hamilton seniors. Stacey Verge, a member of the Hamilton COA Board will also be in attendance.
- The COA will be reaching out to seniors who are known to not have a cell phone. During the last three extreme weather events when power went out, we had no way to contact at-risk seniors to let them know the Day Shelter at the Senior Center was open, had heat and food. Free cell phones are available for those who meet financial income guidelines.
Update: The COA is compiling information for no and low cost phone services for seniors. Also, will be discussing with COA Board members at April meeting a program that we are tentatively calling “Adopt A Senior” that would allow someone to “adopt” a senior to be included on their monthly phone bill for a minimal cost.
- Director visited Brookdale Assisted Living March 23rd. for a tour of the facility with the Managing Director. Of importance was whether or not Brookdale has the ability to take at-risk seniors into their facility during loss of power at a senior’s home. The COA Board will be tasked with compiling a list of nursing homes and assisted living facilities who will be able to accept seniors on a 24 hour basis during extreme weather events.
- Director attended a seminar March 28th at the Essex County Jail to discuss mail scams targeting seniors. Of particular concern is the change-over from the current Medicare cards which include the person’s Social Security number to a new card based more on a drivers’ license. Scam operators are targeting seniors posing as a Medicare representative to get personal information from the senior.

➤ **Annual Town Meeting/FY19 Budget**

Update: The Finance department main focus continues to be on the fiscal year 2019 budget and preparing for Town Meeting.

➤ **OPEB - Actuarial Study**

Update: Continued to work with Odyssey Advisors in providing all necessary information for the preparation of a new OPEB Actuarial Study.

➤ **HR Connections**

Update: Continued to work with Integrated Benefits Group, a benefits and HR consultant, in providing census information and other materials as requested.

➤ **Fund Reconciliations/Cash Reconciliation**

Update: Worked on various fund reconciliations (i.e. capital projects and grant funds) and prepared monthly cash reconciliation.

➤ **Financial Policies**

Update: The Division of Local Services (DLS) recently provided the Draft Financial Policy Manual which is currently being reviewed by the Finance Committee and Board of Selectmen.

FIRE PREVENTION:

INSPECTIONS: The following inspections were done between March 14 & March 28.

- 3 – Smoke Detector/CO
- 1 – Re-inspections
- 1 – Oil Tank Inspection
- 2 - Dumpster Permit
- 2 – Plan Review

CAR SEATS:

They did 3 car seat installations. We have 3 Firefighters that are certified to install car seats.

OPEN BURNING:

Open Burning Season started January 15 and will end May 1.

25 Burning Permits sold, 151 to date.

CALL FOR ASSISTANCE:

33 Total 296 since Jan. 1

18 EMS 95 since Jan. 1

15 Fire Incidents 201 since Jan. 1

- Automatic Alarm – 1
- Building Fire – 1 (2 Alarms) 146 Gregory Island Rd. – Mutual Aid received
- Water Problem – 2
- Public Service – 5
- Smoke – 1
- Motor Vehicle Accident – 2
- Lock in – 1 (Child locked in bathroom)
- Mutual Aid Given – 2 (Engine 3 Essex Line Boxes)

TRAINING:

EMS - EMS Protocol Training

FIRE – Drafting and hose deployment.

OSHA MANDATE: Gov. Baker signed the OSHA Bill in to law. It is going to mean more training, record keeping, and equipment. Municipalities have until February to conform. This will affect all Departments, especially Fire, Police, and DPW.

Staffing levels:

Planning – 1 FTE
Building – 1 FTE; 4 PTE
Health - 1 FTE; 3 PTE
Con Com – 1 PTE
CPC – 1 PTE
Minutes – 2PTE
Wts & Measures – 1PTE

Dept Issues:

Continue departmental budgeting process for FY19 budget as necessary.

Evaluating department filing practices. Developing strategy for scanning of departmental records based on Secretary of State Requirements.

Preparing and retrieving response materials regarding Citizens Petition article directed at Mixed Use provision in Zoning Bylaw as approved October 22, 2016.

In connection with the FY 2019 departmental budget, the largest single additional request from our collective department includes a recommendation for full time Building Inspector staffing hours which would be shared with Wenham. We are continuing to address non-permitted construction work taking place in town and how to address.

Ongoing and Pending Projects / Concerns:

Continue addressing various demands generated by four separate legal actions involving the Planning Board.

Working to obtain information from Varsity Wireless regarding their evaluation of the Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary Steeple. I have been advised that the space within the steeple was simple not adequate dimensionally to accommodate the amount of equipment needed by cell service carriers such as Verizon so they considered the space not acceptable.

Participating in affordable housing related matters and involvement ongoing with HAHT, et al.

Review draft scope of services for Owners Project Manager (OPM) work to Town Hall Committee for Town Hall project (with the benefit of approved CPC funding) in order to allow project to get started. Continued work to attempt to coordinate information, process and Committee involvement. Met with committee to review OPM scope on March 21, 2018 to talk through the scope of services and next steps. Advised others that the Chair had resigned and that the vacancy needed to be advertised so a new member could be added.

Continue participating in the Patton Homestead property future to the extent possible. Assist architectural team in project input and review of conceptual planning. Delegated Code Analysis review to Building Inspector for input – he is currently engaging Architect on project assumptions and specifics.

Assist in pursuit of grants as needed. Met on March 27 to discuss design refinements and reactions to the conceptual design as prepared by architectural team, Spencer & Vogt. We discussed process and approaches for bidding the project.

Planning Board Related:

Advising multiple other communities as to Hamilton's prior voting and approaches to the zoning article (passed at November 4, 2017 Special Town Meeting) regarding the Recreational Marijuana Sales and Cultivation Ban.

With the Planning Board I continue to review and discuss the board's intentions as to potential future actions on various zoning articles and bylaw modification efforts. We have reviewed our attorney's diagnostic of the zoning bylaw and have (and are) discussing how to address remaining issues. Continue to work with zoning attorney on scope of work to continue adjusting zoning bylaw elements. Accessory housing is a topic which the board wants to pursue and consideration is underway. It will likely generate bylaw changes.

During the March 6, 2018 meeting the Planning Board declined to advance an article which was to eliminate the unenforceable Conservancy District (CD) Zoning Bylaw as the Open Space Committee objected and believe they can improve the bylaw text. The Board gave the Open Space Committee the responsibility of recommending tangible improvements to the CD bylaw by fall town meeting. Discussed the topic with BOS on March 19, 2018.

The Planning Board is considering "accessory apartments" which are currently allowed but with fairly stringent controls. Reviewing other community's approaches and bylaws regarding the topic.

Meet with developers and property owner representatives regarding various projects being pursued. Reviewing submission materials for Definitive Subdivision Application for 46 Winthrop Street. Reviewing materials for Abbreviated Site Plan Review (Planning Board submission) for Little League Bleacher Installation at Patton Park.

Staffing (Police):

- Full-time: Fully staffed at 13 officers.
- Part-time: Staffed with 7 Reserve Officers

Staffing (ECO):

- Full-time: Fully staffed at 4 dispatchers.
- Part-time: Staffed at 2 dispatchers.

Note: We continue to review resumes for a 3rd Part-Time Dispatcher.

Equipment Issues:

- N/A

Union Issues:

- No Union grievances or complaints at this time.
- Current Police contract expires on June 30, 2019.
- Current ECO Contract expires on June 30, 2020.

Miscellaneous:

- N/A

Upcoming Police Related Events:

- N/A

Community Policing Events:

- N/A

Administration:

1. DPW Truck Driver/Laborer

New: DPW received over 40 applications for the vacant Truck Driver/Laborer position in the Highway Department. The DPW has scheduled 4 interviews with the top candidates and plans to make a decision within two weeks.

Highway:

1. Roadway Clean up and Repairs

New: The Highway Department continues to perform roadside clearing of trees and debris following the storm events and winter season. On fair weather days the crews are out repairing roadways, filling potholes, fixing asphalt berms etc.

2. Town Hall Sidewalk

New: DPW has received quotes on replacing the asphalt sidewalk in front of Town Hall along Bay Road. Work will include resetting of the existing granite curb, and removal and replacement of the asphalt sidewalk between the entrance and exit of Town Hall.

3. Gravel/Dirt Roads

New: DPW is soliciting for quotes to reclaim and grade Chebacco Road, Winthrop Street, and Cutler Road. Reclaiming and grading of the three roadways is planned in April.

Buildings:

1. Town Hall Cupola Damage

Update: DPW is waiting on an architectural proposal from Structures North, an architectural firm that specializes in historical properties. The proposal will include design services to make permanent repairs to the Town Hall cupola as well as a construction estimate. DPW should receive a proposal within a few weeks. DPW has also filed a property and liability claim form to the Town's insurance company.

2. Public Safety Building Fence

Update: The DPW has received quotes on replacement of approximately 220 linear feet of privacy fence behind the Public Safety Building. The fence was damaged by the March 2nd and 3rd storm event. DPW has also filed a property and liability claim form to the Town's insurance company.

3. Patton Homestead Rose Trellis

Update: DPW was referred to Walter Beebe-Center at Essex Restoration, by the Patton Homestead design consultant, Spencer & Vogt Group, to provide a quote for the Rose Trellis reconstruction. DPW has also filed a property and liability claim form to the Town's insurance company.

4. Patton Homestead Rehabilitation Project

Update: With the completion of Task 1 Feasibility Study - Space Programming & Needs Assessment, the Town and Patton Homestead, Inc. gave the green light to Spencer & Vogt Group to begin design development of Phase 1A. Spencer & Vogt is also working on formulating a conceptual construction schedule for the Phase 1A construction which will also include potential uses of the property during construction activities.

5. Town Hall Preservation

New: The Town Hall Building Committee conducted a meeting on March 21st. The overall goal of this meeting was to discuss and finalize the Request for Qualifications for OPM Services. DPW has made all the revisions presented and has forwarded the document to Town Counsel for final review. Upon return, DPW will revise accordingly and start to advertise the request.

Water Distribution

1. Phase 3 – Water System Improvements

New: The Phase 3 Water System Improvements project will kick back off on April 9th. The contractor has approximately 50 more water services to install and tie over to the new water mains as well as a few key water main tie-in locations. Following the utility work the contractor will begin the roadway milling and overlay portion of the project. All streets that received new water mains are planned to receive a full width 2-inch mill and overlay. Essex Street and Chebacco Road will receive a half width 2-inch mill and overlay.

Water Treatment:

1. Water Treatment Plant

Update: The Town received a signed contract for the WTP upgrade project. The Town and engineering consultant are trying to schedule a pre-construction meeting in the beginning of April. We also plan to receive the contractor construction schedule for review prior to the pre-construction meeting.

Water Management

1. ASR

On-going: Begin compiling reports and data to complete the MassDEP Annual Statistics Report. Deadline is April 30th, 2018.

Summer Camp Dates

Due to the number of snow days we had to make an adjustment to the Patton Park Summer Program start date. The Parks Program will now start on Wednesday, June 27th, which will create a shortened (Wed-Fri) first week of camp.

Summer Employment

We are currently in the process of interviewing all prospective summer employees. All interviews are scheduled to be completed this week and we will be notifying everyone of their employment status starting early next week.

Pingree Park Tennis Courts

We are having a complete inspection and evaluation done to the courts this week. Recommendations on how to proceed as well as accompanying cost estimates will be provided as part of the evaluation. After we receive the report the recreation committee will discuss the findings and will report to the Wenham BoS at a future meeting.

Annual Town Meeting Babysitting

We have once again teamed up with the National Honor Society to offer babysitting during both the Hamilton and Wenham Town Meeting. The NHS will use the Recreation Center as the location for the babysitting program.

Summer Movie at the Park

We are teaming up with the Library to provide a free outdoor movie this summer at Patton Park. The date of the movie is TBA but we plan on having the event towards the end of July. Marketing Material will be distributed once a movie date and movie title has been selected.

The Clerk's office has been busy still getting the dog licenses out to the dog owner's and still continuing updating the annual census

Certifying papers for the candidate's running in the September State Primary

We had a voter registration from 8-8 on Friday March 16, 2018 for ATM & ATE

Preparing for ATM & ATE

Absentee Voting has started