

Town Manager Report to the Board of Selectmen

Monday, April 29, 2019

- A lot has happened since the last Town Manager Report on April 1. We had a successful Town Meeting on April 6, 2019, where the town approved the FY 2020 budget requests and passed several warrant articles, including three zoning changes. On April 11, the Town also had its annual election and two new members of the Board of Selectmen were sworn in and accepted their positions with a brief organizational meeting on Wed., April 24. Now, we begin the work of managing the town together for the next 12 months with a new board and a new set of expectations, based on the approved budgets.
- The town has also received notice that two of our longtime employees have decided to retire, with both Treasurer/Collector Cheryl Booth and Director of Assessing Tina Zelano retiring effective June 30, 2019. I look forward to working with both departments over the next two months as the town searches to find suitable successors to their positions and we thank them both for the many years of hard work and dedication they have given to the Town of Hamilton and its residents.
- Additionally, I was notified last week that Assistant to the Town Manager Anabela Batista has decided to accept an exciting new position in a new career field. I am saddened to see Anabela go, as she has been a huge help to me as I transitioned into my role in town, and I know that she will be missed as well by her co-workers in Town Hall. Anabela is one of those colleagues who is not just good at what she does, but she is very good at helping others excel and feel comfortable and it will be difficult to find someone who can fit that role in our organization. I wish her the very best in her future, for she and her family and though I will miss having her here, I know she will have great success in this next phase of her career as well.
- With the news of the two retirements in the Finance Department, Finance Director Marisa Batista and I are reviewing the announced re-organization of the Finance Department and we expect we will be making adjustments to that plan. The main purpose of the reorganization was to find a way to evolve the department for future operations, but with the recent announcement of personnel departures, we now feel it may be possible to accomplish the same goals with a realignment of duties and responsibilities. We will provide the Board with more information on that soon.
- The Town has also lost a longtime member of the community, former Hamilton Police Officer Edward Hopping passed away on April 23 at the age of 84. He was an officer in the town from 1969 to 2001. His funeral service was held last Saturday from First Church in Wenham. We extend our sincerest sympathies to his family and many friends.

- The town will be formally requesting bids for Senior Van service and Ambulance service beginning this week. Our existing contracts for those services expire at the end of June and Fire Chief Ray Brunet has worked with Town Counsel, our Council on Aging Director Mary Beth Lawton and myself to draft two separate procurement documents to ensure that there is no lapse in coverage for either of these two vital services.
- On May 19, the town is invited to an event on Railroad Avenue, to celebrate the local downtown shopping district. Railroad Avenue will be closed off between Bay Road and Willow St., for a portion of the day to allow residents to participate in a street fair that will feature more than 20 vendors, with a number of different attractions and events to promote the shops and businesses in our downtown.
- **Update on Town Manager Goals:**
 - Self-Sufficiency of the Patton Homestead – Patton Director Kaleigh Paré and I will be meeting with residents of the Patton Ridge tomorrow evening to discuss with them the town's goals to activate the Patton Homestead and attempts to derive some financial resources from the property. Our goal is to make sure test we are sensitive to the Homestead's neighbors and find ways to address any concerns they may have about increased activity at the Homestead, particularly for events. Additionally, Kaleigh and I will also be meeting with the Finance Committee on May 8 to discuss our proposed business plan and offer answers and get input on any items that may need to be adjusted in the plan. Kaleigh, Tim Olson and I have also received from the Patton consultants a plan for the activation of the stables, which we will be working to undertake very shortly.
 - Financial Policies and Stabilization Funds – Now that Town Meeting has passed, the Finance Director and I will begin working with the Finance Commission again in the coming months to renew this effort on which policies would be next to consider for Hamilton. However, I want to caution everyone that a chief concern as we do this is to make sure that we hire the full complement of employees for that department. The Finance Department has not been fully staffed since before I arrived in Hamilton and with the retirements of two key members of that department, it will be critical that we hire the rest of the positions in the department as soon as we can.
 - Chebacco Road/Well Exploration and Manchester – With the approval of the funding for the road paving project, the town will now be contracting with an engineer to complete the design, permitting and bid specifications. I will also be re-connecting with the town of Manchester to discuss the issues surrounding potential future use of the Manchester water source and determining the likely feasibility of that possible source.
 - Town Hall Renovations – The Town Hall Building Committee is working to finalize the concepts for development with the architects. To that end, they will be meeting with Town hall Department heads on Thursday, May 9 to confirm the proposals' building plans, ensure the size of offices and storage needs

calculations are accurate and workable and discuss other needs of individual departments. They will also be making an effort to get public feedback on the two options under consideration – Option 6 and Option 8, particularly about things like the community’s level of interest in keeping or changing the Grand Staircase or having an accessibility corridor (stairs and elevator) as an addition to the back of the building to free up more space inside the existing Town Hall.

Master Plan and Housing – The second of two public meetings is happening tonight at the same time as our Board of Selectmen’s meeting. The **Focus and Design of Public Forum #2** is to identify/clarify the overall vision and goals for housing in Hamilton and to consider potential strategy options. The consultants will present the results of the survey, as well as the results of the first public forum. They have designed interactive exercises that are intended to get public feedback and encourage discourse about the vision, goals, and strategies. They have created a matrix of the housing strategies recommended in the prior Master Plan and will circulate this to you to clarify what the status of each strategy now is. I will plan to have Patrick Reffet at an upcoming meeting to provide an update on that process and the outcomes. I also intend to be following up with MAPC, as I had already requested their assistance with developing a strategy for completing other element of a Comprehensive Master Plan update for the town. MAPC is currently working with us on updating our Hazard Mitigation Plan and developing/completing our Open Space and Recreation Plan. With those components and the Housing Master Plan and Housing Production (both required by the state) and underway, I want to develop a strategy for the Board to consider how to address other critical elements of a Comprehensive Master, such as an Economic Development Plan, Emergency Response Plan, etc., so that we will be able to provide the community with a cohesive plan for the town that respects the ideas, goals and sometimes competing interests of all involved.