

Town of Hamilton

Town Manager's Office

Town Manager Report to the Board of Selectmen Monday, September 20, 2021

I am pleased to be able to offer the following report on programs and initiatives that are on-going in the Town of Hamilton, as well as some updates on a variety of things that have happened since our last report.

Local COVID case counts amidst the Delta variant surge – The Town of Hamilton is currently tracking five active cases of COVID-19, that is down from two week ago when there were seven. Two of the current cases are in children aged two, twins, who were exposed together.

Approximately 73-percent of the town's eligible residents are now vaccinated. The highest number of unvaccinated people in the community remains in the 20-30 year old age group, which continues to be vaccine hesitant across all states, cities and towns.

By contrast, the town's employees are close to 95 percent vaccinated across all departments (not including schools).

The Hamilton Board of Health continues to recommend vaccination for all who are eligible to receive the vaccines and also is endorsing CDC and Mass. DPH guidance regarding masking when indoors or unable to practice social distancing, regardless of vaccination status.

Special Town Meeting at Patton Park on Oct. 23 – The town has determined that it is best to hold Special Town Meeting under a tent again on October 23, 2021. This time the tent will be set up on the Patton Park ball fields, because Hamilton-Wenham High School has a home football game on that Saturday.

We'd like to encourage residents to plan on being present at the Special Town Meeting, to consider a short list of important issues facing the town. The STM Calendar calls for the Warrant and Book of Recommendations to be mailed to voters the week prior, on Friday, October 15.

Latest progress on the cell tower – We have been fielding a number of calls recently from residents wanting to know when the cell phone tower will begin operating. As you know the Board of Selectmen granted a utility license to National Grid this past July to allow electricity to be run from Bay Road, across town hall property to the tower itself.

After some adjustment to the path for the electricity, to make sure that trees wouldn't become an issue in the future, the conduit was buried underground and National Grid has been in town this week to complete the connection of the conduit to the pole on Bay Road and to the tower in the DPW yard.

However, last week National Grid notified the town that though the license was sufficient for completing the work to connect power to the cell tower, National Grid will require a utility easement for the area where the conduit is buried, in order to energize the line.

Town of Hamilton

Town Manager's Office

Upcoming Mater Plan meetings – The Master Plan Steering Committee has several meeting dates coming up, as the Committee and the town's consultants begin the process of outreach into the community to gather input from residents.

The next scheduled meeting dates include Thurs., Sep. 23 at 6 p.m., Thurs., Oct. 14 at 6 p.m., Thurs., Oct. 28 at 6 p.m. and Sat., Nov. 13 time to be determined.

The Master Plan consultants participated in the HW Shop Local Fall Festival this past Sunday, with a booth and table, at which they sought input from residents visiting the fair.

North Shore Water Resiliency Task Force and SWMI grant – Senator Bruce Tarr's North Shore Water Resiliency (formerly Drought) Task Force met last Friday with representatives of several of our neighboring towns, including Hamilton, Wenham, Manchester, Ipswich, Essex, Middleton, Boxford and Topsfield as well as regional state legislators and the Ipswich River Watershed Association (IRWA), Salem Beverly Water Board (SBWB), Mass DEP and the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC).

The primary purpose of the most recent meeting was to discuss a \$100,000 legislative ear mark that Sen. Tarr and the regional legislators helped to secure to find a regional solution for the water resiliency issues in the Ipswich River Watershed.

Additionally, Sen. Tarr offered strong support for a Sustainable Water Management Initiative (SWMI) grant that Hamilton will be applying for with the assistance of the town of Manchester by the Sea, IRWA and the support of the SBWB.

While the Senator's earmark will be used by MAPC to study the larger issues that complicate a regional approach to solving water sustainability issues in the region, the grant Hamilton is seeking will focus on specific challenges facing Hamilton's search for alternative water sources or regional approaches and will be used to provide data and information to the larger effort.

Bi-weekly e-newsletter to returns this week – The Town Manager's office is working on the next installment of the bi-weekly e-newsletter that we began distributing over the winter. Our goals is to have the next e-newsletter ready for distribution this Friday afternoon.