

Town Manager Report to the Board of Selectmen – Mon., February 24, 2020

- The traffic consultants studying the Sharon Road closure have completed their work. I reviewed the draft report with Chief Russ Stevens and Public Works Director Tim Olson today and have asked that they have the report finalized and submitted to you for the next meeting. Essentially, the study found that closing Sharon Road at the Asbury Street side would have fewer impacts on traffic flow and public safety and would be the easiest to accomplish. The Salter Bus company had been consulted and actually had a large issue with its ability to serve the Sharon Road neighborhood if the road were to be closed from the Highland Avenue side. If you will recall, the Board has already voted to close one end but were awaiting a report from a traffic consultant to determine which end of the street to close. Based on the draft report, our police and public works will be preparing to reinstall the temporary road closure barriers in the next few weeks, while we formalize a plan for the permanent closure of one side of that street. I have also asked Chief Stevens to contact the neighborhood and offer to host a community meeting to discuss the findings of the report before the road is permanently closed.
- We are continuing to work with consultants to conduct a study of the parking and traffic environment in the Willow Street/Downtown District, as had been requested by the neighbors during the recent Planning Board process. To this point, I have had had two consultants offer to do the work studying the parking issue, and we are asking a third to look at parking, as well as traffic flows and signage. I hope to have a quote from the third company next week and be able to move forward with initiating the study by mid-March.
- An update on our progress working with the Asbury Grove regarding its seasonal water usage. Since the last time this issue appeared on the agenda with the Board, Tim and I had been working to develop a plan for how to segregate the seasonal usage as much as possible through the master meter. The Grove has applied for a permit to install a sub-meter or separate meter for the pool usage, and we have learned that there are three year-round homes are also currently being served by the seasonal master meter. We have asked the Grove leadership to make arrangements to separately meter those three year-round homes and separate it from the seasonal meter as well. I am also scheduled to meet later this week with representatives of the Grove Board of Directors and have offered to attend a full board meeting to discuss some of the issues associated with changing the billing infrastructure. It is important to recognize that this has been a long-standing billing practice that has been on-going in town for many years. From the town's perspective, there is much we don't know about the Grove's water infrastructure, and as much as this has come up as an issue about the tiered rate structure or number of water infrastructure fees, it is also about being able to ensure the integrity of the water system within the Grove and across the town. I am hopeful that the Grove's Board and the town can agree to a solution before the fourth quarter of the billing calendar.
- I wanted to officially notify the Board of Selectmen that we are looking at the possibility of asking you to vote to withdraw from the Eastern Essex Veterans District within the next month. As some of you may know, we began looking to see what our options are for providing a high level of veterans services to our local residents a few months back, in part due to the high level of cost associated with being part of the eight town Eastern

Essex District. After several discussions with neighboring communities and Veterans Services Officers, as well as a candid, informal meeting with some of the leadership of the local American Legion Post, we have entered discussions with the Veterans Service Officer out of Gloucester, who also serves Manchester and Rockport in a regional district. All three communities have agreed to allow Hamilton to join their district through an Intermunicipal Agreement (IMA), which is being drafted by Gloucester now. The service district with Eastern Essex was established under Massachusetts General Laws in the 1960s or 1970s, and there is no formal agreement in place. The Board would be required to take a vote to leave the district at least 60 days before the start of the new fiscal year. However, out of courtesy to the other communities in the District, I have previously made the other communities aware that we were looking at the possibility of leaving. Assuming we have an acceptable IMA to present to you at an upcoming meeting, I may be asking you to take a vote to allow us to exit the Eastern Essex and join a region with Gloucester, Manchester, and Rockport.

- A screening committee of six people has begun first-round interviews with several candidates that applied for the Regional Human Resources Director position to serve Hamilton, Manchester, and Rockport. The committee will choose two candidates to put forward as finalists. We are still planning to have the new Regional Human Resources Director on Board this Spring.
- Recreation Director Sean Timmons has confirmed with the National Honor Society that there will be babysitting offered at the Recreation Center on Saturday, April 4, to allow parents of small children the opportunity to attend Annual Town Meeting. We have also been made aware of an effort among some youth sports parents and coaches to ensure that there is no conflict on April 4, involving youth sports in the town.
- The nominating period for town elections has closed, and there are currently three seats with no candidates. The soon to be vacant seats are for a two-year term on the Planning Board, a three-year term on the Board of Library Trustees and the Housing Authority. According to Town Clerk Sharon George, this will cause the election workers to likely have to count write-in votes to determine winners for these seats. In the coming weeks, I will work with the Town Clerk to develop information about the upcoming election, so that residents know the process for writing in a candidate to an uncontested election and how many votes will be needed for a write-in candidate to fill the seat.
- I attended the CATA Board meeting this morning, representing Hamilton. Previously, CATA Manager Felicia Webb had met with me and other stakeholders in Hamilton and had agreed that we'd be rolling out service to the currently "unserved" communities, for which the town had previously had service first. Over time, we will slowly expand that service area. According to Felicia this morning, she hopes to be able to start serving communities like Danvers, Peabody, and Salem in April and to hopefully also start to plan for a once or twice per month trip into the Boston medical campuses as well later in the year. During this time, the Beauport service covered under the existing contract would continue until we can roll the services up together.
- Also, from the Town Clerk, the **Presidential Primary** will be held on **Tuesday, March 3. Early voting** in the Presidential Primary will be held in the Memorial Room at Town Hall during the daytime hours from **Monday, February 24 through from 8:30 am, to the close of business on Friday, February 28.**