

Town Manager Report to the Board of Selectmen – Mon., September 14, 2020

Public Works – Things have been busy at the DPW and water buildings. Phase 4 water distribution improvements are getting ready to start on Forest St., Village Lane and Beech St. This is the final phase of the water main replacement program that was started with a Town Meeting appropriation several years ago.

Another water project that is on-going involves the approved plan for a pre-treatment system at the water plant. Conceptual designs of the new pre-treatment facility, which will be added to the water plant, are underway and we are hopeful that the design will be done in the coming weeks.

Additionally, all 2019 roadway improvement projects have been completed, which included new sidewalks along Linden St. and School St, as well as the roadway paving that was completed earlier this year.

The DPW has also applied for the town's first Complete Streets Improvement project, which, if successful, will help the town make roadway, sidewalk and crosswalk improvements at the intersection of Asbury Street and Highland Avenue. This intersection was identified in the priority planning phase as the most critical roadway intersection in the town and one that could make dramatic improvements to the safety of all using the intersection.

Senior Center – In the photo to the right, resident Claudia Brown is receiving a new iPad from the Hamilton Wenham Rotary Club, as part of the club's new program to help combat social isolation among the senior population in town amidst the pandemic.



The Hamilton Wenham Rotary Club has pledged to donate 20 iPads to seniors in Hamilton and Wenham. The devices will allow seniors to interact socially with friends and family members and participate in virtual programs. Ms. Brown was the first resident to receive an iPad last week. Mary Beth Lawton and the Hamilton Generals for Generations program will also support this generous Rotary Club donation by providing training on how to use iPads to the seniors who receive them.

Pictured above are George Beilin, Chairman of the Rotary Club's Committee to Combat Social Isolation, HW Rotary Club Vice President Mike MacDonald, Rotary Club President Chief (Ret.) Phil Stevens, Ms. Brown, COA Director Mary Beth Lawton, Generals for Generations students Carter Glovsky and Morgan Glovsky and Wenham COA Director Jim Reynolds.

Town Finances – The town received an email notification from the Department of Revenue this week that, based upon submitted reports, the town has a free cash balance of \$3,343,823 and Enterprise Fund retained earnings of \$716,785. DOR stated that certification letters will be mailed soon.

The Free Cash number of \$3.3 million is higher than last year and I want to credit our department heads and Finance Director Marisa Batista for identifying budget areas where we could slow or halt spending on during the Pandemic lockdown. I would also like to thank our residents as property tax collections during the pandemic were not far behind the annual average.

With all of the uncertainty the town was facing, particularly from March to June, our department heads and staff worked to identify savings in the FY'20 budget in order to protect against a possible revenue shortfall. As a result of this effort, some projects and programs that had been planned for FY'20 did not occur.

At the same time, and against a backdrop of rising unemployment and anxiety due to the start of a recession, the property owners of Hamilton largely continued to meet their responsibilities, which meant that funds that we were authorized to spend were able to fall to our bottom line. It is our hope to use this prudent fiscal management to our advantage as we begin what will be a very challenging FY'22 budget preparation.

Mask Up Hamilton – I will be working with a Marblehead graphic design company, Flat Rock Creative, on a Mask Up Hamilton campaign designed to remind our residents, business owners and visitors of the importance of following CDC and DPH guidance about safe social distancing and disinfecting during the coming autumn and winter cold/flu seasons.

Flat Rock has developed a very unique set of images and references for Marblehead and we are hoping they will be able to do the same here in Hamilton, in an effort to remind people, in a fun and creative way, that taking precautions is as much about helping others feel comfortable as it is keeping ourselves safe.

This project will be funded through CARES Act money and should be able to be rolled out in just a few weeks.

Successful First Flu Clinic – While we are on the subject of flu season and safety, I'd like to remind residents that medical professional are recommending that everyone get a flu vaccine this year due to the potential double threat of a rise in COVID-19 cases and a potentially difficult flu season. There is also some medical evidence to suggest that the flu vaccine may provide at least some protection against COVID-19, as it could heighten the body's immune system at a time when it will be needed.

To that end, the Hamilton Public Health Nurse, the Medical Reserve Corps and the Hamilton Fire Department worked together on a very successful first flu clinic with the help of AFC Urgent Care of Beverly, administering more than 80 flu vaccines to Hamilton employees and employees of the Hamilton Wenham Regional School District.

The employees were offered access to the first flu clinic, due to the type of vaccine that was available and the re-opening of schools. The Health Nurse is currently working on plans for the annual senior flu clinic as well as a flu clinic open to the public. Details will be announced as those events are finalized.

Gordon Conwell Task Force – With the recent departures of several members of the previous Gordon Conwell Task Force, due to their departures from others town committees, I have asked Selectman Jamie Knudsen and Planning Board member Rick Mitchell to serve with David Smith and Dave Thompson on the Gordon Conwell Task Force and continue to meet with and work with the Seminary on building up the relationship between the town and the Seminary and to continue to advise me on negotiations and collaboration with the Seminary leadership. I thank

them both for the agreeing to this assignment and look forward to working with them in the coming months.

Town Meeting Voting “Clickers” – The town has received confirmation from the state that the purchase of these clickers is allowable under the CARES Act funding and we are pursuing a collaborative procurement, along with the town of Wenham, to purchase 750 vote counting machines for Hamilton and 500 for Wenham. The winning bidder will provide a demonstration at the upcoming Special Town Meetings in each town, and the machines will be sequentially numbered 1-1,250, so that we can share the machines for instances when we anticipate larger than normal Town Meeting attendance. Thank you to Tim Olson for managing the procurement for us.