

Town Manager Report


Town of Lunenburg- January 5, 2021





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Announcement on Existing Vacancies:

The following is a list of vacancies on the following committees:

- Architectural Preservation District Commission (1 vacancy)
- Cultural Council (1 vacancy)
- Historical Commission (1 vacancy)
- Zoning Board of Appeals (1 Associate vacancy)

Interested persons can find application forms on the Town Website and completed forms can be sent to the Select Board's Office.

Long Term Plan of Parcels Sought by Conservation Commission to transfer the care, custody, and control of from Select Board to Conservation Commission(Current Business):

As this has been touched on but not fully discussed at a Select Board's meeting, I reached out to the Conservation Commission Chair Bob Pease and the Open Space Committee Chair Brandon Kibbe to request a list of properties under the care, custody, and control of the Select Board that either the Conservation or Open Space is currently interested in conveying from the Select Board to the Conservation Commission and if there were any future discussions that were planned on this topic by

those respective Commissions and the timeline of making these requests to the Select Board. I received a response from the Conservation Commission Chairman that my request for a list of vacant undeveloped properties currently under the care, custody and control of the Select Board is premature as the Open Space Committee is just getting started on this review. The OSC's source of information about town owned properties is the Assessor's database and there is work to be done with the Assessor, Tax Collector, and various town departments to clarify the status of vacant undeveloped properties that are listed in the assessors database as tax title, "owner unknown", "last known owner", or as being assigned to a town department such cemetery or public works. The OSC is not interested in conveying town owned properties to the Open Space Committee, rather, they are interested in evaluating town purchased properties, tax title properties, and owner unknown properties in order to develop recommendations for the Select Board to consider. For town purchased or tax title properties, these recommendations might include doing nothing, transferring them to one of the various commissions or boards that supervise land such as schools, cemetery, parks, or conservation, or even auctioning them off to return them to the tax rolls. For "owner unknown" property, where the town does not have clear title, it is likely any recommendation would be limited to transfer to the Conservation Commission or possibly the Parks Commission.

If the Open Space Committee is going to recommend transfer of parcels to Boards or Commissions, the Conservation Commission Chairman anticipates they would work first with the relevant Board or Commission in order to develop well reasoned and fully informed recommendations for the Select Board to consider. However, that means members of the Select Board could read about our interactions with such other Boards or Commissions in their agenda prior to the committee approaching the Select Board.

In terms of managing the flow of information, I would suggest that the Chairman of both the Conservation Commission and Open Space Committee update the Town Manager in advance of the meeting that the topic will be discussed and any relevant documents so I can inform the Board that land under the care, custody and control of the Board will be discussed at that upcoming meeting.

Encroachment on Town Parcels:

After it came to the attention of the Town that different town owned parcels were being encroached upon by different property abutters, we have worked with town counsel on drafting No Trespass Letters that have been sent to the property abutters that have their personal property on town land or in one instance, paved an area of town owned land. The parcels that have encroachment issues are:

- 51 Parmenter Road
- 671 West Street
- Fire Road 12 (Parcel ID 137-0012-00)
- 1625 Mass Avenue (Cowdrey Conservation Area)

We will continue to work with the abutters and town counsel to ensure that private property is removed and the land is restored to the original condition.

North Cemetery ADA Parking Lot Improvement Grant:

I applied for a grant through the Massachusetts Office on Disability to perform all the necessary preparatory work, paving, and installation of a sidewalk with handicap railing at North Cemetery and received notification that we were awarded \$32,000 for this project. This was a pleasant surprise, as

grant program. As part of the next steps for this project, the DPW Director will be working with an architect on the design to ensure it meets all the ADA requirements and the construction will commence in the spring.

Flat Hill Road Culvert:

The DPW Director contacted me today after a follow-up inspection performed by MassDOT on the Flat Hill Road culvert. Due to signs of settling and failure of the culvert on the southside of the bridge, MassDOT asked us to close the southside lane of the bridge until they release their written recommendations based on today's inspection. The DPW has put out barriers and signs will be installed shortly. Jersey barriers have been ordered and will be installed when they receive them. The worst case scenario is that MassDOT requires the Town to shut down the bridge entirely; the written report should be forthcoming with recommendations and any requirements. I will update the Board with any new information.

Flat Hill Road Drainage Update:

As a follow-up to the discussion on the Flat Hill Road drainage issues, the DPW Director sought a proposal from Brian Marchetti of McCarty Engineering to conduct a topographic, utility, and lot line survey of Flat Hill Road and Page Street within the project limits defined on the Conceptual Drainage Plan dated October 27th that was presented to the Board at the November 10th meeting. Mr. Marchetti has been engaged to perform this work as the next step in addressing the drainage issue on Flat Hill Road and our Conservation Administrator will perform the necessary wetland flagging that will be included in the Existing Conditions Plan. The survey work will commence next week and we can expect an Existing Conditions Plan in 4-6 weeks, depending on weather conditions.

Invitation for Bids/Request for Proposals:

- The Assistant Town Manager is currently handling the Invitation for Bids on Cleaning Services for our Town Facilities. Bids are due on January 14th.
- The Assistant Town Manager is working with the Executive Director at MassToss to develop a Request for Proposals for Solid Waste and Recyclable Material Collection and Disposal Services as our current contract with Casella expires on June 30, 2021. Based on recent webinars that both the Assistant Town Manager and I have attended with industry experts, I expect our costs for this service to increase exponentially.

Brooks House Request for Proposal:

In January of 2019 the Select Board met with the Architectural Preservation District Commission, Historical Commission and Historical Society and came to an agreed upon future use of the Brooks House, which was to sell the building, not the property, in order for it to be relocated while maintaining this historical building in town. The Select Board put forth an article at the May 4, 2019 Annual Town Meeting (Article 23) to convey the building, which passed. I will be asking the Assistant Town Manager to proceed with putting together a Request for Proposals to carry this out, unless the Board has an objection to this.

CARES Act funding update:

As part of the latest federal stimulus package, it has been relayed to us from the Executive Office for Administration and Finance that the deadline to use our CARES Act funding has been extended from December 30, 2020 until December 31, 2021. We have submitted roughly \$555,000 of which we were eligible for reimbursement for approximately \$434,000. Our total eligible amount of CARES Act reimbursement funding for the Town is \$1,027,771.

Pay As You Throw Bags- Supply at Retailers and Online Ordering:

As a follow-up to a public comment from a prior Select Board meeting about the lack of PAYT bags at the various retailers in town and whether there was an option for online ordering, I contacted our bag vendor, Waste Zero. They responded that there was one week that Hannaford had taken themselves off auto delivery but this had been corrected and Waste Zero also sent an order history and scheduled deliveries to retailers that indicated there should not be a shortage. I would ask residents to contact our office or the DPW if they encounter a problem with getting PAYT bags at the retailers that carry them.

In regards to purchasing them online, Waste Zero was able to set up an online bag ordering but this program ("Safer At Home") is not designed for high volume and is geared towards individuals that cannot get to the retail stores that sell bags. The packages are 2 Large bags totaling \$5.70 and there is a shipping fee of \$2.75/pack and it takes 3-5 business days for delivery. Please contact our office or the DPW for the weblink.

Department Updates:

Land Use: The 20 year population study performed by the UMass Donahue Institute has been completed. As part of their scope of services, Donahue will update the data once the 2020 census information is received. As a next step in the Master Planning process, the Planning Board will be proceeding with putting out a RFP to do the Services and Facilities component of a Master Plan next. This section identifies and analyzes existing and forecasted needs for facilities and services used by the public. In terms of major construction projects, the Tri-Town building is well underway.

Finance Director: The Finance Director reported that all the budgets have been updated in MUNIS to reflect the STM amendments and the tax rate was certified at \$17.12/thousand, which was a decrease in the tax rate due to a rise in assessments.

Treasurer-Collector: 3rd Quarter bills will be mailed before the end of December and will be due February 1st.

COA Director: The Governor approved a rate of \$12 per elder for FY21 and this will add \$25,000 to their budget. The COA has currently stopped indoor programming but is still busy doing their Drive Thru events. PJ Keating donated 100 stockings with goodies for seniors which will be all distributed before Christmas. The Sand for Seniors program is going well.

PACC Manager: PACC has done some programming with local events and is currently filming the Discovery Center for Citizen Engagement series and will be live streaming a LPS basketball game on the educational channel. PACC recently upgraded their server software that failed during a recent live meeting. PACC is also in the process of hiring a consultant to make recommendations on the layout and materials they will need for the proposed renovated space at the TCP Building.

Library Director: The Library Director reported that the Trustees have selected a consultant for their Long Term Strategic Plan that is expected to be wrapped up by the end of June. Having a long term strategic plan will make the Library eligible for grant opportunities through the State.

DPW Director: The DPW Director reported he has been busy since he started in November, including some early season snowstorms. He and the Facilities Director are currently working on getting a couple more quotes for the Senior Center and Ritter Kitchen Remodels. The Fuel Tank project is underway but has been delayed due to a delay in getting the tank materials. The tank is expected to be delivered in mid-January, barring any further delays. The contractor has completed as much of the project as possible and will be ready to go once the materials are delivered. The Pleasant Street Bridge project has been awarded to a contractor and he will notify town officials in advance of the detour going into effect. The Director reported there are new additions to the Capital Plan he requested, including the Page Street culvert, which they are continuing to monitor to make sure it does not become an emergency repair.

Fire: The Fire Chief relayed they received a \$15,000 grant for Turnout Gear recently. Rescue 2 is currently out of service as it was hit by another driver and is currently waiting to get fixed. The estimated time that it will be out of service is unknown and will be dependent on the ability to get parts due to delays from the pandemic. Fire Engine 5 also is currently out of service as an electrical shortage in the chassis wiring occurred but it was caught quickly but will be out of service due to the electrical damage done. The truck will be towed to the dealership this week and get an estimate for the repair at that time.

Assessors: The Principal Assessor reported that she is continuing to work with VISION on the conversion from the old CAMA software. Property assessments increased 4 1/2% and will be reflected in the 3rd quarter real estate bills. Forms of List for personal property accounts are being generated and will be sent out shortly.

Town Clerk: The Town Clerk reported that the General Code provided their updates for all recent town meeting votes that affected the Code, with the exception of the Stormwater article from the Special Town Meeting, as that will need to be approved by the Attorney General first. The Town Clerk is changing companies for census forms due to lack of timely response from the old company and those forms will be sent out in January. They will include a notice for Dog Licenses, which are due in April.

Meetings, Events and Other Announcements:

- The School Committee has a meeting on Zoom on Wednesday, January 6th at 6:30 p.m.
- The Conservation Commission has a meeting on Zoom on Wednesday, January 6th at 7:00 p.m.
- The Planning Board has a meeting on Zoom on Monday, January 11th at 6:30 p.m.
- The Park Commission has a meeting on Zoom on Monday, January 11th at 6:30 p.m.
- The Sewer Commission has a meeting on Zoom on Tuesday, January 12th at 5:00 p.m.