



TOWN OF UPTON, MASSACHUSETTS Office of the Town Manager

MEMORANDUM

TO: BOARD OF SELECTMEN
FROM: JOSEPH LAYDON, TOWN MANAGER
SUBJECT: TOWN MANAGER REPORT FOR AUGUST 22, 2023
DATE: AUGUST 22, 2023

The following is the Town Manager's Report for the August 22, 2023 Board of Selectmen Meeting.

DEPARTMENT UPDATES

Elder and Social Services/ Council on Aging - ESS Staff and the Town Manager met with Tri-Valley to renew the contract for meals on wheels in preparation of moving to the UCC in mid to late September.

Coffee with the Town Manager – I held “Coffee with the Town Manager” on August 18th at Millhaus to talk with residents on various issues. Topics that came up during the 1 and ½ hour session included cable/internet costs, electric aggregation plan status, completion of Hartford Ave TIP Project, pedestrian safety at Millhaus Crosswalk and Coach Road Crosswalk, speed of traffic in Town, and the new TIP Project.

Human Resources – A meeting with Town Employees on Tuesday, August 1st to kick off the Classification and Compensation Plan. Employees are reviewing existing job descriptions and completing Job Analysis Questionnaires, which will be submitted to GovHR for the Plan. HR Staff is also working to evaluate paid family and medical leave options. Municipalities are exempt from the Commonwealth’s requirements to provide paid family medical leave, so the Town vote must opt in to provide such leave. Since this will impact existing benefits, we must conduct an analysis of impacts to employees covered by collective bargaining agreements. A meeting with our issuance carrier is scheduled for next week to discuss a private party option.

DPW – Fiske Ave Water Main Project contract has been signed and a pre-construction meeting was held on Friday, August 18th. The contractor will be mobilizing the second week of September. DPW Staff will prepare a pamphlet to be hand delivered to each household that is on or around Fiske Ave. The contractor estimated the project will take 120 days to complete but anticipates initial work being done by the winter and loam and seeding being completed in spring 2024. DPW crew has been working to rejuvenate fields in preparation for fall sports.

Cultural Council – The FY24 Mass Cultural Council grant cycle will open September 1st and runs until October 19th. For more information visit <https://massculturalcouncil.org/local-council/Upton/>

Kiwanis Beach – With Kids@Play ending, the beach is now only open weekends.

Kiwanis Tennis/ Basketball/ Pickleball Court Resurfacing – I am working with the Recreation Commission to draft specifications and solicit quotes for resurfacing of the surface courts at Kiwanis. Draft documents will be completed this week to send to Recreation Commission for their review.

Kiwanis Soccer Field Lights – A meeting between town staff and representatives from MUYSA occurred on Monday, Aug 21st to discuss the installation of lights at the Kiwanis Soccer Field. MUYSA would like permission to install lights and then turn them over to the Town. They are tentatively scheduled to meet with the Board of Selectmen on September 5th to review their proposal.

Treasurer Collector’s Office – Courtesy letters for outstanding taxes for 2021, 2022, and 2023 have been sent out. Department is getting a good response to the letters. Assisting Finance Dir. with year-end.

Finance Department – Staff has completed statement of indebtedness and Community Preservation reports. Staff continues to reconcile cash and receivables and anticipates completion Mid-September to submit to the state.

Assessor’s Office – Staff worked with vendors to update Assessing and GIS software, GIS software has not been updated since 2019. Staff is working on calendar year 2022 sale verification and new growth reporting, which are due in September. Staff is also working on mailing the annual Chapter Land Application to the owners of 59 parcels that participate in the State Chapter Land Program. The state revised the due date for submission to December 1st in 2022.

PROJECT UPDATES

Housing Production Plan – A presentation of the final draft of the Housing Production Plan will occur at the August 22nd a joint meeting with the Board of Selectmen and Planning Board. Both the Board of Selectmen and the Planning Board must vote to approve the plan prior to it being sent to DHCD for approval.

Town Website Redesign – Staff continues to update content on the new website. We have been meeting internally to review issues with consistency and formatting and realized we need a different approach. Assistant Town Clerk Kathleen Bern has been tapped to be our website “guru” and will be coordinating consistency and formatting of pages. In addition, we are working with CivicPlus and our IT Department to build out staff and board/committee member modules that will enable us to track members and graphically display members on committee pages. To allow staff additional time to do this work, we are pushing back the “go live” date to October 1st.

Town Server Replacement – Annual Town Meeting approved \$60K to replace the server at Town Hall. With the cost of purchasing an on-premises server being higher than the amount authorized by Town Meeting, IT Staff and the Technology Committee are evaluating leasing equipment or moving to a cloud storage solution. Discussion of estimated costs will occur at the committee’s September meeting.

Upton Community Center (UCC) – UCC Building Committee continues to meet to review final close out punch list. With the downpour events we have been experiencing, the stone dust surface in the rear of

the playground has been damaged due to runoff. The Committee is working with the Landscape Architect to evaluate various solutions including installing additional drainage. The Building Committee is also looking to install fencing between the upper portion and lower portion of the playground. Fencing is also being proposed around the generator to protect it against vandalism.

UCC/ VFW Parking Lot – The Town and the VFW have a shared parking agreement that allows the shared use of the parking lot between both facilities. Nitsch Engineering has started their work to redesign the parking lot to install a new handicap accessible ramp near the Senior Center entrance of the UCC, to add handicap parking spaces, relocate EV make traffic one way, and adjust spaces to increase the total number of spaces. The revised plan will need to be reviewed by the Planning Board before it can be implemented.

UCC EV Charger – Installation of EV Charger will occur after the UCC parking plan has been altered and approved. The Town will be working with National Grid to secure and install the charger.

Municipal Fiber Grant – Work to connect all municipal buildings, including the beach and schools, is nearing completion. Switching gear had been backordered and was delivered to Town Hall yesterday. Contractors will be working to install networking gear to complete the project in September.

Parklet & Town Hall Parking Lot – Town Planner and DPW Director are reviewing draft plans reconciling the Town's parking reconfiguration plan and the work done by EDC and BSG for the parklet design plan. Next steps will be presentation of final plan to the Board of Selectmen.

Electric Aggregation – I recently requested an update from our Aggregation Plan Consultant, Colonial Power, on the status of the Town's Aggregation Plan with the Department of Public Utilities. Colonial Power confirmed that they do not know the status of the plan after they had submitted information back in May that was requested by DPU. They indicated that Upton was one of 23 municipalities that have a plan under review by DPU. I asked Colonial Power to come to our 2nd September or 1st October meeting to give the Board an update and they agreed they would attend a meeting. I have also asked Representative Muradian and Senator Fattman for their assistance in moving the Town's plan through DPU.

Police and Fire Paving – The paving contractor is currently repaving the Fire Department parking lot. The Police Station lot will be paved next week. The paving work is being funded through the Town's American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) allocation.

MassWorks/ Rt 140 Water & Sewer Extension Project – FY2023 Invoices were due to the state for final payment. Since the award of \$275K in the fall of 2022, the Town's consultants have completed plans through the 50% design stage. Expenses to date have totaled \$141,250. The engineers continue to work on the engineering plans. An article will need to be placed on the Fall Special Town Meeting Warrant to secure a permanent easement for a new pump station.

CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS

Governors Landing – The Conservation Commission issued an Order of Conditions at their August 9th meeting. The Zoning Board of Appeals filed its special permit decision with the Town Clerk on July 5,

2023 and the appeal period has expired. The Planning Board is scheduled to take action on the draft special permit decision at their August 22, 2023 meeting.

Upton Apartments/ 40B at 45-51 Main Street – Mass Housing issued a letter date August 11, 2023 granting the proposed 68 unit 40B site approval. The Mass Housing approval allows the applicant to file a Comprehensive Permit Application with the Zoning Board of Appeals.

Thank you.