



TOWN OF UPTON, MASSACHUSETTS

Office of the Town Manager

MEMORANDUM

TO: SELECT BOARD
FROM: JOSEPH LAYDON, TOWN MANAGER
SUBJECT: TOWN MANAGER REPORT FOR MARCH 5, 2024
DATE: MARCH 5, 2024

The following is the Town Manager's Report for the March 5, 2024 Select Board Meeting. Staff and Department Updates contained in this memo are from the March 5th Department Head meeting.

DEPARTMENT UPDATES

Town Manager

FY 25 Budget: The Town Manager met with the Finance Committee on February 28th. With major department budgets level funded, the Finance Committee will not be scheduling department reviews. They indicated that specific boards may be invited to talk more about long-term projects and funding needs. The MURSD school budget may be reduced from what is in the Budget Recommendation, but that reduction will offset anticipated increases in BVT and Norfolk Aggie.

2024 Annual Town Meeting Warrant: DPW Director, Police Chief, and Fire Chief will be attending the Select Board's meeting to provide an overview of their budget and to discuss capital articles that are on the Annual Town Meeting Warrant. Planning Board is still working on articles and a public hearing is scheduled for March 12th. The Town Manager said he anticipates a near final version to be prepared for the Board's March 19th meeting. The warrant will need to be executed the following week.

Contracts and Procurement: The Town Manager is seeking Select Board approval of a cleaning services contract for the Community Center and Town Hall. Contracted cleaning services will supplement existing custodial services and will be done in the evening after regular business hours. The Town Manager said he is finalizing procurement specifications and documents for the replacement of Fire Station HVAC control systems. Specifications were recently revised to be accessed by the same building management software as the Community Center.

Technology: IT Staff is implementing a new cyber security training program. Staff will receive an email from KNowBe4 with a link to an initial training module. All town staff is required to do the training.

Update of Town Street Lights: The Town Manager met with two members of the Green Committee to discuss next steps in a streetlight conversion/buyout program. Members are looking at how to reduce energy usage by converting existing streetlights to LED and the purchasing of fixtures. Cost to purchase fixtures is approximately \$157K after incentives and committee members are projecting a 3.5-to-3.9-year return of investment. Green Committee will meet again next week and will be inviting a vendor to speak about the purchase and conversion process.

Town Clerk – Town Clerk was not in attendance as today is the State Primary Day. Staff is working with CMRPC to implement changes to the Town's website.

Elder and Social Services/ Council on Aging – Tania Paparazzo introduced herself as the new ESS Director to the department heads and said that the community has been very welcoming. She said a "Meet the Director" is scheduled for Tuesday, March 12th. She also said that there are hours available for senior tax workers and if departments need any assistance, they should contact her.

Police Department – On March 31st there will be a road race starting at Nipmuc High School. He indicated he anticipates 400+ race participants since it is the run up for the Boston Marathon. He said that he has finished the sergeant promotion process and will be making a recommendation soon to implement.

Recreation – The Recreation Department continues to accept registrations for 2024 Kids@Play and beach season, as well as applications for employment. Interviews have been occurring over the last few weeks and into next week. The Rec Director is working to finalize the concert schedule and summer programs. The WooSox Town Takeover with Grafton, Upton, and Mendon is scheduled for Wednesday, August 28th and tickets are now on sale.

Finance Offices

Treasurer: Reminded employees to access their W2 through the Employee Forward website or App. Working with the town's tax title attorneys, letters were sent out to the owners of 40 properties in order to encourage payment. Staff is working with bond counsel on paperwork for Grove Street Bridge. She said she will work with DPW Dir, TM and Town Clerk on finalizing paperwork. The Treasurer informed departments that she is looking at replacing Town Debit cards with purchasing cards.

Assessors: Engineers for the Fiske Ave Project contacted the Assessing Dept for information about Memorial School and found that the land was originally donated by the Knowlton Family for a high school in 1850-1851. She said that there is new legislation entitled the [Municipal Empowerment Act](#), allows for towns to increase the a local option for meals tax from 0.75% to 1% and a new 5% local option for motor vehicle excise. Next mailing to Upton business owners is the Income and Expense (I & E) report, which will be mailed in April and due 60 days later.

Planning/ Code Enforcement – Building Inspector is away on vacation for the next two weeks and the Local Inspector is covering. Dept. has issued a determination on short-term rental and that they are not allows in Upton as a primary or accessory use. Dept anticipates this may result in appeals of the determination to the Zoning Board of Appeals. The dwelling at 12 Stoddard Street has been inadvertently demolished and the applicant is going through the Historical Commission's demolition delay process. The demolition has highlighted the need for procedural changes in the administration of the demolition delay process. The Planning Board is dealing with construction issues at Mayflower Drive. The Board is hearing from residents that the developer is not completing the subdivision. The Board is examining calling the bond to complete the road. The Board will also be scheduling a hearing to determine completeness of Azalea Lane. (Select Board will be holding a layout hearing as well following Planning Board hearing.) The 40B at 47 Main Street is ongoing and the ZBA could be closing the hearing in May with a decision anticipated in June. The Planning Board is finalizing a scope of services with RKG Consulting for assisting develop a MBTA Communities bylaw.

DPW –DPW Crews continue to work removing roadside debris and filling potholes. DPW Crews have also been working to rebuild the driveway for the Pratt Hill Water Tanks to allow for access to water tanks and to the cell phone carriers at the top of the hill and to prevent/mitigate against future washouts. Water Dept is trouble shooting discolored water on Mendon Street near Plain Street. Source appears to be coming from the

West River pumpstation and elevated magnesium ion the water. Traffic counters have been out on Christian Hill Road as part of the speed study authorized by the Select Board last fall. National Grid has brought in eight (8) tree crews to trim around wires and to reset lines due to installation of new poles. They are parking at Kiwanis and will be in town for about 4 weeks.

Conservation – The Commission has issued order of conditions for the Grove Street Bridge and the Governors Landing Water/Sewer Infrastructure Project. The Commission has also changed its meeting format to webinars due to consecutive Zoom-Bombing occurrences. It appears to have resolved the issue.

Human Resources – A mandatory harassment training has been scheduled with two dates for employees to choose to attend. The first session will be on March 19th at 9 am and the second March 21st at 2 PM. The Insurance Advisory Committee met recently to examine existing plans and usage. Insurance Rates are going up in FY25 by 10%. The IAC is looking into a new dental option that would include orthodontic benefit. Plan changes are not being proposed now but may be needed in FY2026.

Board of Health – Staff is finalizing approvals for Precision Auto and the remaining issue is the modification of the stack. The owner has agreed to modify the exhaust stack and send a photo of the work to DEP for approval. CDC has released new Covid new guidelines. People with Covid does not need to quarantine if they are fever free for 24 hours. It is still encouraged that people wear a mask. Covid is now considered a respiratory illness and grouped with other illnesses like the flu. Hazardous Waste Day is scheduled for July 27th. Staff continues to review new septic designs and address existing septic system issues.

Library – The Library Director say the warm weather has brought a significant increase in playground usage. The Library has a lot of art and cultural programs slated for March and April.

Thank you.