



TOWN OF UPTON, MASSACHUSETTS

Office of the Town Manager

MEMORANDUM

To: SELECT BOARD
From: JOSEPH LAYDON, TOWN MANAGER
Subject: TOWN MANAGER REPORT FOR APRIL 2, 2024
Date: APRIL 2, 2024

The following is the Town Manager's Report for the April 2, 2024 Select Board Meeting and reflects various updates and discussion at the April 2nd Department Head Meeting.

DEPARTMENT UPDATES

Town Manager

FY 25 Budget: The Town Manager met with the Finance Committee on March 27th and will meet with them again on April 3rd to review final changes to the FY 2025 budget.

2024 Annual Town Meeting Warrant: DPW Director, Police Chief, Fire Chief, and Town Manager attended the Capital Budget Committee's Meeting on Monday, March 25th. The Committee voted to support all capital articles in the May 2nd Annual Town Meeting Warrant. The final draft of the warrant is being reviewed by the Select Board for approval and posting.

Contracts and Procurement: The Town has published a Request for Quotes for the replacement of Fire Station HVAC control system. A Site visit is scheduled for Wednesday, April 3, 2024. Quotes are due Thursday, April 11, 2024. Staff anticipates the execution of a contract with the winning bidder will be on the Board's April 16th agenda for approval.

Technology: Town Server Upgrades went live last week with migration from older server to new occurring on Monday, March 25th.

Town of Upton Annual Scholarship: The applications for the Town of Upton Annual Scholarship are available on the Town's website. Complete applications must be returned to the Select Board's Office by noon on Thursday, April 25th. Visit the Town's Scholarship Page on the Town's website for more information.

Town Clerk – Staff is attending a Town Clerk training session this week to learn more about security around elections. For the Annual Town Election, at least one person has submitted papers for each elected board seat. Select Board and Planning Board are the only contested races. Candidates' night is scheduled for April 24, 2024, at the Community Center. Staff will be mailing out over 1,300 ballots for the local annual election. The increase is due to the availability of early voting as an option. In the past, approximately 800 would vote in the local election.

Elder and Social Services/ Council on Aging – The Office of Worcester County District Attorney was at the Upton Community Center today to present Scams Targeting Older Adults: A presentation informing older adults about active scams. The presentation will be available on the Town’s Cable Channel (UCTV Public 192) and on the Town’s YouTube Channel. The ESS Department is providing assistance to the Police Department to implement a Silver Alert Program. The program helps to identify people with dementia who have wandered or become lost and return them to safely to their homes. A Volunteer Luncheon is scheduled for Friday, April 19, 2024 at the Community Center from 1 PM to 3 PM. Josephine McLaughlin, a valuable member of the Upton senior community and Upton Council on Aging, passed away at the age of 93 on March 27th. Josephine was a member of the COA for over eight years and a volunteer for many more.

Police Department – Officers are working to complete their annual in-service and firearm training.

Recreation – Employment Applications are no longer being considered for Kids@Play for the 2024 season. One hundred and twenty-eight applications have been received and staff has been and continue to conduct interviews to fill positions. Athletic Fields are open for the spring season. Concert schedule has been set for the summer and staff is working to execute contracts.

Finance Offices

Treasurer: Treasurer’s Office is preparing the annual longevity and elected board stipends for the end of the month. Treasurer’s Office will also send departments a timeline for submitting employee action forms for processing in advance of July 1, 2024. The Treasurer informed departments that she will start rolling out new purchase cards to departments and schedule trainings on processing invoices and transactions. The new purchase cards will replace the Town issued debit cards.

Assessors: Assessors completed processing 74 abatements. Total value of the abatements was approximately \$100K and was covered by the Assessor’s Overlay Budget. All Property Exemptions were processed and completed and are included in 4th quarter property tax bills. There are approximately 10 sold units of 62 units in the new Cobbler’s Creek condo complex, and all will be receiving Supplemental Tax bills for Fiscal Year 2024. Upton Ridge condo complex has been completed and the remaining 6 units that were completed after July 1st, 2023, will be issued a Supplemental Tax bill for Fiscal Year 2024.

Land Use & Inspectional Services

Planning: Four (4) zoning articles have been proposed by the Planning Board for the Annual Town Meeting Warrant. The articles propose to insert or amend language for a solar overlay district, 5G – Small Cell Technology, Inclusionary Zoning Bylaw, and amending uses permitted within the Upton Center Business District. The Planning Board has executed the contract with RKG, the consultant that will assist in the development of a plan to comply with MBTA Communities legislation.

Conservation: The Conservation Commission will hold a public hearing on April 10th for the proposed amendments to the stormwater bylaw and stormwater regulations.

Code Enforcement: Staff continues to deal with complaints associated with short term rentals, two-family dwellings, and non-conforming uses. Many are located on Crockett Road where seasonal camping lots have been developed into year-round housing and summer rentals.

DPW –DPW Crews continue to work removing roadside debris and filling potholes. DPW Director is working with Town Counsel to finalize the acquisition of the easement for the Milford Road pumpstation authorize by 2023 Special Town Meeting. Environmental permitting continues for the replacement of Grove Street Bridge.

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 – A new Community Health Worker has been hired by the Blackstone Valley Health Partnership, which Upton belongs to and has meet with ESS to discuss where this new person can help. 144 West River Street has halted their development plans and are not moving forward with the new single-family structure. The owner is now looking at using the existing structure and existing septic system, which passed Title 5 inspection. Staff said that no further earth work is contemplated. The Director of Land Use & Inspectional Services indicated a new building permit for a garage/barn has been submitted to the department, but review has not commenced.

Library – The Library Director noted that there is increased interest in renting the Community Center for birthday parties with one occurring over the weekend and two more scheduled this month. Passport activity has doubled from 15 to 20 per month to more than 30 per month.

Human Resources – Staff will forward annual review timelines to departments for conducting annual performance reviews. Staff is working with the Personnel Board to schedule meeting to finalize recommendations for the Compensation and Classification Plan before reviewing with Department Heads. The Insurance Advisory Committee is meeting to review potential dental plan coverage changes. Work is starting to prepare for open enrolment which will occur the beginning of May.

Upton Apartments/ 40B at 45-51 Main Street –The ZBA will hold its next public hearing on Wednesday, April 17th at the Upton Community Center. The 40B Proponent has yet to submit revised site, engineering, and architectural plans to the ZBA. The Applicant is finalizing new drainage plans for the culvert existing the property under Route 140 to address abutter complaints.

Upcoming Events:

April 15th: Upton Men's Club Supper, 4:30 PM at the Upton Community Center with food from the Rose Garden.

April 24th: Upton Candidates' Night, 6:30 PM at the Upton Community Center

April 25th: Upton Police Meatball Dinner, 4:30 PM at the Upton Community Center

May 2nd: Annual Town Meeting, 7 PM at Nipmuc Regional High School

May 7th: Upton Annual Town Election

Thank you.