



Town Administrator

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To: Board of Selectmen

From: Ryan M. McLane, Town Administrator

Date: January 4, 2021

Subject: Town Administrator's Report

The following is the Town Administrator's report for the period ending December 31, 2020.

1. **COVID-19 Information** – Hubbardston is a green community in the newest weekly public health report with a current case count of 13. In the last 14 days, 369 Hubbardston residents have been tested with 13 positives, giving the town a 3.52% positivity rate. This is a LOWER rate than the previous week. Towns bordering Hubbardston are seeing higher case totals with Westminster, Gardner, Princeton and Rutland in red statuses and Barre and Templeton in yellow statuses. We continue to be vigilant in our town offices, recommitting daily to COVID-19 safety and consistently updating employees with guidance about staying home when sick. We are requesting that residents only come to the town offices with an appointment and a valid in-person need. For now, all town departments remain open for appointments, but employees have been instructed to work from home when possible.
2. **Department Report** – The staff will be busy this week responding to inquiries from over the holidays and taking time to prepare for the New Year. I will be working with each department to review goals, COVID-19 needs and budget requests to better understand the town's needs headed into Q3 and Q4. I also met last month with the Gardner Chamber of Commerce. The goal of this meeting was to further coordinate regional efforts. I have connected this group with your Economic Development Committee for future coordinated efforts. Lastly, I reached out to Senator Gobi's office to inquire about legislation changing your name to the Hubbardston Selectboard. The Senate passed bill S.2983 and the House will consider it this month.
3. **Financial Management** – All FY22 department budget requests are submitted except for regional assessments like WRRS, QRSD, and Monty Tech. We expect these assessments to filter in slowly. The state is also expected to be slow with original

budget figures meaning the Town Administrator's budget presentation will be based primarily on estimates for key figures. In good news, the federal government extended CARES Act funding for use by state and local governments. Correspondence from the state allows for the continued use of the CARES Act for COVID-19 response at the municipal level. Having complied fully with PPE, social distancing and remote work guidelines, we are recommending that the majority of remaining CARES funds be used to continue extended police and fire coverage. This allows for safe, socially distanced and expanded public safety. So far, this approach has benefited the town greatly due to increased response times.

4. **Infrastructure Updates** – We continue to move forward with the Fire Station Exhaust Mitigation System procurement. Our vendor has sent submittals to our engineer for review. We are also continuing to work with an engineering firm to assess the library building foundation. The initial report, currently under review by the Board of Trustees, reveals less damage than originally anticipated. Suggested work includes exposing the brick below the ground level and repointing in addition to grading the land in front of the library to improve drainage. I am meeting with Travis this week to assess whether some of this work can be completed by the DPW. Lastly, I will be bringing a contract to you next week to hire UMass Boston to serve as project manager for our digital records project. Their scope of work includes assisting our departments with the transition, creating a long-term naming convention for record storage, helping to bring all possible files to a public-facing solution and preparing training schedules for town employees.
5. **Employee Recognition** – This week I would like to recognize our Fire Department under the direction of Chief Hayes for their work in the difficult COVID-19 environment. In addition to securing the staffing and equipment necessary to expand coverage this year, Chief Hayes and staff responded to 694 emergency calls, a 7% increase from 2019. This increased workload included additional safety protocols for each resident engagement, ensuring the safety of our employees and our residents. Our staff completed this stressful work with no complaints, providing high quality medical care in our town and the surrounding region. While there is little doubt that we have the best Fire Department around, I appreciate having these hard facts to demonstrate publicly what we already know - we have a very professional and efficient department. We look forward to their continued work in 2021 and beyond.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "R. M. McLane".

Ryan M. McLane
Town Administrator