

Town of Upton, Town Manager, Performance Evaluation

Employee Name: Robinson, Blythe

Evaluator: Board of Selectmen

Position Hire Date: 05 April 2010

Review Period: Jan 2015 – Dec 2015

Review Date: Febuary 2016

Next Scheduled Review Date: December 2016

Section 1: Standards / Expectations for Performance

The performance elements, listed below, have been reviewed with the employee, along with the rating, comments, and development plan if needed.

Item	Performance Elements	Comments / Explain Rating / Development Plan (if appropriate)		
		Needs Development	Meets Standard	Exceeds Expectation
1	<p>Job Knowledge / Skill:</p> <p>Measures Town Manager’s demonstrated job knowledge and essential skills, such as work practices, policies, procedures, and technical information, as well as the relationship of work to the organization’s mission statement.</p>			<p>Blythe has demonstrated ability in managing town activities and has shown strong competencies as it applies to the operational, financial, the technical and human resources activities that fall within her authority. She has clear vision as to objectives and uses her talents in accomplishing the goals set forward. Her decisions are rational in that she uses research and evaluative reasoning prior to taking action, recognizing the possible positive and negative outcomes that could result from these actions. Her knowledge of her subordinates responsibilities was demonstrated when she took over the role of DPW Director when the position became vacant. Through this process, working with her supervisory staff, she played a major role in the activities of the DPW, among them; snow removal, water sewer calculations and billings, and storm related activities and dealing with Mass Highway on a proposed TIP program. The TIP process meant numerous meetings with Mass Highway and required a solid understanding of the process and the state’s position as to funding, to which Blythe was well versed. She has consistently demonstrated a strong understanding of the town’s capital needs and through her efforts the town has a solid capital management plan. This is an ongoing process that she keeps up to date with financially analytical facts. She keeps updated with new legislation and the impact it has on the town, and where necessary, seeks council for guidance in making the right decisions. Through the bargaining process with department unions, she demonstrates competency in the art of negotiation and realizes possible financial impacts to the town. As to legal issues involving the town Blythe has effectively utilized council to limit liability to the town. Although not within her area of authority, she reaches out to other departments and boards to provide assistance in creating a one team “Esprit de corps”.</p>

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Dependability:		<i>Needs Development</i>	<i>Meets Standard</i>	<i>Exceeds Expectation</i>
2	<p>Measures the Town Manager’s demonstrated performance relative to the ability to complete assignments accurately, the ability to follow required procedures, guidelines and the timeliness with which the Manager completes assignments both individually and in a team. This area may also be used to assess the manager’s attendance for organizational – sensitive functions.</p>	<p>Blythe is sensitive to all time related issues with attention to deadlines imposed by law or negotiation. She expects the same of her staff. She devotes herself to attendance at many meetings of departments and boards in a spirit of cooperation and to assist in the debate on issues. (She is encouraged to reduce the number of meetings attended through delegation or some other process, to allow for more personal time and self fulfillment.) She has worked tirelessly to meet the scheduling of the financial process through to annual town meeting and works with the Capital Budget and Finance committees in meeting same. Employee evaluations, licensing permits, state mandated certification (ethics, sexual harassment) are completed on a timely basis. It is recognized that reporting to a three member board can be difficult and where there have been minor instances of requests falling through the cracks, (application for livery license, fire association Jeep) it is proposed some form of a monitoring/clarification system be established to eliminate misunderstanding or redundancy. Written assignments are timely, detailed, and accurate and show attention to detail and forwarded in the proper format, whether public record, or confidential.</p>		
Communications:		<i>Needs Development</i>	<i>Meets Standard</i>	<i>Exceeds Expectation</i>
3	<p>Measures the Town Manager’s demonstrated performance in exchanging information with others in an effective, timely, clear, concise, logical, and organized manner. Communication includes listening, speaking, writing, presenting, and sharing of information. Consideration should be given to complexity / sensitivity / confidentiality.</p>	<p>Blythe meets expectation as to communication and is excellent in communicating with other departments as well as agencies outside of the town. She communicates with clarity and breaks down complex information so it can be understood by all with sensitivity to the audience. Presentations are written in a clear, concise manner and stay to the subject matter. Communication to her subordinates is done with professionalism and shows no bias or favoritism. Her dealings with the media are excellent, staying strictly to fact with no personal interpretation. She uses her skills in creating teamwork to create a constructive work environment. This communication encourages all entities of town government to work as a team and feel all are part of the system. Verbal communications are effective and her staff and managers are encouraged to speak freely and express concerns or opinions. The BOS (with copies to other town departments) is apprised in a timely manner as to any activity that would be of concern to the board. Her weekly staff meetings are open to all department heads and members are encouraged to offer input. Information is shared where needed without redundancy with respect for privacy, confidentiality and the dignity.</p>		

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4	<p>Core Qualities:</p> <p>Measures the Town Manager’s demonstrated ability to accepts personal accountability; and desire to actively seek out new solutions, opportunities or development functions that improve the organization’s ability to accomplish its mission in a more effective and efficient manner as well as improve the Manager’s value to the organization by furthering his or her own professional development.</p>	<i>Needs Development</i>	<i>Meets Standard</i>	<i>Exceeds Expectation</i>
	<p>Blythe is constantly seeking out new solutions or opportunities with respect to providing more effective operations. She personally assumed the role as acting DPW Director in the position’s transition period. To name a few, she was very active with an inter-municipal nursing agreement with Blackstone, she pushed for progress on the town’s TIP Project, and attended many Mass Municipal and CMRPC meetings or conferences for the purpose of networking, opportunities, and other items that best serve the Town of Upton. She has worked with the State Attorney General Office in an effort to turn around vacant and / or decaying buildings. She accepts personal accountability with respect to her position and responsibilities, and makes every effort avoid mistakes, and if made, learns from them to positively move forward.</p>			
5	<p>Situational Responsiveness:</p> <p>Measures the Town Manager’s demonstrated skill and abilities to respond to internal and external stakeholders, develop and maintain effective relationships, respond to inquiries and circumstance as necessary, as well as the manager’s ability to tolerate stressful situations, adapt to change and remain alert and aware of his or her surroundings. This includes the manager’s proficiency and accuracy, of written and verbal communication for situational response, as well as the manager’s ability to maintain the correct balance between tact and firmness.</p>	<i>Needs Development</i>	<i>Meets Standard</i>	<i>Exceeds Expectation</i>
	<p>Blythe does her job very well with responding to inquires as it may relate to questions, concerns, or complaints individuals may have. She accomplishes her responses timely, with the input of other individuals or departments as necessary. Stress is a true non-effective emotion that affects all of us. Each individual needs to determine how they can deal with it personally and not allow it have a negative effect on their actions. Blythe needs to be open to know when it becomes an issue, understand the effect, and allow others to assist or advise her, and if needed, take personal time off to “clear and re-boot”. Blythe’s written communication is extremely effective, with her extremely detailed e-mails, memos, and / or weekly reports. They are timely, professional, and extremely informative. Her verbal skills are also effective and a vital part of position. Possibly the most important with respect to small town management and communication. Blythe does and needs to continue to clearly listen and openly understand the needs all her stakeholders and individuals with respect to her decision making or recommendations.</p>			
6	<p>Direct & Organizational Leadership:</p> <p>Measures the Town Manager’s demonstrated ability to effectively motivate, direct and enhance the performance of direct reports and co-worker.</p>	<i>Needs Development</i>	<i>Meets Standard</i>	<i>Exceeds Expectation</i>
	<p>Positive leadership and effective management come together when both the manager and their respective reports have respect for each other and function as a team. Actions have shown that this is how it occurs with Blythe and her reports. She continues to meet with them on a weekly basis, as well as maintains an open door policy with them. She also supports and meets with them individually as needed. How someone motivates is always a challenge. The simple definition of motivate is “to give someone a reason for doing something”. Over the years, and this past year is no different, Blythe’s staff and departments have been motivated to implement ALS,</p>			

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		<p>seek and maintain department accreditations, seek out grants or opportunities that enhances operations saving the taxpayers money, improve customer services, and many other items or processes that show her departments are never just “comfortable” with just doing their jobs, but constantly seek and explore improvement. These actions are a clear example of Blythe’s teamwork approach and her ability to productively motivate showing positive results to the town and services.</p>		
7	<p>Management Skill:</p> <p>Measures the Town Manager’s demonstrated ability to oversee a process or project; the ability to organize, plan, and strategize; exhibit judgment and independent discretion; and use resources effectively.</p>	<i>Needs Development</i>	<i>Meets Standard</i>	<i>Exceeds Expectation</i>
		<p>Blythe effectively applies and utilizes the three primary managerial components of an exceptional manager; (1) technical skill: the knowledge and proficiency of the job, (2) interpersonal skill: the ability to interact and motivate, and (3) conceptual skills: the ability to understand concepts, develop ideas and implement strategies. Blythe’s direct reports are happy with her ability to clearly assign and identify areas of responsibility, communicate priorities, and ensure staff has the necessary resources and training to perform effectively.</p> <p>Blythe continues to demonstrate knowledge of the technical responsibility and requirements of her job. Blythe practices continuous improvement of town government operations that fall within her domain. She regularly seeks out opportunities to reduce operation costs without decreasing services. She also demonstrated her technical skill by overseeing the operations of the Department of Public Works in the absence of a DPW Director for six months. She worked effectively to maintain operations of the three DPW divisions. Blythe demonstrates her human skill by setting clear objectives, measures, and areas of responsibility for all of her direct reports. She deals with issues head on and in a timely manner rather than letting it fester into a large contagion. She ensures staff is able to obtain necessary resources such as supplies, equipment, training to perform effectively, and avoids duplication or redundancies of work. Blythe needs to enhance her emotional intelligence, to recognize her emotions and realize how her emotions affect people around her. This also involves her perception of others: when you understand how they feel, this allows you to manage relationships more effectively. When Blythe is under stress that she can be short with staff and can also be dismissive of ideas. Blythe demonstrates mastery of conceptual skills with the development of a new Capital Improvement Plan for town assets, the development of a new town government web site, and the development of a conservation restriction for Heritage Park.</p>		

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Performance Planning & Documentation:		<i>Needs Development</i>	<i>Meets Standard</i>	<i>Exceeds Expectation</i>
8	<p>Measures the Town Manager’s demonstrated ability to ensure adequate supervision of his or her staff, with primary focus on the accuracy, completion and communication of the objectives and standards. Ensures staff development and performance improvement. This includes the manager’s ability to complete staff performance planning and evaluation process.</p>	<p>Blythe executes performance evaluations of her direct reports within the time line specified by the Town’s Personnel By-Law. Blythe displays strong communications skills in her interaction and promotion of mutual contribution in the development of direct report evaluation and objective setting. She creates an environment of accountability, trust, camaraderie and ensures that mistakes become learning opportunities. She creates a dialogue atmosphere whereby feedback is encouraged as to ways to achieve continuous improvement. She allows and encourages direct reports to find innovative ways to contribute to the town government process. She encourages staff to develop and enhance professional skills. Despite the small annual merit increase pool or opportunities for vertical promotion availability in town government the staff continues to display motivation. Blythe’s direct reports are satisfied and engaged; they feel connected and know that their input to town government creates positive impact and outcomes.</p>		
Compliance with Statutory Regulations:		<i>Needs Development</i>	<i>Meets Standard</i>	<i>Exceeds Expectation</i>
9	<p>Measures the Town Manager’s demonstrated knowledge of statutory regulations and development of mechanisms/procedures to meet Federal, State, and Local regulatory requirements.</p>	<p>Demonstrates a clear understanding of the Massachusetts Generals Laws and associated regulations and applies this knowledge to the operations of town government. This has been clearly demonstrated with her managing issues related to collective bargaining negotiations, Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination (MCAD) legal challenges, and procurement. She stays current by attending training sessions and the readings of publications relative to issues that have potential impact to the town. Makes sure that staff is trained and adhere to legal requirements and procedures. Uses discretion when seeking the advice of legal counsel and where possible seeks information through more cost effective means.</p>		

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Section 2: Goals / Objectives

The goals/objectives, listed below, have been reviewed with the employee, along with the rating, comments, and development plan if needed.

Item	Performance Elements	Comments / Explain Rating / Development Plan (if appropriate)
10	<p><u>Post Major Goal(s):</u></p> <p>A measure to the extent the Manager has met the major action plan goals during the performance periods. The measure includes; was the objective realistic, has the intent of the goal been attained, did the goal meet the measurable/quantifiable, and did the goal meet the projected time-bounds.</p> <p>The Managers personal action plan should be attached for a reference.</p>	<p>The Board and Blythe did not generate a formal action plan for this evaluation period. What the Board and Blythe utilized was themes from the Leadership Strategic Plan that was developed in 2014</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Expand and explore regionalization opportunities. ➤ Foster a sense of team among departments and Town Boards. ➤ Assist Board with carrying out the strategic plan. ➤ Increase Transparency ➤ Enhance employee skills and training.
11	<p><u>Future Major Goal(s):</u></p> <p>All action plan goals should include the following elements.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Area of Focus: summarize the broad area the goal pertains to. • Specific Plan: describe your goal in this section and identify what you plan to accomplish and how. • Expected Outcome: describe measures or other evidence that will help determine whether you've met your goal. Measures can be either: quantitative (expressed in numerical terms) or qualitative (expressed in descriptive terms). The goal needs to be attainable / realistic and requires the Manager to stretch to obtain the objective. • Resources needed / Expected Timeframe: describe any resources (time, funding, help from others, asset relocation) you will need to accomplish your goal. Be clear about when you plan to start working on your goal; expect to achieve the goal or milestone steps. 	<p>Blythe has submitted the following as areas of focus or goals for the upcoming year.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Negotiate successor union contracts with DPW and Police. ➤ Develop financial policies & procedures - Community Compact Project. ➤ Develop a policy - town vehicles assigned to employees. ➤ Develop a list of parcels of land that may be considered for future municipal use such as cemetery, recreation, or COA sites. ➤ Continue meeting ICMA credentialing requirement for continuous learning - the work plan for 2016 is attached. ➤ Continuing goals from prior years.

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Section 3: Competencies

3.1: Conflict of Interest Program Compliance

This employee **has** / ~~has not~~ completed with the State's Ethics Compliance Program, by adhering to the Conflict of Interest and Financial Disclosure Laws and applicable compliance policies and procedures. If the employee has not complied, please list the action plan to correct:

3.2: Self-development: *Please list internal and external seminars, educational programs, degree program courses, etc., the Manager has attended over the past year or may take in the upcoming year:*

Blythe's professional development activities during this evaluation period included:

- ❖ ICMA credentialing - attached is the annual report she submitted to the association last month for CY 2015
- ❖ Attended the MMA Annual meeting in January, 2015
- ❖ Attended the MMMA Spring Conference in May, 2015
- ❖ Attended several monthly MMMA meetings

Note Exhibit A: ICMA Credentialing Plan Annual Report 12.2015
Exhibit B: ICMA Professional Development Plan 2016

Section 4: Remarks

4.1 Board of Selectmen Overall Comments (Accomplishments, Strengths, Opportunities for Development, etc.):

Blythe has had another busy, challenging, and successful year as Town Manager. She continues to refine her craft, lead change, and reinforce responsive government. Through her actions as Town Manager she demonstrates dependability, innovation, and integrity.

Blythe continues to demonstrate mastery of the knowledge and skills required to function as an exceptional Town Manager. She successfully navigates town activities and has shown strong competencies in the skills necessary to fulfill her role and responsibility that fall within her authority. She clearly understands the vision and mission of the Board; she uses her talents in accomplishing the objectives as they are presented. Her decisions are rational in that she uses research and evaluative reasoning prior to taking action, recognizing the possible positive and negative outcomes that could result from these actions.

Blythe effectively applies and utilizes the three primary managerial components of an exceptional manager; (1) technical skill: the knowledge and proficiency of the job, (2) interpersonal skill: the ability to interact and motivate, and (3) conceptual skills: the ability to understand concepts, develop ideas and implement strategies. Blythe's subordinates are happy with her ability to clearly assign and identify areas of responsibility, communicate priorities, and ensure staff has the necessary resources and training to perform effectively. She practices continuous improvement of town government operations that fall within her domain. She regularly seeks out opportunities to reduce operation costs without decreasing services.

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An organizational leader is anyone who inspires and influences people to accomplish organizational goals with appropriate action. The way Blythe influences others within the organization with and without authority takes many forms. She leads with her words and deeds; she communicates and demonstrates the core values of the organization. Blythe exemplifies the **Be - Know - Do** leadership philosophy. One of the challenges of leadership is to empower ones subordinates. Blythe delegates tasks, authority, and lets them do their work. She checks on them frequently enough to keep track of progress. Blythe needs to be self-aware that her work styles preference maybe different than the one employed by her subordinate leaders.

Blythe has truly earned the respect of the Board, her staff, and others within town departments and surrounding town governments. She is a true asset to the Board and Town, and we are fortunate to have her as part of our team.

It is not enough to doing things right; we need to do the right thing also.

4.2 Employee Comments:

Note Exhibit C: 2015 Performance Evaluation – Town Manager Comments

This performance evaluation will become part of your personnel record.

Board of Selectmen, Chair's Signature (date)

Town Manager's Signature (date)

Board of Selectmen, Signature (date)

Board of Selectmen, Signature (date)

Exhibit A

Credentialing Annual Report Blythe C. Robinson – December, 2015

Professional Development Activity #1

What I did: Develop Skills in the area of Human Resources – I attended two training sessions at the Massachusetts Municipal Association Annual Meeting in January.

What I Learned: The first session was titled “Lessons and landmines: Navigating Interviews & Internal Investigations” which provided information on interview strategies, role playing during an interview process, and do’s and don’ts for bringing new employees on board. I found the session helpful to myself as the de facto Human Resources Director, but also in my role in advising elected and appointed volunteers who have their own responsibility for the hiring process. Our volunteers don’t necessarily have any background in human resources and often need guidance to handle interviews in a way that is legal, and also has the best outcome for picking the best employee to fit the job. It was helpful to both update and refresh my skills in this area.

The second session was called “Modernizing Personnel Benefits: Sustainability and Flexibility for Cities and Towns”. After employee wages, the largest cost driver for Upton are health insurance costs including those for retirees. This training session delved into what the trends are that will affect personnel costs, such as the Affordable Care Act “Cadillac Tax”, and how to plan to be prepared for that. The presenter also offered advice on options when procuring health insurance to reduce future costs, and options to reduce cost for Medicare-eligible retirees. This information was very helpful as it gave me the tools to educate our four bargaining units during negotiations this year. While unions don’t want to agree to have their employees pay a larger percentage of their health insurance costs, my ability to explain the impact of the ACA Cadillac tax was important to be able to negotiate future contracts that will impact the Town’s costs. In my job I also staff the Insurance Advisory Committee and in doing so I need to be knowledgeable about trends in health insurance costs, and ways to reduce annual premium hikes. The training gave me good tools to use and be able to challenge providers on what they are proposing to the Town. Finally, I learned that the Town was able to take advantage of purchasing the required retiree prescription drug benefit through the federal government, thereby cutting in half the monthly cost to the Town to provide this benefit (in Massachusetts if a community has accepted a section of state law, the community pays 50% of retiree health benefit costs (and their eligible spouse) for life. We were able to then transition all of our retirees to a

new plan and cut our costs in half. This will help our annual budget, as well as future OPEB costs. A wonderful outcome for the Town that I'm proud of!

Practice Area Addressed: Human Resources Management

Professional Development Activity #2

What I did: I read several publications regarding Democratic Advocacy & Citizen Participation including two PM Magazine articles published this year "Citizen Disengagement: The Minority Opinion", and "Innovative Engagement Shows Promise", as well as I purchased and read "Engaging Your Citizens Using Social Media".

What I learned: 2015 was an incredibly difficult year in our community for two reasons. First we had record breaking snowstorms on a weekly basis for a month that severely taxed our ability to keep roads clear and frustrated our resident's to the point of questioning our ability to provide services. We also had a significant budget increase requested by our regional school district that required us to either have a referendum for a large tax increase, or cut local services drastically. These issues presented different yet challenging citizen engagement issues; the first in how to manage a crisis and engage residents in what it meant to them and what we were doing about it, and the second to educate people about an important topic that would affect their taxes and the services that are provided.

In the first situation, I learned that it is important to be proactive about a difficult situation, that citizens are sometimes more accepting of the issue if they understand it. During the early part of the winter we focused on responding to calls and complaints only to have comments posted on a local blog by residents voicing frustration. At one point we had no salt, and that was going to significantly affect our ability to clear the roads. I took a different tact and posted a story to our website and reached out to the blogger and newspapers warning people about this, why we were unable to obtain salt, and what we were doing to address it. The reaction from folks was that while they weren't happy, they understood the dilemma.

The issue posed by the budget was much different, and it split the community between residents who felt government could do fine with less resources and keep taxes low, and residents who want good schools, almost at the expense of other services. The Board of Selectmen made a decision that they wanted to support the schools, and if the referendum to increase taxes didn't pass, they were willing to reduce town services to accommodate that. We had to develop a list of budget cuts that would be implemented, and then educate people about what it meant if we followed through with those. Addressing this with citizen participation in mind I found that using multiple approaches led to success. We put out

information on our website, held meetings in various locations and with different groups (seniors, school advocates, social clubs), and responded to forums such as the local blogger. Although it was a challenging time, it also presented the opportunity to engage people about their government, and how we provide them services.

The piece on social media was very interesting, and it has given me the chance to think about how we'd address such issues going forward. We are a small town and besides being Town Manager I'm also responsible for IT, the budget, and last winter the DPW Director! We will need to utilize a mix of options and start slowly so that residents find our outreach helpful and dependable. This year so far we've put out a survey instrument in various mediums, and are in the process of upgrading our website that will enable use on mobile devices and interface with social media sites. Our Police Department is using Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, and their experience will be helpful. We've also started a monthly newsletter to inform people about what is going on in their community. Finding the right balance going forward will hopefully bring citizen engagement as we consider important community issues such as rezoning in our central business district to encourage commercial development, whether to build a new Library, and seeking land for a cemetery.

Practice Area Addressed: Democratic Advocacy & Citizen Participation

Exhibit B

Professional Development Plan 2016 – Blythe C. Robinson

Section 1. Professional Development Needs Identified by the Applied Knowledge Assessment:

- Staff Effectiveness
- Media Relations

Section 2. Learning Goals

I would like to change the areas that I work on this year. I believe I have made good strides regarding Human Resources and Democratic Advocacy and Citizen Participation. Of the practice areas identified above, this year I plan to focus Staff Effectiveness. As Town Manager and the organization leader, being skilled at coaching/mentoring staff and empowering them to succeed is important to enable them to move the organization forward. I have several new department heads that are new at being managers and would benefit from my improving my ability to coach them to reach their potential. In regard to Media Relations, we have a blogger in Town as well as varying levels of professional print publications and a radio station. I would like to work on my ability to communicate information to them that improves public understanding of issues facing our government. We have an important road project and building project coming up in the next few years and I'd like to be better prepared to communicate on these topics.

Section 3. Planned Professional Development Activities Related to My Practice Areas

I will look for sessions on staff effectiveness when I register for the 2016 ICMA Annual Conference and state association meetings over the next year (the agendas have not yet been published). I will also look at ICMA's website to see what resources are available to me on this point and study those. I will identify what I have learned from all these activities when I submit my annual report.

Exhibit C

2015 Performance Evaluation – Town Manager Comments

I was pleased to have reached a milestone of five years with the Town this past year and looking forward to number six. Several events this year made it the most challenging that I've had since I joined the Town and as the year ended I think things are again moving in a positive direction.

The first six months of the year were almost entirely focused on the budget process leading up to the override, the employee injury issue in the Fire department, and the tough winter in which I needed to step in as Acting Public Works Director. All three topics are time consuming and challenging, but when they happen simultaneously they became almost my singular focus. That meant that other important tasks either did not get my full attention or were put on the back burner until late spring. Having said that I'm proud that I was able to work with all of our departments to come up with a budget that met the goal of reducing expenses to avoid a tax increase if the override failed. It was gut wrenching to consider what it meant to the organization and services to our residents, but it was rewarding in that everyone pulled together to make it a possibility. I'm proud of our DPW staff and their abilities through a tough winter. I provided as much support and guidance as I was able to through the winter and while we didn't take on any new initiatives, we had things in good stead for when Mr. Roy started in May. It's been a pleasure to help him settle in and I'm excited about what he will bring in the future – a good hire I believe! The fire department situation unfortunately is not resolved and won't be for several more months. Navigating the legal, emotional, political and personnel aspects of this matter has been difficult for all, and it weighs on me constantly. I think that it will bring next phase to the overall structure of the fire department that was going to need to happen at some point, and we will successfully get to the other side. We will continue to focus on this in 2016.

The second half of the year has been more upbeat. We finally were able to settle the Fire union contract and just recently the Police Contract. We took on some new initiatives such as dealing with foreclosed properties, getting two significant by-law changes passed, getting a solar array project approved, revising our class II licenses, etc. I've spent a fair amount of time supporting other boards such as the Historical Commission on #2 Grove Street and the Heritage Park CR, and matters facing the Cemetery Commissioners. I'm also more involved with the Planning Board as we consider a new development plan for Noble Vista, a Village Center by-law to help spur economic development, and expanding town planner services through CMRPC. We also made good progress on the TIP project, and developed a new regional contract with Blackstone for nursing services.

Although the position continues to be demanding, the key to making it easier is the leadership and involvement by the Board. I am very appreciative of the support that you provide me in my position on a consistent basis. During last year's election process we got some feedback that the Board is not as in control as some residents' think it needs to be. While I think we all know that isn't true, I see the need to continue to find new balance to address that perception. I appreciate your patience as I work to change my instinct to jump in with

information that you already have when discussing topics at meetings. I continue to appreciate that you do not try to involve yourselves in the day to day operation of the Town. That is often a frustration I hear expressed by other managers, and it is nice that you allow me that latitude. Of course if you have concerns about an issue or how things are going I always want to hear those. It is also very positive that the Board is enthusiastic about improving the efficiency and effectiveness of our local government and it is invigorating to think about what is possible in terms of improving service delivery for our residents. This is motivating, especially when the issues in front of us are not always ones with simple fixes.

Finding balance between managing the day to day work of the Town as well as giving proper time and effort to the unforeseen issues that arise and the amount of time that must be invested to resolve a situation will never go away as a challenge. I think I'm getting more adept at this, but it sometimes takes away from some of the other important work or long term projects the board wants to see accomplished. While some of my work can be delegated, it is challenging at times and I never like to see any balls dropped.

I am grateful for the opportunity to work with a great staff. Sandy continues to assume many routine tasks and troubleshooting which makes my job so much easier. All of the department heads perform at a similar level, making my job look easy and enabling me to focus on town-wide matters. Kelly was able to participate in some new things this year including union negotiations and I look forward to doing more with her going forward.

I do note the Board's concern for the hours that I keep and I confess to not always doing the best job at managing my work/life balance. But to that end I appreciate the Board's continued support of taking vacation time and I will continue to do so while at the same time balancing the needs of the Town.

Thank you again for the opportunity to be Upton's Town Manager, it truly is a pleasure.