

Board of Selectmen

**Town of Upton**



**Massachusetts**

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN**

**Kenneth E. Picard, Chairman**

**James A. Brochu**

**Robert J. Fleming**

**TOWN MANAGER**

**Blythe C. Robinson**

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Memo To: Board of Selectmen  
From: Blythe C. Robinson, Town Manager  
Date: December 21, 2012  
Re: Town Manager's Weekly Report

Warrants:

- Payroll: \$ 69,349.00
- Expense Warrant: \$263,286.36

For Your Information/Follow Up:

- In the forefront of everyone's minds this week has been the awful events in Newtown, Connecticut last Friday that resulted in the loss of 27 students and staff at Sandy Hook elementary school. Our thoughts and prayers are with the families, first responders, teachers and the entire community that has been irreparably harmed by that event. As you might expect such situations bring about a review of our own procedures. The Police Chief and Superintendent have been in contact this week to discuss school procedures. The School Resource Officer was at Memorial on Monday to lend assistance, and we will be reviewing procedures to determine if anything differently should be done. The Chief has told me that they will conduct a lock down drill at Memorial (one is done yearly at Nipmuc). While our police officers have received active shooter training, we'll be revisiting that as well.
- As a result of the Town Hall architect's meeting with the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) last week we've received another letter from them indicating that they find the draft plans to be in order. Once they receive the completed design development drawings (which should be done this week) they will give their final approval. The Committee attended the Historical Commission meeting on Tuesday night to go over the drawings and discuss the project with them.

The Town Clerk and I met with the Administrative Team from United Parish Church on Monday night to review the latest design for the upgrade to their parking lot, and began discussions on a lease agreement for the Town to be able to use the parking lot as a result. We were able to answer all of the questions presented by the Committee and they will begin review of the lease with counsel. The Committee is planning to attend the Selectmen's meeting on January 22<sup>nd</sup> to bring you up to speed on the project.

- The Fire and Police Chiefs, EMD Director and I met with National Grid last Friday to discuss their response to Hurricane Sandy and how they plan to improve upon that

in the future. We expressed our frustration about the lack of communication on the status of outages, despite the liaison program they put in place. We also reiterated our frustration about the amount and timing of resources dedicated to us after an event, as we're in a zone that stretches down to Foxborough. National Grid is planning to change the zones and we'll likely be in one of just 4-5 towns. They seemed sympathetic to our frustration about communications and plan to make adjustments to address this. We suggested that once these zones are established, they assign permanent liaisons for continuity, and they hold meetings in each zone so that everyone is informed on how the new process will work.

- As you know, we've joined 8 other Towns in seeking a grant to put in place an electronic permitting system. Last week I asked a firm called GEO TMS to come in and make a presentation about their system to various departments. We had great participation from Code Enforcement, Board of Health, Planning, Zoning, Conservation, Assessor's, Fire, Police and our office. The general consensus was that this is a robust system that would greatly improve our ability to monitor and manage all activity on each parcel in Town, make our internal operations more efficient, and give the public and contractors more flexibility in conducting business with us and paying on line if they choose to do so. The coordination between departments in the permitting process would be very helpful, and the licensing process in our office would be much more efficient. I'll be including a warrant article for the ATM to start a program, while we wait to hear the status of our grant application.
- On the topic of grant applications the State called us this week to provide the feedback I asked for regarding the PARC Grant. I learned that we were not slated to get a grant, even if the Town Meeting had passed it. While we did well at preparing it, we did not stack up as well as other towns due to our demographics. There were a number of communities that had a higher density population, lower median income and other factors that rated them higher than Upton. We also do not have public transportation that serves the site. If we are to apply for one of these grants in the future we would score higher if we adopted the "Green Communities" program, and do some outreach in environmental justice neighborhoods. But depending on the demographics of other towns that apply each time, we still might not be successful. It was nice to hear that otherwise our application was well done, as a lot of work went into it from a number of volunteers.
- At Thursday night's Personnel Board meeting the Board voted to recommend a COLA increase for non-union employees in the FY 13/14 budget year of 1.75%. The Board will be sending out spreadsheets to each department with the new ranges so that all hiring authorities can review their information, note any changes they propose and return them to the Board.
- This week MMA released a report indicating that cities and towns face a \$362 million shortfall in funding to adequately maintain local roads in a state of good repair. This is certainly well known to Upton as our estimated shortfall is \$9 million, and we should be spending about \$700,000 yearly to bring our roads up to an acceptable standard over the next 10 years. MMA is advocating for an increase in Chapter 90 funding of \$100 million, bringing the total to \$300 million. This would be advantageous to us, as our current allocation from Chapter 90 is \$319,000, bringing it up to about \$478,000.
- In the next two weeks we will celebrate Christmas and New Year's, both of which fall on a Tuesday. All employees have been given the option to take time off on Monday,

provided they use their accumulated vacation or personal time as applicable. The COA will be closed on Monday, and other offices will likely have a skeleton crew.

- Just a reminder that it is that time of year – annual reports and performance evaluations! Evaluations are due this month and Town Reports on January 10<sup>th</sup>. If you haven't gotten to those yet, please put them on your list for January 2<sup>nd</sup>!
- With the season I want to take a moment to wish everyone very happy holidays! It's been a good year in Upton and the Town continues to move forward in a positive way. A special thanks to all of our employees and volunteers who work hard to assist residents, and make our Town the type of place we're all proud to be from. More than ever at this time of year, our hearts go out to those in the world less fortunate, and those who have experienced heartache and tragedy needlessly. I wish you and your families a very merry Christmas and happy New Year, and look forward to working together in 2013.