



## TOWN OF UPTON, MASSACHUSETTS

### Office of the Town Manager

## MEMORANDUM

To: BOARD OF SELECTMEN

FROM: JOSEPH LAYDON, TOWN MANAGER

SUBJECT: TOWN MANAGER REPORT FOR MARCH 7, 2023

DATE: MARCH 7, 2023

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The following is the Town Manager's Report for the March 7, 2023 Board of Selectmen Meeting.

**Town Manager:** The Town Manager reviewed the following topics:

Town Website Redesign – A staff committee reviewed design elements of various websites to provide guidance for the design team with Civic Plus. Departments should review their pages to update, edit, or remove content. Pages will be migrated on April 14<sup>th</sup>. Time sensitive content will not be brought over (news, job postings, calendar items). The anticipated launch date is June 29<sup>th</sup>. Training will be late May/early June. A request to the community will go out to submit photos for use on the town website through a web form.

Town Hall Bathrooms – BoS and FinCom will meet to consider a request for funding to repair bathrooms. The repair solution involves cleaning and polishing the wastewater lines and replacement of toilet fixtures with fixtures that have tanks. Once toilets are replaced, we can open Town Hall to groups and meetings. A second part of the repairs will involve removal of paper towel dispensers and installation of hand dryers. In the meantime, we are continuing to limit use of town hall to those groups that are staff supported. I ask that staff check bathrooms prior to leaving to make sure nothing is bubbling out of floor drains or toilets.

Electrical Aggregation - The Town of Upton is continuing its work to finalize its electric aggregation program but at this time it is not available. The Board of Selectmen engaged Colonial Power in March 2021 to work with the town to prepare and finalize a Community Aggregation Plan. The Town submitted its petition to the Department of Public Utilities in March 2022 to request approval of the aggregation plan. Most recently in November, the Department of Public Utilities held a public hearing on the aggregation plan. In order for the Town to be able to select a vendor to run the aggregation program, we must get approval from DPU. Our consultant who is working with Upton to get approval of the aggregation plan estimates does not have an anticipated date for DPU's approval of the plan. Once Upton receives notice of approval, we will advertise to go through a selection process. It is hoped the town can select a supplier by early fall. Our consultant did state that it is anticipated there will be a significant decrease in supplier costs for the spring term that starts May 1<sup>st</sup>.

**Treasurer Collector:** Water sewer bills due the March 13<sup>th</sup>, excise tax bill due to the 27<sup>th</sup>. VADAR migration to the cloud is scheduled and departments will not be able to use the system between March 23<sup>rd</sup> until the 27<sup>th</sup>. During this time, information is read only. Walkthrough with staff scheduled for March 14<sup>th</sup>. Moving forward with Employee Forward, pushing information to the vendor, if people don't have information in the system, it will impact paying employees. Police and Fire will not be part of the initial effort. Departments will be provided with a list of who's information is needed. Working to revise the process for paying stipends for elected officials. Bylaw requires it to be paid prior to the May election. The form will include a box incase elected officials want to waive receiving the payment.

**Conservation:** Staff and the Commission has been working with Five Forks Farm on installing an irrigation pond to supply water for irrigation of flowers. Lack of water impacts their operations.

**DPW:** Last week, the department was called out to treat roads for two storms and has used approx. \$185K out of the budgeted \$260K. Salt Shed is under half full. Department is doing pothole patching. Community Center is online for water and sewer. Active in tree removal, but nearing end of the Department's \$47K annual budget. Will be blocking off the parking lot at Risteen Building for the delivery of the handicap ramp on Wednesday and for installation on Thursday.

**Town Clerk:** To date, just under 500 dogs have been registered, which is more than has been registered to date in years past. Late fee after May 31<sup>st</sup>. There are 20 open positions on the ballot; no papers have been pulled for Selectmen, Planning Board, Finance Committee, or Recreation Commission among others. Deadline is March 17<sup>th</sup> and papers must be turned in by the 21<sup>st</sup>. Candidates' night will be at the Fire Station Training Room and April 20<sup>th</sup>. Stipend letters will be going out to elected officials. Staff and board members are required to do a state ethics training, notification will go out after the election.

**Elder and Social Services/ COA:** Departments should contact ESS/COA staff for getting help through the senior tax work off program.

**Police/ Fire:** Comprehensive emergency management plan is before the Board of Selectmen for approval. Plan was last approved in 2011. Department Staff is reviewing expansion plans. Also working with GURR on their hazardous materials management plan. Police Dept. is up for reaccreditation, which will occur this fall. Fire Dept has one recent graduate from fire call academy, who will then be going to EMT training. Two are in paramedic school, three more are potentially going to the next call class. Fire Dept is working on standard operating procedures. Dept has seen increase in calls to support adjacent towns.

**Code:** 6 Milford Street has a new landlord and there are some structural issues. Good news is that the new owner is communicating with the Code Enforcement Office, and they want to work to resolve issues. Other complaints received include junk in people's yards. Building haven't seen a lull in permit activity.

**Recreation:** Hiring for Kids@Play ends March 31st. They are still looking for lifeguards and a beach director. Interviewing for a yoga instructor to have on board for when the Main Hall at Town Hall opens back up. Met with friends of library on ways to collaborate on programs and activities. Working with DPW and their engineer to locate a tent location.

**Board of Health:** A clinic was held on Saturday the 4<sup>th</sup>, 37 people came. Majority were kids, which is the age group in Upton that is not up to date receiving vaccinations and boosters.

**Library:** Library has seen an increase in program attendance. Lots of questions on the new community center. Still on track on May 1<sup>st</sup> for opening of library and playground.

**Planning:** Town was approved for interim compliance under MBTA Communities and therefore maintain eligibility through Dec 2025. Submitted for housing choice designation. Compliance is based on housing production over the previous 5 years. A new department specialist started this week in the Land Use & Inspectional Services Dept primarily supporting with Planning Board, Conservation, and CPC. Not many new applications before the Planning Board, they continue to meet on Governors Landing and East Street Estates. The Planning Board will hold a public hearing on zoning articles and citizen's petition on April 17<sup>th</sup>. Staff is meeting with the consultant on the Warren Parklet this Thursday to review the parklet design. Housing Forum is next Thursday 6 pm to 8 pm. Met with DOT on the Rt 140 design.

**Human Resources:** Insurance rates and they have gone up considerably, 8.9%, the largest increase in several years. To offset it, we are looking at bringing in a vision plan. If 10% of membership to take the plan, health insurance cost will be decreased by 0.5%. Dental Insurance went down 6.3%. Open enrollment will come out in May. There is an ATM Warrant article for a compensation and classification study to look for external and internal fairness. Staff will put out an RFP and hope to have true cost for ATM. Scholarships will be announced in a couple of weeks.

Thank you.