



MEMORANDUM

TO: Board of Selectmen

FROM: John C. Curran, Town Manager

CC: Susan Aker, Cathy O'Dea

SUBJECT: Town Manager's Report, April 22, 2019

DATE: April 19, 2019

MDI Grant

The Town received a grant from DHCD from their Massachusetts Downtown Initiatives (MDI) program. This grant can be up to \$15,000 in Technical Assistance to help communities solve issues in the downtown. Our submission dealt with downtown mobility, and – rather than reinventing the wheel – would use a state chosen engineering consultant to analyze the previous work. If there is a development coming at the Mall, a strong possibility, then Billerica could be looking at a MassWorks submission. Given the issues surrounding the Center the last time, this third-party work would provide invaluable backup.

This office met with the State and their consultant on April 8th. We will be working with the state to put together a schedule and process of how the review and recommendations would work. This obviously will involve a public input component. The Town Center vote was almost seven years ago.

The Commons – follow-up and review

I have reviewed the Town's response as requested by Selectman Burns. I received a call from the fire chief while the Fire Department was on scene. I was informed that the Red Cross was on scene but would be leaving shortly. The Fire and Building Department had determined that 60 units were not habitable either because of damage to the units or access and egress issues related to public safety. I was also informed that the Corcoran Management Company was relocating all displaced tenants or they were taking temporary residence with family or friends. It was determined that there was no need for a shelter in the short term.

Over the next week that followed the Town worked with the Management Company to get as many units open as soon as possible and to ensure that no tenants – particularly those in affordable units were not without housing in the short and long term. Through some collaboration between Town inspectors, this office and the Management Company 42 units were opened on April 6th – 12 more than originally anticipated. All of the affordable tenants were housed in Corcoran properties so as to preserve their lease status.

This office worked with the Management Company, the Attorney General's Office, Community Team Work, State Representative Lombardo and all of the Town's Public Safety Officials to make sure no one was left without housing. A statement was made that my office was slow to reach out to

Community Teamwork. Upon review I found that statement to be inaccurate. The Management Company had already involved Community Teamwork in assisting residence, a fact that I was aware of from my constant communication with the Management Company. I did, however, speak to Joanne Howell from CTI on several occasions and she kept me informed of the status of different affordable tenants.

Selectman Rosa had inquired if we had a plan in place. The Town has a voluminous Comprehensive Emergency Response Plan (300+ pages). It also has an equally substantial Emergency Shelter Plan (200+) pages. These are not public documents in accordance with the Homeland Security Act. If any Selectmen would like an opportunity to review them I can arrange a time. Private entities such as Bright View or New England Pediatrics and all Multifamily Units such as the Commons are encouraged to have their own Emergency Response Plan. The Commons did have an emergency Response Plan and they did follow it during this event which is why they were so successful in placing tenants. This is also why the Town did not have to intervene.

It should also be noted that there were social media posts of a tenant sleeping in his car which turned out to be false. Much of the perception of people not being helped was simply not true. After being asked to review this matter I went back and interviewed The Management Company and our own Emergency Management Director and I am confident that the Town's response was not only appropriate but it was above and beyond what the Town's responsibility – especially in the area of ensuring that tenants were receiving assistance and access to available agencies. I did not find the Town's response in terms of helping tenants gain access to different agencies to be lacking in any way.

However, after the review it may be helpful to send letter to private entities to remind them to have an emergency response plan and to provide a copy to the Town. The Commons fortunately had one in place but after speaking with Mr. Laurendeau it is clear that many entities do not have one in place. Perhaps the BOS should consider sponsoring a by-law that requires Multifamily developments over a certain number be required to have an Emergency Response Plan and tenant insurance

Howe School / PHR – RFQ:

Last Spring Town Meeting the Town had applied for funding of three projects with CPC money. The Howe School project was awarded \$420,000 for full design. This office met with PRA Architects who put together a feasibility study for BATV in 2016 on the building. The Town was brought up to speed on some of the challenges that we can anticipate and what they learned through the initial process. An RFQ is expected to be on the street within the next month to select a design firm. The RFQ will include specs for a visioning session, community space, and how to create a home for BATV, among other specifications.

This office also met with Weston and Sampson on the Peggy Hanna Rizza Complex project. Town Meeting awarded the Town \$433,200 for design at Town Meeting. This project will include how we can rehabilitate the softball fields, football field, and practice fields. It will also include a turf field and other potential upgrades throughout. The Recreation Commission was given a similar update at their last meeting. The Town has met with the Director, Chair, and CPC representative about the project and will continue to keep them in the loop. The Town will issue a similar RFQ on the same timeline as the above project. Both of these projects and the Fire Station Project will share an Owners Project manager. An RFQ is being compiled for these services as well.

Mosquitoes Spraying

Last week the Town of Billerica and Chelmsford Board of Health received a permit for the aerial application of mosquito larvacide from the MA pesticide Bureau. Spraying was ongoing from dawn to dusk. They sprayed mostly in wetlands and highly wooded areas. The product used is commonly known as BTI and has no toxicity to humans and is commonly used in organic farming. The next step

for the mosquito control program is to treat the catch basins. After that the only treatments that are done are through residential request by truck. If you would like to request a spraying you can contact the Central Mass Mosquito Control Project at (508) 393-3055. Once a scheduled is confirmed the Town will notify residents.

Middlesex Turnpike – Traffic Advisory

This office received notification from MassDOT that due to construction some road closures would be taking place. Daytime closures took place on 4/16 and 4/17 for excavation and grading of the roadway between 7am-3pm. This affected both westbound and eastbound traffic. MassDot will commence paving operations on 4/22 and 4/27 from 7pm-6am with alternating traffic. This work is weather dependent and is subject to change. Also the neighbors in that area a few months backed had asked for increased communication regarding work that would be taking place. The Town has communicated directly with these people through their Facebook groups and recently solved an issue with light timing for them. On the road closures the Town has done their best to communicate these efforts with neighbors through multiple channels.

Clean Up Green Up

The Town of Billerica will be holding their annual clean up green up day. It will be held on Saturday, May 4th from 8:30AM-12PM. Please join your friends and neighbors spending the day cleaning up roads, town parks, and conservation land. Volunteers can check in at the Senior Center at 25 Concord Road starting at 8:30AM. They will be given special yellow bags and equipment for road side litter. The DPW will come and collect the bags when you are done. If you would like more information please reach out to Billerica Recreation at (978) 671-0921!

Cable Ascertainment Process

The Town is starting to move through the Cable Ascertainment Process. This office had a call with our attorneys handling the process last week. Currently they are collecting information from BATV and the Town on our needs. Currently a tentative date has been set for a public hearing on May 21st at 7:30PM. Selectmen Rosas request for a senior discount and price package hikes/dismemberment have been noted to the attorneys. The Town has roughly 8,100 subscribers to Comcast and another 4,600 to Verizon. This is a significant difference between our last contract where Comcast had 12,306 customers signed on. Also from our understanding Verizon has also changed their tactics and moved towards contracts that are less than 10 years.

Housing Trust Balance

Selectman Conway asked for an update on the Housing Trust Account. There is currently a balance \$452,585.00. The upcoming warrant article would add \$90,000.00. This will bring the balance up to \$542,585. This would bring the total CPC contribution to this account up to \$250,000.00.