

ACTING TOWN ADMINISTRATOR REPORT

May 25, 2021

To the Select Board, please find following status and next steps on some priority projects working through the Town Administrator's office.

1. SCHOOL FORMULA ASSESSMENT

I was involved in a call initiated by Planning Board Chair Ewell Hopkins and FinCom Chair Bob Gaffey with Michelle Griffin (DOE), John Sullivan(DOE) and Matthew Deniniger (DESE), to discuss any possible course of action Oak Bluffs can take to find relief to the current school formula. As we know the current formula established back in 1954 is based on assessment of budget and capital costs being assigned based on previous year's enrollment. Oak Bluffs has a higher percentage of families than other Towns, and the current formula significantly burdens the Town.

While there is no silver bullet, they did provide some points to consider. Change has to be done through an amendment to the agreement and approved by the member towns and the DESE. There may be opportunity to leverage Town services to offset the capital assessment. The DOE have seen some success with other regional districts with a combination of enrollment and equalized valuations, and they are going to follow up with sample agreement language that include methodologies for apportioning capital assessments. They also brought forward that we could use the services of MA Office of Public Collaboration https://www.umb.edu/mopc/about_us, who operate as a neutral third party to mediate in situations of impasse. The State are unable to intervene on the decision of the formula.

There is not a specified law of how regional apportioning assessments in regional schools apply and the DOE encourage Oak Bluffs to find an equitable alternative. The most compelling argument is that we have collateral of the High School on Town Land. Research of other formulas needs to be done, and by using a mediation agency, the Town may be able to implement change. Future meetings with the FinCom and the Select Board to establish a unified formula and approach could be beneficial before presenting to the other Towns.

2. CLOSE OF YEAR DUTIES

The end of the fiscal year is upon us, and this is a busy time for all Town Offices with reconciling budgets, gearing up for summer demands, seasonal staff onboarding and scheduling shifts. Final union negotiations are still in progress, but it is expected that new contracts will be implemented for July 1 without any retroactive pay. Permitting offices are facing the Spring/ Summer rush and construction boom. It is hope that *ViewPoint* will be up and running to help alleviate the sign-off obligations. Duties in the Select Board office also ramp up with the completion of annual businesses licenses and renewals, parking mitigation billing, and shellfish permitting escalates. Parking re-bids will be going out for Kennebec for July 1, plus the new lots at the Highway are expected to be out to bid for July. I will keep the BOS informed on how our finances are bearing out. Lack of CARES reimbursement continues to be concerning as monies pending will prevent any deficit spending. It is expected that Close of Year transfers will be in-front of the Board on July 13.

At this time, I wanted to recognize the highly professional work that is performed by staff and office administrators, on a day-to-day basis, who are the frontline and face to the public. Their work is necessary and their sincere effort to provide exception customer service is valued and appreciated.

3. COASTAL INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

There has been significant movement in the pushing forward of two prime projects and submission of grants in the last week. The work that has been done by Shellfish Constable Chuck Fisher and

Harbormaster Todd Alexander in coordinating with grant writers to get all the information submitted is commendable.

Re-build of the Harbor Jetties, and rebuild and resiliency of Farm Pond have both applied for design and permitting grants. Oak Bluffs is aggressively presenting itself as a pro-active Town in addressing the critical impacts sea level rise and increases in storm intensity have on our infrastructure and coastline. There have been several meetings with CZM, MVC, Foth Engineering and Fuss and O'Neil in priming our applications to succeed. We will be meeting with DOT in the near future, on the viability of rebuilding the Farm Pond culvert and Seaview Ave.

Farm Pond has been plagued by false starts and loss of momentum. By appointing a Town project manager, they are assigned to work directly with the architects, engineers, and designers in getting this 'shovel ready'. Chuck is embracing this role and the MVC have jumped aboard offering their resources and DOT network, to help navigate Oak Bluffs through the highly complex DOT permit system. The Town Administrator's office will continue to work closely with Chuck and Todd throughout these projects. Oak Bluffs, being surrounded by water, needs a focused team effort across multiple agencies to move the needle in the many coastal resiliency projects that need to be addressed.

4. RE-OPENING TOWN BUILDINGS

And just like that the pandemic is over...

For your review, the below punch list will be emailed to all staff, board and committee members this week, in preparation for the lifting of the emergency orders on June 15, and certain COVID restrictions on May 29. Further information from the BOH meeting, may be added before sending (*this meeting is Tuesday morning at 10am*). I have also called a Department Head meeting for Thursday May 27 at 11am, to address concerns as we move into this phase. Some departments such as the COA may need a little more time before fully opening its doors and there may be other personal accommodations by staff who need additional time before 100% in the workplace.

1. Town Buildings are officially open to the public as of June 1.
2. Masks are still required for all visitors when entering public buildings for the near future. We will be following closely how the State handles indoor mask wearing for departments who handle vulnerable and family populations. <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-mask-requirements#effective-may-29:-updated-mask-requirements->
3. For employees, while in their personal space, mask coverage is not required but when moving about the building, mask wearing is required especially when social distancing cannot be observed.
4. Plexi-glass barriers will remain up and will remain for the length of time we are stationed in the temporary trailers.
5. All offices will need to be staffed and available to serve the public, 8.30 to 4 pm.
6. Tele-working privileges and staggered shifts will be re-assessed, and unless there is a clear and justified reason, employees will need to be in their offices.
7. Some employees are permitted to continue to work from home, until New Town Hall opens, and they are assigned a workspace.
8. All effort must be made by each department to update their websites with clear information on office hours, access to resources or forms, and new meeting protocols.
9. Remote meetings may continue until June 14, then Boards and Committees are to meet in-person. A quorum must be present – meeting participation by other groups may be remote.
10. Posting of meetings remain the same with each committee or board being responsible for their own posting onto the website and sending agendas to the Town Clerk, no less than 48 business hours before the meeting start time.