



Report of the Town Manager

April 13, 2020

1. Financial Updates-

Massachusetts State Legislature recently passed municipal relief legislation. This legislation provides communities the authority to change the dates of the May elections and Town Meeting due dates on property tax bills and waive interest on taxes due. The May 4th Town election and May 18th Town Meeting have been tentatively scheduled for June 15th and 29th. With the Town Meeting date changing, the closing of the warrant will also change. The warrant can't close any more than 45 days prior to Town Meeting. Once the Town Meeting date is determined, the Board should vote to reestablish the warrant closing date. Due dates on taxes have been deferred to assist property owners. They include:

- a. Real estate and personal property taxes normally due on May 1st will now be due June 1st.
- b. Applications to apply for exemptions of taxes have been extended from April 1st to June 1st.
- c. Interest and penalties will be waived on any property and excise tax, betterment assessment, water or sewer bill with a due date on or after March 10, 2020 if payment is made by June 30, 2020.

Due to an anticipated shortfall in the health insurance, the snow and ice accounts and the possible impact of COVID-19 on the budget, I placed a spending and hiring freeze effective immediately on effective April 8th. Due to more current and retired employees electing Town health insurance coverage than anticipated, the health insurance appropriation over expended by \$118,000, and the snow and ice appropriation will be over expended by \$18,000. Other accounts will be over expended by much smaller amounts. I anticipate a budget surplus in school transportation, veteran services and many other line items throughout the budget that will cover any account shortfalls.

2. Personnel Updates-

- a. There are no personnel updates this week.

3. Project Updates-

- a. The Town Clerk received the draft version of the revised Town Charter and Town Bylaws from General Code. The project was spearheaded by former Town Clerk Judy LaJoie approximately two years ago. General Code has

reviewed the documents making recommendations to clarification, update legal references and correct any inconsistencies. Over the next few months each Board and Commission will need to review the section of the bylaws pertaining to them prior to presenting both documents to Town Meeting for consideration this fall.

4. Miscellaneous Updates –

- a. I attended a Virtual Legislative Forum for Greater Gardner Chamber of Commerce members with State Senator Anne Gobi and Representative Jonathan Zlotnik, addressing the business needs of our region during the COVID-19 crisis.