**TA Update 9/30/19**

**Committees**

The Planning Board has been discussing options for Deerfield River Portage to work within the Town’s by-laws, the requirements of which don’t seem to apply well to businesses that operate with remote, distributed, or variable locations (“…for a commercial establishment up to 50 people shall be permitted on the premises at any one time”).

The Open Space Committee/Friends of the South River have partnered with the Connecticut River Conservancy for enhancements at the South River Meadow on Sat. Sept. 28. They are being given about 200 shrub seedlings for volunteers to plant to improve riverbank stability and shading. As this is also part of the “source-to-sea cleanup” day, they are coordinating with the Highway Department for the removal of any trash collected during the event.

The Board of Health installed their new compactor at the Transfer Station on Tuesday. All went smoothly.

The Administrative Assessor and I are preparing a Community Compact IT grant for enhancing the Town’s GIS capacity. We are trying to enhance both the efficiency and the capacity of the system and to make it more useful for the public.

**Departments**

We received a certification of our free cash, at $577,425. I will note that about $166,000 was turned over from this year, and I would like to reserve $200,000 to turn over into FY 2021. That would still leave us with $377,425 for stabilization, capital, and other non-operational expenses.

Our FY 2019 finances are closed and our FY 2020 tax rate has been set, at $18.76. This is not the decline that Lee and I believed was possible, but it does represent just an eleven-cent, or a 0.59%, increase. Lee and I have identified most of the issues that led us to underestimate the tax rate and have improved the Excel sheet to be able to generate better estimates next year.

I understand that the newsletter of the local Congregational Church, The Visitor, has been having difficulty getting published. Many town residents—though not all—see the newsletter as the main means of getting Town information. If that publication ceases, which we all hope will not be the case, the Town may wish to pick up the slack. That would mean a major increase in service to the Town, though also an increase in work, which could be met in various ways. This is just to let you know that I am preparing for the possibility.

I looked into what it would take to get florescent school bus signs near the Greenfield Savings Bank; we would need to request MassDOT to put up extra signs (we already have yellow signs). If we go forward, I’d like to have a formal Select Board discussion and letter request, so I’d like to put it on the agenda for the next meeting.

A resident has expressed interest in a plot in Shirkshire Cemetery. I believe there may be a map of plots with Planning Board materials and have asked about that; I’ve also asked Peter Freisem if he has any helpful information. I have nothing for Shirkshire in my files.

A reminder that the first session of the inaugural Town Academy will take place on Thursday, October 3, at 7:00 p.m. in the Town Hall. It would be great if people could show up for it.