



## MEMORANDUM

### OFFICE OF THE TOWN ADMINISTRATOR

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TO: Select Board

FROM: Carter Terenzini  
Temporary Town Administrator

RE: Administrator's Weekly Report

DATE: October 16, 2020

CC: All Departments

#### IMPORTANT NOTICES TO ALL DEPARTMENTS

- Fall Town Meeting has been postponed to October 31, 2020 @ 2:00 p.m. GHS, 24 Providence Rd (Rain Date Nov 1)
- Capital Project due October 30<sup>th</sup>: If you do not have any projects upcoming in the next five years; please send Chris and email so he can assemble those as opposed to simply not responding.
- FY22 Budgets due November 30<sup>th</sup>; review the chart of accounts re: those that might be consolidated so I may discuss the same with the FinCom

#### Business Meetings or Workshops

(This is where we provide basic information or expand upon memorandum enclosed in your packet).

1. a. Still in process but will send out as soon as possible.
1. b. At the staff level we are looking to understand the intent of this effort so that we can assemble a proper charge and composition; and
1. c. The discussion is the same as b.

#### TOWN ADMINISTRATOR

My office days next week will be Monday afternoon, Tuesday, and Thursday. Starting 11/01, I will expend to four days most weeks try to keep pace with everyone. We have made an offer of employment for the position of Captain/Fire Inspector and it has been accepted subject to your confirmation vote on 10/27 with a start date of 11/15. Asst. Chief (Retired) Charest will be doing some training as will Mr. Berger. Paul had his conference call with Ms. Goldberg. Coming out of the Zoom Meeting with Ms. Goldberg, I think he was surprised a bit to be asked for a variety of documents, but they have now been scanned and are on their way. Free cash is certified at roughly \$1.6M

but do please remember that roughly \$.9M of that is rolled from FY '19 so normal and ordinary free cash is closer to \$.7k. Your various Medicare supplemental insurance plans, effective January 1, 2021, have increased from 3.11% to 15.10%. A quick look see shows that it cost \$19k+/- for Q3 and Q4. It does not seem like the budget was prepared with a reserve for any such increase so we may need to backfill some of that at the ATM. Mr. Berger and Cournoyer have prepared a list of surplus items for disposal we will have before you on 10/27 for your action. This will kick off a discussion/decision for November to use as the basis for planning the expenditure budget. Considerable time was spent working with the Clerk's office and Town Moderator and responding to numerous inquiries relative to the Early Voting and STM. The first cut of FY '22 revenues has been completed (thank you Amy P.) and the Job Descriptions for Finance Director and the position in this office. We should have our second cut of all next week with the Finance Director on your 10/27 agenda for classification. We are using the accounting office to begin the budget template and look for a first cut next week. I will advise all now that your FY '22 budget will NOT be the 400-page document you are used to be a bare bones submission.

In addition to the new fire hire, I've received their IT estimates to move them forward organizationally and to be able to trigger the permitting program. I've asked they review it to make sure this is all of it so that I can be sure they are meeting all of your needs re: upgrading existing computers at all stations, accounting for additional work stations if need be, having tablets so command staff can enter their own incident reports instead of handing them to enter from their handwriting, positions us to pull the trigger on the new permit system and the like. My primary objective is to get the new hire in the house with it being IT and workstation ready... I'd like to think he can make getting the program live a primary objective. If there is a need to have a vendor enter data to get you live, I'll need to know what that is. So, let us just assume from the begin it will be and price it. With the FTM coming up we have a small window to transfer any monies you need from personnel to expense beyond the \$20k. If we do not use that opening, we will have to spend the monies and then backfill it in the Spring or get a FinCom reserve transfer. I'll explain it all up front but that is not a great option in my mind. Once we get these two things done, we can freshen the Deputy Chief JD and get that posted. If by then Chief Gauthier has devised an approach he feels better meets the needs of the Department we will present it otherwise we can proceed. Finally, I have asked that they look at the other recommendations of the Committee to see what – if anything – we can tackle by some added in-house hours or an independent service and how rotating =coverage might be implemented so that it rolls from week to week giving your commend staff greater experience and depth to develop possible succession ladders and give you some relief for effectively being the "On Call " officer 24/7/365.

## ADMINISTRATION & FINANCE

### Town Accountant

No Report Submitted

### Treasurer/Collector

Courtesy notices were sent out for any Real Estate bills remaining outstanding for FY 19 & 20. Fiscal 2021 Q1 Real Estate & Personal Property tax bills are due Monday, Nov. 2nd. Payments can be made online or checks can be dropped off in the GOLD drop box in the front of the building. The office continues to receive a steady flow of MLC requests.

### Principal Assessor

- 1) Scheduled classification hearing for 10/27/2020 at 7pm
- 2) Training Cody and Course 101
- 3) Exemptions are being returned and reviewed
- 4) Chapter land review complete, presenting to BOA on 10/20
- 5) Working with Accountant on RECAP
- 6) Field Inspections for permit sign offs, sales, and commercial properties
- 7) Motor Vehicle abatements

### School Superintendent

I wanted to provide a brief update to the board in regard to the current status of the school department.

Health and Safety – I believe that we have done exceptionally well in this area. We have strong cleaning protocols in place. We have additional nurses on staff and a nursing aide in each school. We have two nursing rooms in each school, one being used as a traditional nursing office and the other being used for students/staff who are exhibiting symptoms. We have exceeded the three-foot distancing minimum in all schools and students are doing exceptionally well in terms of adhering to distancing and mask guidance. We ordered PPE early and have had no issues with the provision of PPE throughout the district. The winter months will bring new challenges to our doorstep. The use of outdoor space has been a great luxury for us, especially in terms of mask breaks. As the weather worsens, we will need to utilize indoor spaces to provide for breaks. We had our first positive COVID case last week. Our nursing team and building leadership did a great job following protocols to define the issue at hand, communicate with the school and district community, contact trace, and quarantine. Any time there is a suspected case, the district works in tandem with the Department of Public Health to ensure that all steps are being taken with fidelity.

Instructional Models - We are basically running four different instructional models at once. We are offering full in-person to students who qualify (typically those with high needs), a hybrid model with one group receiving virtual instruction for a week while the

other group receives in person instruction for a week, and our Remote Learning Academy for students opting to participate full-remote. To say this has been difficult is an understatement. The most fundamental challenge is staffing. As students have enrolled and shifted their preferred model of instruction, it is very difficult to shift staff accordingly. If we were a larger district, with more students and staff we would have the economy of scale to shift staffing more easily. We have been working daily on scheduling and efficiencies in order to make the staffing work better all around. This week we are posting for some additional remote staffing positions at the 2-5 level as we have now maximized the ways in which we can utilize existing staffing. The long-term nature of the provision of four different models of instruction is important. We can do just about anything for a few weeks. The fact that we anticipate being in this current mode of teaching for the remainder of the school year is constantly on our minds. Building a structure that can be maintained and supported for the next eight months is the focus. I worry about everything and the sustainability of what we are doing (for staff, students, and parents) is a continual area of focus.

Technology – We have put almost 2,000 devices out to students and families since March. Just about any device not nailed down, has been distributed. We ordered additional Chromebooks in the early spring and we are anxiously waiting for their arrival. The order was tied up on the US border for months and was recently released. These Chromebooks will cover the needs for the remaining families in need of a device and provide us with some much-needed breathing room in terms of our supply of devices.

Staffing – We have done an unprecedented amount of hiring this year. We have had many staff members decide not to return to GPS due to the health situation and we have also had an unprecedented level of need due to the fact that we are utilizing three different models of instruction this year. We have staff who are unable to teach in-person due to health needs and we have made accommodations to allow for those staff to work remotely. We have five substitute teachers in district and work to have them assigned to individual schools to limit exposure. This is a fraction of our typical substitute pool. Once we begin seeing more staff absences due to typical colds, flu, etc. we will be faced with a host of challenges as we will not have the staffing needed to adequately cover the existing needs.

Budget – This is a mess at the moment. The 2021 budget has not been finalized at the state level. We have been fortunate to be provided funding through a number of grant programs (i.e. CARES Act, FEMA, Food Security, etc.) Two of these funding sources (CvRF and CARES) are scheduled to sunset on December 30, 2020. This will provide for tremendous challenges as staffing that is tied to this funding will need to be maintained while the funding is scheduled to terminate. We are in good company in terms of this problem as all districts in Massachusetts are facing the same issue. While we are hopeful that the state or federal government will extend this funding, we are preparing for the possibility of that not happening. The school district would need to begin exhausting monies held in revolving accounts to cover staffing costs starting in January

2021 if additional funding is not provided. This would entail spending any reserves that could be afforded in transportation, circuit breaker, and school choice revolver funds. The school district may need to seek permission to utilize the \$200,000 in the special education tuition revolver fund as well. The creation of a budget for FY22 will be challenging. Currently, our plan is to create two budgets based on the scenarios of extending our current reality into FY22 and to also create a budget that is reflective of a typical school year with full in-person instruction.

### **Things Being Worked On**

**Readiness** – If the Department of Public Health requires that we temporarily close an individual school or the district as a whole, we need to be prepared to shift to all-remote instruction. This generally sounds easier to do than it is. Coordinating the four models into one model in a manner that actually works is not going to be like flipping a switch as many think it will be.

**Kindergarten and First Grade Full-Time** – This week I will be putting out a survey to K&1 parents about the possibility of having all students at this level attend in-person on a daily basis. We would maintain the use of the Remote Learning Academy if we do move to full-time in person at this level. This is the only level that we would have the staffing and space to have everyone back and maintain a minimum of three+ feet distancing. This is also the only level at which bussing would not be an issue when having all students in-person. The state prioritizes districts working to bring as many younger elementary students back to in-person as possible. They do so because the social component of their learning is so great, and the remote learning is particularly challenging for our youngest students.

**Snow Days** – The state is overdue in putting out guidance regarding snow days. I believe the state will allow for use of remote instruction in lieu of traditional snow days this year. Questions come up with power outages and student accessibility to devices as many parents will also be working from home on those days. I am hopeful that we will get snow this winter, but only on Friday and Saturday nights.

**Instruction for Absent Students** – As we move into the winter, we are going to have more students kept home sick and possibly quarantined. What to have these students do if they are home sick (exhibiting any of the COVID symptoms) or quarantined is a significant challenge for us. They cannot simply jump into an existing class as that would be very disruptive as the teacher does not know the student and it is not fair for teachers to be dealing with class makeup changing on a daily basis. We are working on creating a fifth model of instruction that would be tailored to individual grade levels, would be largely asynchronous, and would include supports that could be accessed by students when needed. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me with any questions or concerns. I can be reached at [cummingsj@grafton.k12.ma.us](mailto:cummingsj@grafton.k12.ma.us) or by calling 508-839-5421.

### Town Clerk

I conferenced with Attorney Goldberg and will be submitting multiple additional documents that she requested. As the TA advised I we will be emptying the drop box twice a day to keep up with volume. However, it will not be moved at this time given this is where all have come to believe it will be and moving it now will only confuse things. I have worked with the Chief to arrange for two officers at each polling location on election day and dispatch is on the alert should we need assistance on election day or on the early voting days. Otherwise I do believe we are all set. I'm working with the TA to try to develop a Plan B should something happen to me and Counsel has advised the TA may appoint a Temporary Assistant Town Clerk in my absence if needed. That said I believe we are in good hands.

## **PUBLIC SAFETY**

### Police Department

432 log entries were made including 71 - 911 calls, 20 alarm calls, 31 ambulance calls, 8 animal complaints, 1 arrest, 122 business/area checks, 5 disturbance calls, 10 fraud/ID theft complaints, 7 motor vehicle accidents, 22 motor vehicle stops and 46 storm related calls.

I would like to commend the night shift officers and dispatchers for their professionalism and quick response during the storm that occurred throughout the early evening hours on Wednesday, October 7th. There were over 40 storm related calls in a short span of time including trees down, wires down, power outages and blocked roadways. In total, 4 roadways were completely impassable, and 18 roadways were partially obstructed. Thanks also to Grafton DPW for their response.

11 License to carry Firearms applications were received. Weekly Chief's Column posted on "Domestic Violence and Signs of Abuse" in recognition of Domestic Violence Awareness Month. Dispatcher candidates continue to train in the communications center.

### Fire Department

No Report Submitted

### Department of Public Works (Including Engineering, Cemetery & Sewer)

The Highway division of the DPW has started the long-awaited process of moving into the new facility at 64 Old Westboro Road. Residents should be aware that the administrative office which was at the town hall has also relocated to the new facility. We wish to thank the residents for their support in the funding of this new facility.

Highway Department: Routine mowing, trimming, line painting, fleet maintenance, catch basin cleaning, and pothole patching. Continued the cleanup of downed trees and limbs from the storm event on 10/7/20.

Cemetery and Parks: Fall cemetery cleanup continues. Routine mowing, trimming, equipment maintenance, and trash removal. With leaf season upon us, the leaf

collection system was installed on a dept vehicle and weekly collection of fallen leaves has begun. Continued cleaned up of storm debris at all parks, cemeteries, and memorials. Installed two grave foundations. Provided services for two funerals.

Sewer Department: Routine operation and maintenance of the towns wastewater treatment and collection system. Routine administrative functions including billing and collection issues, final billing, and resident questions and requests. Provided inspection services for new service connections and new subdivisions.

#### Engineering

No Report Submitted

#### Health Department

As of October 15, Grafton has been informed of a total of 130 confirmed positive COVID-19 cases since case tracking started earlier this year. As of October 14, Grafton is at a Green status on the State's COVID weekly report and map.

The Worcester DPH nursing staff contacts any confirmed positive cases to review the protocols for proper isolation and quarantine with the cases and monitor each case per protocol. The nurses also contact any close contacts of each case regarding the appropriate protocols.

Grafton Public Schools had their 2nd and 3rd positive case since school started this year. The cases are part of the North Street Elementary School community and Grafton High School community, and the school department worked closely with the Worcester DPH nursing staff regarding the cases. There were no close school contacts identified during the timeframe for potential exposure. The Board of Health is continuing to monitor the case counts in town to identify whether any recommendations or policies should be updated if the case count trends upward further.

### **DEVELOPMENT SERVICES**

#### Building/Zoning

The Building Department processed roughly 22 building permits and 27 mechanical permits which consist of electric, plumbing, gas and mechanical application also including trench permits. In preparation for early voting, we had a temporary handicapped accessible ramp installed at the senior center. The ramp was installed on Thursday.

Our maintenance crew, with our residences' health and safety as their highest priority, will be fogging the senior center and gym with disinfectant on Saturday and Sunday after early voting has ended for the night.

This week the Building Department received a joint memorandum from the State Fire Marshalls office and the BBRS with the requirements for temporary tents and open flame equipment. The Building Department and Fire Department early next week, will

be making field inspections to confirm that all our outdoor venues are complying with these regulations.

### Planning

This week, the Planning Department continued to conduct outreach to local businesses related to the Shop Grafton Program, the holiday shop local program, and completed administrative tasks for the Planning Board and Affordable Housing Trust. Staff conducted a Site Visit at 15 Meadowbrook Road to discuss status of As-Built Plans and remaining work to be completed as well as reviewed ERA Application Approvals, documents related to ongoing litigation and closeout work for the Grafton Open Space and Recreation Plan. Staff also responded to resident concerns regarding public participation during the current state of emergency and meetings with the Zoom format. A follow up letter and staff memo with recommendations for moving forward will be issued shortly.

### Conservation

Phone calls and emails were fielded from residents and project representatives for various inquiries. Staff issued documents following up from the Conservation Commission meeting held on 10/6. Additionally, work continued the FY20 Green Communities Annual Report, as well as the close out for the MAPC streetlight retrofit grant.

## **COMMUNITY SERVICES**

### Recreation Department

Our annual Scarecrow Building Contest will be on October 18 from 11am-1pm and a new Pumpkin Decorating event will be on October 24. Planning is in full swing to adapt our popular Amazing Turkey Challenge to a game of 'Clue' which will be on November 15 and Grafton Celebrates the Holidays which is on Dec. 6 this year.

### Council on Aging

Submitted for approval the purchase order with MHQ for the new senior van. Composed and mailed a letter and application to current Pay as You Throw participants informing them of the new income limits for the subsidized bag program, and the need for them to complete an application with income verification every November 1st. An ad for a P/T van driver was sent to Joan Chase for posting. Attended the Friends of Grafton Elders Zoom meeting. The friends group will be paying for Grab n Go Elder Nutrition meals through the month of November. They also will be contributing towards the cost of the next Drive-By Barbeque scheduled for November 20th. Working on the monthly senior newsletter to send to press next week.

### Library

Grafton met all 2021 MA State Aid to Public Libraries eligibility requirements for staffing, budget, hours open and percent of budget spent on materials for FY20, and submitted over 60 pages of data to the MA Board of Library Commissioners for their review.



Stats at a glance:

190,708 total holdings (all physical and digital items)

123,278 total materials circulated (all physical and digital items)

791 programs

6,610 attendees

Our typical annual State Aid award is around \$20,000 which cannot be used in place of municipal funding, but to supplement it. Our state aid is banked by the Town and administered by the Library Board of Trustees. Past expenditures have included capital projects and architect fees, equipment, staff development, additional museum passes, programs, new collections, and previous years unpaid bills. The majority of our state aid funds are being saved for a donation to the Library's Capital Campaign to defray construction costs. For more information about the State Aid program, please visit <https://mblc.state.ma.us/programs-and-support/state-aid-and-arls/index.php>

Library story times resumed early October and are available via YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCDztdT4ZwbJPXB5K1NOGbFg>

The Children's Room continues a robust schedule of virtual programming, with their first virtual preschool visit to South Grafton Elementary School on Friday October 16 follow by a Mystery reader via Zoom. Young Scientists, sponsored by YMCA Family and Community Partnerships, continues on Thursdays. Please visit our events calendar for more information and to register in advance for those programs that require an RSVP: <https://graftonlibrary.org/events/>

The Director completed a grant application to MA Office on Disability to defray costs of ADA compliant equipment for the library renovation, including the elevator and a ramp. Awards will be announced in December.

#### Veterans Services

No Report Submitted

#### GCTV

Current efforts include, two segments of the Bus Stop Weather report hosted by Julia Koshivos. Bonnie Frederico recorded two episodes of her new program titled "Let's Try Something New". The first two episodes featured the use of watercolor pencils to create a colorful bookmark. Both productions have appeared on "AIR" and on our GraftonTV YouTube account. Testing of audio and video for the upcoming Town Meeting took place Thursday afternoon, with the assistance of the staff from Immedia. Staff continues to maintain coverage for all GGTV events whether LIVE on Zoom.

## TOWN CONSTRUCTION UPDATE

### DPW

We achieved our C of O last week. The Fire Alarm is tested and on, IT switch has been moved from the existing facility. The DPW equipment is going to start moving next week, TBD on being 100% moved, I am expecting it will take them a few weeks to get everything out and moved over. Discussions with the GC and town teams have been ongoing and productive - they have been getting punch list items completed and by the end of the month should be completed.

### Library

All good; roofing is coming along, skylight installation has started and will be complete next week, first floor concrete slab will be poured on Monday. The mason is late starting but plans to increase crews to maintain the schedule.

### Grafton Common Improvement

Paul Cournoyer and I were on a call with the Historic District Commission last night and to get up to speed on this small project that has been in the planning stages for a while and is funded by CPC money. The overall project originally consisted of replacing the existing paved sidewalks on the Common with brick, installing new iron arches with lights at the four entrances, some general electrical improvements, and some new benches. An arborists report determined that excavating adequately for new brick sidewalks could potentially damage most of the larger trees, so the committee is looking at scaling the sidewalk portion of the project back to avoid impacting those trees. The current timeline is to get an RFP together by the end of December so we can bid the work in mid-January in time for work to begin in the Spring. The Town has a standard RFP template that I will use to draft the RFP.

## IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER

**Town Administrator Office Days Next Week: Mon. (afternoon), Tues., and Thurs.**

**Select Board Meetings - Oct 20 & 22 (workshops) Oct 27 (business mtg)**

**Fall Town Meeting has been postponed to October 31, 2020 with a rain date of November 1, with a 2:00 p.m. start on the High School Football field.**