

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR UPDATE

Heather M. Munroe, Town Administrator
September 25, 2023

BOARD/COMMITTEE OPENINGS

Boards, Committees, Commissions

Board of Appeals – There is one two vacant associate position available for the Board of Appeals. Please see the [Town's website](#) for more information.

Cable & Communications Committee – There are currently two positions available on this committee. This committee is responsible for running and maintaining cable access TV channels, live streaming and recording government and community meetings. The committee currently meets monthly. Please see the [Town's website](#) for more information.

DPW Building Committee - The Town of Paxton has reconfigured its DPW Building Committee to update the charge and membership. This Committee will be instrumental in matching the Department of Public Works building infrastructure needs with the Town's financial constraints and the Community desires. There is currently 1 resident vacancies for someone with a marketing/advertising background available. Please see the [Town's website](#) for more information.

Historic District Commission - The Historic District Commission is a group of individuals committed to maintaining the historic integrity and aesthetic appeal of Paxton's treasured landmarks. We work to ensure that our town's rich history remains an integral part of its future. There is currently 1 opening. Please see the [Town's website](#) for more information.

[See the Town's Website for all openings and how to submit an application.](#)

COMMUNITY HAPPENINGS

Check out the [Town's Website](#) for the latest programs.

COA Annual Health Fair – Join the COA for their annual Health Fair on September 27th from 10 am to 1 pm at the Council on Aging, 17 West Street. For more information, check out the [COA's newsletter](#).

DEPARTMENTAL UPDATES

Building Department

In August, the Building Department had 27 permits pulled, which is six less than in July and nine less than the months of August in both FY23 and FY22. The eight building permits consisted: a deck, a basement bulkhead removal, windows, three roofs, and two bathrooms.

Fiscal Year 2022															TOTAL
Permit	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	22-Jan	Feb-22	22-Mar	Apr-22	1-May	Jun-22			
Building	9	11	10	9	11	9	7	6	15	12	8	13			120
Electrical	8	8	16	9	13	10	5	3	9	6	8	12			107
Gas	2	10	3	7	3	2	5	5	5	4	2	5			53
Plumbing	1	7	5	3	5	2	4	3	7	1	6	7			51
Sheet Metal	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	1	1	2	0	1			8
Wood Stove	1	0	3	2	3	3	0	1	1	0	1	0			15
TOTAL	21	36	37	30	36	28	21	19	38	25	25	38			354

Fiscal Year 2023															TOTAL
Permit	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan-23	Feb-23	Mar-23	Apr-23	May-23	June			
Building	9	11	11	14	5	6	11	8	3	15	15	9			117
Electrical	8	8	9	8	3	5	8	4	4	8	6	16			87
Gas	2	10	3	5	5	2	3	2	3	3	1	0			39
Plumbing	1	7	4	5	5	1	7	4	2	3	2	2			43
Sheet Metal	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0			2
Wood Stove	1	0	0	1	5	4	0	1	0	0	0	0			12
TOTAL	21	36	27	33	23	18	30	19	12	29	25	27			300

Fiscal Year 2024															TOTAL
Permit	July	August	September	October	November	December	January	February	March	April	May	June			
Building	16	8													24
Electrical	9	14													23
Gas	1	0													1
Plumbing	5	4													9
Sheet Metal	0	1													1
Wood Stove	2	0													2
TOTAL	33	27	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0			60

DPW

DPW will be starting water hydrant flushing. Customers may notice some discoloration in your water as a result of the sediments from flushing. The water will remain safe to consume.

In order to clean our large water tank, the tank will need to be taken out of service, which will substantially reduce the amount of water the Town has in reserve. As a result, the DPW will be initiating a Water ban during the time of the cleaning beginning on or around 10/18/23, with the current expected date to clean the interior of the tank on 10/25/23.

Once the tank has been cleaned, it will take several days to refill the tank, and additional days to flush, and take samples after that. Once all necessary samples have come back correctly, we will place the tank back in service. The entire process should take 2-3 weeks, dependent on how much flushing is necessary.

Library

The Library Trustees met on the 12th of September and reviewed the submitted procurement documents for the Library Roof, Gutters, and HVAC control system upgrades. After reviewing

all applications, they opted to move forward with the quotes for the gutters and the low slope roof area replacements in hopes of addressing the water leak concerns. The next step is to submit documentation to the Local Historic District and review with CIPC, if there are any concerns.

IT

As time continues, Suzor IT has been working through individual concerns and issues as they arise with departments. They looked at the COA internet/network issues the week of the 20th and will be making recommendations on how to proceed, as several groups have had trouble connecting to the guest network at the COA.

Suzor is working with the Police Department to upgrade the body camera server setup in advance of the technology upgrade. We have ordered a new laptop for the treasurer/collector and our assessor. We are in the process of transitioning over to VADAR cloud (finance software conversion from the server to the cloud) in October. We are also working with Suzor to get a handle on our IT grant for records management software and start sourcing a new Town Hall printer within our budget constraints.

Town Admin

I am recommending that the Select Board hold a Special Town Meeting in November to address one potential zoning bylaw update, acceptance of Olivia Knoll as a public way, and some housekeeping matters. During the month of September, I completed all annual performance reviews with department heads in accordance with Section 10(o) of the Town Charter.

FINANCES

FY23 Year End

The required paperwork for FY23 Year End has been submitted to the State along with our certification requests for Free Cash and Retained Earnings. We expect to hear back from the State around the end of October.

FY23 Audit

The Auditors expect to visit Paxton and begin the FY23 audit around Thanksgiving. The TA's office has submitted all required documentation from our office, outside of availability of files, as requested to the Auditors.

Grants

New

ADA Grant – We submitted a grant again for FY24 for ADA improvements at the COA, with the same details as last year and updated costs totalling around \$25k. We do not expect to hear back until the late fall.

FY24

Recreation Earmark – In the FY24 final budget, the Governor approved an earmark for \$27,000 for enhancements for the recreation department to include the following:

Playground Repair and Mulch (\$4,000)

The Town owns one public playground next to the Paxton Center School. During school hours, the students use the playground for recess. After hours, the playground is utilized during the afterschool program and by members of the public. The playground needs more odds/ends maintenance to keep all parts safe. In addition, because of the after-school program, we must maintain a minimum level of 9 inches of mulch around all potential fall zones.

2. Adjustable Basketball Hoops at the Paxton Center School (\$18,000)

The Recreation program runs a basketball program at the Paxton Center School. The current basketball hoops do not allow for younger kids to play and require volunteers to tediously attach and manually lower basketball hoops for each game, which brings with it its own safety risk. If we were to replace current hoops with four adjustable hoops, that would make them versatile, serve both the basketball program and the students at the Paxton Center School, and would alleviate the chance of injury through manual adjustments.

3. Wentworth Bathroom Repairs (\$5,000)

The Recreation and Town own a bathhouse out by our Wentworth field. The bathhouse is used during games and during the Summer Program. The building is old and in dire need of repairs.

Town Common Earmark – In the FY24 final budget, the Governor approved an earmark for \$50,000 for a design, feasibility, and traffic study for the town common/town center.

Outstanding FY23

Community One Stop – Applied for West Street. Expected decision late Fall 2023.

Ambulance Certified Public Expenditure Program –\$62,566 - Pending

Libraries Transforming Communities: Accessible Small and Rural Communities.
\$20,000 project to support Sensory Processing Disorder.

Community Compact (IT) Grant –\$115,000 to support conversion to records management system, including scanning and electronically filing records.

Community Compact Grant “HR Procedures” – Turnover in staff at Collin’s Center. Working with them to finish up the project. Completed.

Hazard Mitigation Planning Grant –\$4,455 reimbursable grant to update the Town’s Hazard Mitigation Plan.

Small Bridge Grant (2019) – Planning Grant Black Hill Road, extended until December 2023.

State Earmark of Funds – Zoning Bylaw rewrite, underway.

Procurement:

Richards Memorial Library Low Slope Roof – Three quotes were submitted, with the lowest by FRG in the amount of just under \$30k. Documents are under review.

Richards Memorial Library HVAC Controls Update – One quote was received that exceeded the budgeted amount. Documents are being reviewed and a new process is likely to be started in the next few months.

Richards Memorial Library Gutter Replacement – Three quotes were received, with the lowest quote from Gutters by Mac in the amount of \$15,000. Documents are currently being reviewed.

To do:

- ✓ Records Building – Fence
- ✓ Town Common area drainage

PROJECTS

Black Hill Bridge Grant – This project began in 2020 when the State approved a grant for the study on Black Hill Bridge with CHA. We have been through two extensions for this project with MassDOT, and have been assured by CHA that we will be able to complete the work before the end of this calendar year, which will line us up to apply for a construction grant.

While the study is underway, the State DOT and our consultant CHA both recommend consideration of closing the road over the bridge for safety reasons.

DPW Earmark – We are in the process of getting started on the State Earmark we received in the Spring for \$200k for the DPW building improvements. We are working closely with vendors for accurate quotes to include a replacement/new septic system for the DPW, two bathrooms, and some other modifications that will last for the long-term.

The Hills at Paxton Commons – A few months ago we received concerns from residents about the increase in monthly rates at the Hills. We reached out to legal counsel, our State Representative Kim Ferguson’s Office, and relevant state agencies. In the end, we confirmed that the Town and the Mass Housing Partnership have an interest in ensuring that the rental rates are affordable and comply with the current rent adjustment figures issued by the State. At this time, the Hills at Paxton Commons is in compliance with all requirements. Residents experiencing issues or concerns with rent prices at the Hills in the future are encouraged to reach out to the Town Administrator’s Office.

Zoning Bylaw Earmark – The work under the State Earmark we received in the Spring for \$75k has begun. Our Zoning Bylaw Steering Group met with CMRPC in July and again in August. Our first matter of business was to work on the MBTA Zoning bylaw, followed by conduct a survey of Town Residents, followed by an initial review by (ZBA, Planning, Town

Services Coordinator, EDC, and Building Commissioner) on the current Zoning Bylaws and where changes and/or concerns exist.

Earlier this month, we worked with the Light Company to send out surveys to our residents/businesses in Town. Unfortunately, the third party company that does the mailing did not include the surveys in the August billing and it will not be included until September. In the meantime, we sent out an additional 500+ surveys to those who do not get a hard copy bill and have already received more than 50 responses.

JOB OPENINGS

Police Officer – There is one opening for a police officer.

Temporary Full-time benefited Mechanic/Heavy Equipment Operator- The position for a temporary mechanic/heavy equipment operator has been posted. This person will fill in for our mechanic who will be on military leave for the next 12-18 months.