

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR UPDATE

Heather M. Munroe, Town Administrator
August 22, 2023

BOARD/COMMITTEE OPENINGS

Boards, Committees, Commissions

Bay Path Regional Vocational Technical High School – The Committee consists of 20 elected members, two from each of the 10 Town's. The vacancy is an elected position, that once appointed by the Select Board, the person will serve until the next Annual Town Election (May 2024) in which they will be required to run for election to maintain the seat. There is currently 1 vacancy. Please see the [Town's website](#) for more information.

Board of Appeals – There are two vacant associate positions available for the Board of Appeals. 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 are currently 4 resident vacancies. 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

The Building Department has had a recent increase in permits over the last few months. We finished Fiscal Year 2023 with a total of 300 permits, down 54 permits from Fiscal Year 2022, which resulted in the difference of only 3 less building permits in FY23 than in FY22.

FY24 is off to a good start in building permits. July reached 33 permits, where in the past two fiscal years (22 & 23) we had only 22 permits each year, of those permits 16 constitute building

permits, compared to the prior FY's there were only 9! Of the 16 permits, there were three commercial permits – AMC baseball field, PCS Kitchen Hood, and First Congregational Church lift & shaft. Of the remaining 13 permits, they included: bathroom (3), deck, HVAC, Siding, doors, in-ground swimming pool, roof (3), addition, and replacement ceiling.

Fiscal Year 2022														
Permit	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	22-Jan	Feb-22	22-Mar	Apr-22	1-May	Jun-22	TOTAL	
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														
Permit	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan-23	Feb-23	Mar-23	Apr-23	May-23	June	TOTAL	
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														
Permit	July	August	September	October	November	December	January	Februa	March	April	May	June	TOTAL	
Building	16												16	
Electrical	9												9	
Gas	1												1	
Plumbing	5												5	
Sheet Metal	0												0	
Wood Stove	2												2	
TOTAL	33	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	33	

DPW

We are currently working on our second round of posting for the temporary DPW Mechanic position, and have now increased the pay range from Step 6-Step 12. There are limited qualified mechanics currently on the market and an overwhelming need for the skill. We have had little success with trying to use outside vendors to fill the need, the last two procurements were not successful. We will continue to troubleshoot and work closely with the union to find a way to make this work.

Library

In recent weeks, the Library has sustained additional flooding and water damage due to storms. The Insurance company has been out and we are waiting for a resolution to our request. In the meantime, there is immediate threats with the gutter system failing, and the low slope areas of the roofing allowing water through without proper protection. Pam was able to work with some vendors and together we were able to put together some procurement documents for this work.

In addition to the outside work needed, when the boilers were replaced last year, the HVAC control system was not updated, and the heat/air conditioning is not working properly as a result. We have also placed procurement documents out to replace the current HVAC controls.

IT

We have had a representative from Suzor IT coming in person on a weekly basis to work with staff and begin the slow transition from the server to Office 365. We will continue working to have all department heads meet with the IT Director and work through current IT issues that have been ongoing.

Town Hall/COA

The Town Hall and COA will be closed on Monday, August 28th from 10:30 am- 1 pm in order to attend the services for long-time Town volunteer and community member, Bob Wilby.

FINANCES

Grants

NEW 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 – The solicitation for quotes went out on August 16th and is due back at 12 noon on the 30th of August.

Richards Memorial Library HVAC Controls Update - The solicitation for quotes went out on August 16th and is due back at 12 noon on the 30th of August.

Richards Memorial Library Gutter Replacement - The solicitation for quotes went out on August 16th and is due back at 12 noon on the 30th of August.

Cable Access Equipment – The RFP for Cable Access Equipment went out in July is due back on Wednesday, August 23rd.

Town Audit – We received two responses to our request, one was from our current auditor, Roselli & Clark, and from Malcolm. The SB awarded the three year contract to Roselli & Clark, who had the lowest price.

Mobile Mechanic – This bid went out and we only received one bid, higher than we budgeted in return.

Mechanic Services -- This bid went out and we did not receive any bids.

To do:

- ✓ Records Building – Fence
- ✓ Town Common area drainage
- ✓ Well Pump - Recreation

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.