



MEMORANDUM

TO: Select Board

FROM: John C. Curran, Town Manager

CC: Clancy Main, Assistant Town Manager
Robert Maynard, Director of Administrative Services

SUBJECT: Town Manager's Report, February 26, 2024
Agenda Item #8

DATE: February 23, 2024

Professional Recognition

The Town Clerks office has been hard at work preparing for the 2024 Election Season. I would like to thank them for all their efforts during the Special Election, handling absentee and early voting as well as the election itself. All the while Super Tuesday is only weeks way. We are very lucky to have such a dedicated and hard-working Town Clerks office here in Billerica.

FY2025 Budget

The Budget presentation will be done on March 4th. I am expecting to have a report from CLA by that time regarding the assessment of the School Department books. The Superintendent will attend that meeting to assist with the discussion of this report.

Greater Lowell Vision Zero

NMCOG is hosting their first annual *Greater Lowell Vision Zero* Public Forum on February 27th on Zoom from 6PM- 8PM. You can register using the link below. NMCOG will apply an equitable approach, using the most recent and available data to inform and eliminate traffic deaths and life-changing injuries in the Greater Lowell Region. If you can't, make the public forum take the survey below!

Zoom Link; [Meeting Registration - Zoom](#)

Survey Link; [Greater Lowell Vision Zero \(metroquestsurvey.com\)](https://metroquestsurvey.com)

PHR – Award Winner

A couple of months ago, our Recreation Director, David Grubb, nominated the PHR Recreation Complex for a state award given out annually by the Massachusetts Recreation and Park Association. I am thrilled to share with you that PHR has been chosen as the recipient of the 2024 MRPA Design of Facility Award!

DPW Building

The project team is still going through the permitting process with Conservation and the Planning Board. We expect that to be wrapped up next month. We are also reviewing pre-qualifications for all potential bidders over the next two weeks.

MBTA Communities

In December, the Planning and Community Development staff sent the draft zoning and district maps to the state's EOHLIC (Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities) for their preliminary compliance review. It is currently referred to as the "MBTA Communities Multifamily Overlay District" or "MCMOD". In the meantime, PCD staff has been planning an extensive outreach effort, including weekly "Ask a Planner" work sessions, a 2nd public open house, and presentations to various boards, commissions, and organizations. The Town is preparing to submit a warrant article for MBTA zoning at the Spring Town Meeting.

11 Concord Road

The project is continuing to move forward. It is expected the Food Pantry will be able to move in as planned in early April. However, the permanent electric panel will not be available until June, delaying the installation of the walk-in refrigeration/freezer until that time. This will not affect the Pantries ability to operate, will just delay when they have the walk-ins.

Talbot Mills Dam

A Single Environmental Impact Report (SEIR) has been submitted to the MEPA Office for the Talbot Mills Dam Removal on behalf of the dam owner, CRT Development Realty, LLC. An EENF for the project was noticed in the Environmental Monitor on July 10, 2023, and an EENF Certificate was issued by the EEA Secretary on September 1, 2023. Hardcopies of the SEIR are being sent to the Massachusetts Historical Commission and the Billerica Public Library, where it can be viewed by the public. MEPA will be issuing information about the public comment process to the Select Board office and my office after the SEIR is published in the *Environmental Monitor*.

Health Insurance

Over the past few years, the Town has been made aware by potential job candidates that health insurance rates are higher than surrounding communities. It has also been an issue raised by current employees as well. The Town is planning to propose changes that will benefit current employees and future employees, and positively impact our OPEB situation. The Town will be proposing to change the Town health insurance contribution from 65.9% to 70% for Family Plan HMO Blue Members. This could save employees around \$1,000 a year. The Town will also be offering additional high-deductible plans with a health savings account. Another proposal includes offering a cost share assistance program for high-cost specialty medications. All these are a benefit and cost savings to the employee.

Currently, the Town reimburses for Medicare Part B Premiums. Billerica is one of the few communities who offer this benefit. This significantly impacts our OPEB liability. The Town is proposing that any employee who has less than ten years of municipal service as of July 1, 2024 and will retire with the Town of Billerica will not be eligible for that benefit. All future employees will also not be eligible.

More details are attached in my letter below. If the Select Board has no hesitation I will proceed to meet with the unions.

CSX Property Update

This property is not owned by CSX. The use was abandoned by the Railroad in 1962. Statutorily, the land goes back to the previous owner if it was leased or gained through an easement. This is how this parcel was obtained by the Railroad. Accordingly, the land at the centerline on the Town side of this parcel reverts back to the Town. The residential side reverts to all the residential owners along the

railroad ROW. We, therefore, must continue upon our path of taking these properties. The original appropriation made at Town Meeting from CPA funds will be used for this purpose. If more is needed it will be covered by the YDBP Easement Article this Spring. The YDBP will be traversing two thirds of this right of way.

Emergency Relief Money

We just received this \$165,000 from the State for damages caused by the flood. It is not clear how the money can be used. We are awaiting guidance from the DOR. It is likely that the money would cover local municipal costs incurred because of the storm. Billerica was the only municipality in Middlesex County to receive relief money.

Salem and Gray

Please see the attached letter below. I will have more information at the March 6th meeting.



Town of Billerica

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Town Manager

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February 21, 2024

Dear Local Billerica Union Presidents:

I hope this note finds you well. The Town of Billerica is hoping to work with the Local Unions to enhance our Health Insurance benefits. These proposed changes will create positive financial impacts for the employees, improve retention and broaden plan options for Town employees. These proposed changes aim to support our workforce's well-being and job satisfaction.

To facilitate this, we seek to revive the Insurance Advisory Committee and invite each Union to appoint a representative for a meeting in the Town Hall Auditorium at a yet-to-be-determined time. This session will focus on the Town reviewing the proposed benefits changes and the vital role of the committee moving forward.

Proposed Changes:

Blue Cross Blue Shield HMO Family Plan: The Town will increase contributions from 65.9% to 70%.

Blue Cross Blue Shield High Deductible Plan with Health Savings Account: Please see attached.

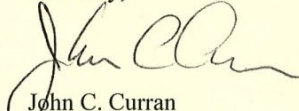
Cost Share Assistance Program, Administered by Pillar Rx: This is a program that addresses certain specialty medications. It is a voluntary program that will save both the Town and the member by taking advantage of pharmaceutical manufacturers coupons. Please see other attached material.

Medicare Part B Reimbursement: The Town currently reimburses retirees Medicare Part B Premiums. The Town will grandfather in all employees who have ten years of municipal service with the Town of Billerica as of July 1, 2024. Any employee who retires from Billerica with less than ten years of service on that date will not be eligible for this program. All future employees will not be eligible for Medicare Part B Premium Reimbursement.

As soon as we confirm a meeting date, please notify Assistant Town Manager Clancy Main with your representative's name, so as to ensure all Unions are represented and attending.

Thank you for your cooperation and the role you play for the Town's employees. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,


John C. Curran
Town Manager



To: Kelley Conway, P.E. Job No: 11014
Date: February 21, 2024
Subject: **Salem Road (Route 129) at Gray Street Safety Evaluation, Billerica, MA**
Project Status

The following is an update on the status of the above referenced study as of February 21, 2024:

- 1) A Site visit took place on January 31, 2024. Tasks performed included field observations, photos of existing features, and site distance evaluations.
- 2) Traffic volume data, including turning movement counts and daily counts were collected on February 7, 2024. The data has been reviewed, summarized, and the peak hours and operating speeds have been determined. Traffic turning movement volume diagrams have been developed. In addition, future year 2034 turning movement volumes were determined and summarized.
- 3) Crash data at the three study intersections has been obtained and summarized. Crash rate calculations have been performed and collision diagrams have been developed. A Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) Crash Cluster has been identified at Salem Road and Gray Street.
- 4) A capacity analysis has been performed for all study intersection using Synchro for the Existing and No Build traffic conditions, and the results of each analysis have been summarized, including Levels of Service (LOS), delays and queues. Build conditions LOS analysis was conducted for All-Way Stop control at Salem Road and Gray Street. We are in the process of evaluating signal warrants at Salem Road and Gray Street and Salem Road and Andover Road. The analysis results will be provided in the Technical Report.
- 5) A draft of the Technical Report is being developed and will include draft short-term and long-term recommendations. A Technical Appendix including data and analysis results is being compiled. Draft report to be delivered for Town review the week of February 26, 2024.