

Manager's project update: March 7, 2022 meeting

Below please find a brief summary and update of on-going projects.

Highlights:

The proposed Town Manager's budget is out and preparation for the March 10th public hearing is underway.

We have received the draft grant award for the \$350,000 award under the State Trails grant for Nathan Hale Road and Bear Swamp Road.

The first of two bids for the \$1.5 million Orchard Hills renovation project were opened and are being reviewed.

The Library renovation project is out to bid.

SLR is proceeding with the grant-funded consulting for a State-mandated affordable housing study, and work is underway. An interactive community housing survey is now live on a project web page.

UCONN's final delivery of classroom ventilators, is scheduled for Monday March 7th at Coventry High School.

Public Works/Engineering

LOTICIP grants: The Swamp Rd./Rt. 44 project is underway. Spazzarini Construction is ordering supplies. During the winter months the overhead utilities will be relocated, allowing a quick start in spring.

Todd Penney continues to work toward getting the plans and specs for the Community Connectivity grant for sidewalks on Main Street from Hemlock Point Lane to approximately Cheney Lane. Starting to seek the required easements from the State and neighbors. This has slipped to a summer 2022 construction project.

Both the softball project and transfer station preliminary designs are complete. Construction specifications are nearing completion, with bidding planned in a month or so. Start of construction is being pushed to summer. The transfer station is exceeding our budget estimates due to more restrictive State regulations. We are trying to value engineer it but will need more federal ARPA funds.

We have finally been authorized to select an engineer for the LOTICIP grant for the intersection of Swamp and South, including the South Street curves, and a dip in Swamp Road. Construction is hoped for the summer of 2023. The Council has funded a portion of the design fees. We have split the project into two phases: preliminary and bidding/construction to fund over two fiscal years. It is expected to be a significant amount since this is a \$3,000,000 grant.

We would like to get into design and have that meeting at the traditional preliminary design stage. Meetings have been held with several of the impacted property owners.

Plans for the South Street road reconstruction and sidewalks near the Homestead have been submitted and we expect to be out to bid soon. Still in some final discussion about pavement thickness. All easements and paperwork have been filed. We believe bidding will be in the next few months for a late spring start.

Bids were opened for the methane venting at the Miller Richardson football field, funded in part by a STEAP grant. A bid alternate included a recreational softball facility in the rear left corner. The plans are being evaluated but additional funds are required to do the whole scope. We hope for a spring construction start. The bid award is waiting for a Council decision on an adult softball field, which will require an additional \$50,000....which is a modest investment for a softball field.

The State preliminary design of the Hop River Road Bridge has reached the 90% design stage. The project has slipped to 2023 construction and the price has increased. We are waiting for a decision, but the local match may be waived under the Federal Infrastructure Act. Interviews for an inspection firm are being scheduled.

We are looking at several culvert replacements on Bunker Hill and Parker Bridge Road for the next Local Bridge grant round in the spring of 2022. We are ready for grant submissions for these two expensive culverts, both of which are in our CIP budget. This grant, if we are awarded one or both, would pay 50% of construction. These two projects are complicated by a pending Andover bridge replacement. We need to coordinate the three projects to assure access to houses and proper traffic detours. We also have to fully replace the Broadway culvert, which will not be eligible for State funds. We will need money for design, and this will likely need to be added to a future bonding package. There is a possibility CRCOG will have a LOTCIP culvert round which covers 100% of construction costs, or ARPA funding.

The DEEP Microgrid project (\$4,000,000 grant) is in a holding pattern while Tritec and Coventry Microgrid negotiate a buyout. We understand the parties have reached an agreement in principle, but the written agreement is not moving at an acceptable pace. DEEP has given a verbal extension on the deadline, but it is not without limits. If they reach agreement Tritec will fund the required Eversource interconnect plan and cost estimate for the transfer switch. The Office of Consumer Counsel will need to review pricing to Orchard Hills residents when available. We will need to restart negotiations for pricing and contract terms and will work on this through several task groups and all boards. It is scheduled that this will be completed by June. It is clear we are reaching a go/no go decision with Tritec.

We have hired B & L to design a new transfer station next to the DPW facility using ARP funds. The design will have concepts for future needs which may not be built now. We have approved a concept plan, and are now asking for cost estimates, tasks the town could do, and a possible phasing schedule. We hope to bid in a month or so. The initial cost estimates far

exceeded the original budget. It is being scaled back and the Town may need to value engineer it. Part of the reason for higher costs are State regulations.

Bill Watkins submitted a DERA grant application for a replacement diesel truck with one that pollutes less. We expect to hear in a couple months.

Public Safety: Police: I have asked former Chief Palmer to help with the initial stages of Police Chief recruitment. The public survey was launched and was featured on the home page of our website through February 25. We are still recruiting for one more officer to get to full staffing, and trying to reserve a slot in the July Police Academy. Our new cruiser is in and almost ready for service. This is good, since a cruiser was hit by another vehicle and will be out of service for several weeks. We have decided to wait for the new Chief to be appointed to make the Sergeant appointments. Jeff Spadjinske's appointment as Acting Chief leaves us with only two other sergeants. We just received a resignation from Officer Bona and our Boating Officer will not be returning this summer.

Fire EMS: The replacement fire truck has been ordered and will take another five months to build. Building improvements at the Merrow Road substation are now underway. The department has moved on to the second phase of a voluntary OSHA compliance process to review of our policies and facilities. Our alternative ambulance replacement has been ordered and confirmed with a possible June delivery. The ambulance fund deficiency was discussed with the Finance committee. An order has been submitted to replace older (expired) Air Pacs.

Finance: We are scheduling a bond sale for April for existing projects. We are now fine-tuning pricing for ventilation at the high school and middle school, and signed contracts to start a cost benefit study of considering a "renovate as new" option. It is a time-consuming but good evaluative process, which will identify and cost out future needs at the high and middle schools. This approach may allow the State to fund some of the HVAC and AC projects as well as already programmed (but not funded) replacements for windows and minor ADA work. So far the State has agreed to share in the cost of the new rooftop air intake work as part of the high school roofing project, which may lead to increased State cost sharing and avoid cutting open a new roof at a later date. Applications for roof funding were just re-submitted, and should be approved this month. We are hoping to get out to bid soon.

We continue to work with the Finance Committee and Town Council on the complicated American Rescue Plan funding planning. The final rules by the Treasury Department opened many more options to consider. These projects will need to be integrated with the upcoming budget. Efforts at updating online assessing data and mapping are also underway. We are working with CRCOG on finding the best and most cost effective means to accomplish this.

Development Group: We hope to get moving on the local agreements required to allow an extension to the Bolton Lakes sewer system. A meeting needs to be set up with Bolton to discuss. WPCA submitted an ARP grant request which is pending. We have diverted attention to the treatment plant in hopes of getting Federal Rescue Act funds for a connection to Windham with a positive first meeting last week. We are meeting with developers and finance groups

interested in the Bolton town line area. Hytone Farm is seeking building permits for an approved anaerobic digester. We believe this will start in a few months. PZC had adopted a moratorium on cannabis retail sales and appointed a subcommittee to work on whether to allow it, and if so, under what conditions. The four-town Economic Vitality group is meeting to work out a regional events calendar and submitted an ARP grant for economic development consulting. They are looking at creating a logo. SLR, our consultant on Housing Affordability are seeking community input and have a first draft of a framework of a plan. A reminder this study is required by State law. A survey is now available on the project web page. The study is anticipated to be complete by late spring. Cassidy Hill Vineyards has hired an engineer to prepare plans requested by the planning commission to come into compliance. They also are working to resolve issues with the State Liquor Control Commission.

We received the grant paperwork for the joint Mansfield/Coventry Eagleville Fanwort project and submitted Hydrilla grant paperwork for this summer, and Eric Trott received notice of a \$25,000 grant for this year's treatment of Hydrilla on Coventry Lake. We are working on reviewing a draft of the revised scope of work for the Nathan Hale trails grant to get that grant contract finalized.

Caprilands Estate is objecting to a short sale of Dr. Cook's house which reduced the amount of funds available to the estate. Any proceeds received will be governed by the State's Attorney General's office, which liked the idea of setting up a trust to keep Adelma's legacy alive. It is slowly moving forward.

We have a signed one-year extension of the Farmers' Market lease with the Homestead. This will allow the Landmarks consulting project of their holdings to be completed before entering into a longer contract.

HR issues:

We have conducted several negotiations sessions for all Town and School AFSCME groups for pension and now have revised cost estimates which will allow us to re-engage. We need to start negotiations with the Police and Public Works unions. Many new issues on COVID-19 leave, and OSHA regulations, have been reviewed and proposed changes to the personnel rule are pending before the Council. We have advertised for a Police Chief, with a March 4 application deadline. We are now arranging and screening an interview process. Over 150 responses to our survey on the characteristics of the candidate have been received. The Department will also be conducting a community survey in March as part of their reaccreditation process. The Sergeant promotional testing is complete with the process on hold for now until we have a new Chief. We continue to discuss options for a replacement Cemetery Sexton with a revised job description now adopted.

We have hired a new DPW Maintainer I, who has started; unfortunately we just received a resignation of a DPW Maintainer I who has taken a job with the Town of South Windsor as an Engineering Tech. Steven Prattson has started as our new Building Official. We are recruiting for a Revenue Clerk due to promotions. We have hired a new Minutes Clerk for Finance and Steering who started on 2/28, and are reviewing applications for Senior Center Assistant with a first round of screening planned soon.

Other projects:

The Walls Committee has signed an agreement with DiBlasi Engineering for this final design work which will include a construction cost estimate. It may be possible that some areas can be worked on during April vacation with the balance this summer. Some additional funds for construction will likely be needed. CHS and GHR roof plans were updated and with the additional funds from the November vote. We await State authorization to bid hopefully in March. We are planning to replace the high school unit ventilators only with the existing funding if we include some ARP money. At some point the Building Committee would like an optional bonding question to consider air conditioning. Pricing for that option was presented at the committee's October meeting. We are proceeding with a "renovate as new" option which would cover additional items in our capital budget and may fund HVAC including air with the State aid at 55%. A new State program is being proposed for school air funding.

Economic development projects have taken a back seat to other urgent work. A local barber shop is now open in Ackert Electric's building and Captain Hale Financial is also open on Rt. 44.

The Library project is out to bid with a pre-bid walk through this week and bid opening the end of the month. The construction could start in April with a completion in spring.

We are in construction for CDBG re-spending fund to install touchless bathrooms and doors at the Senior Center and community buildings at Orchard Hills. We also were approved for ADA funds for our three museums in Town. I have met with the Glass Museum on a proposed scope. I have a proposal from an architect to oversee this work. We are verifying we can use the same CRCOG pre-bid contractor for these projects in addition to the other touchless project, and if so, it will simplify things. We will reach out to the other museums as time allows. We will pause a bit on these to allow a couple of housing rehab projects to be addressed. So likely in springtime.

The EDC authorized an excellence in service award program for local employees. The time period is now up and EDC will make announcements later this month.

Human Services has reconvened their Advisory Committees and is trying to reinvigorate the Human Rights Commission and also staff the Community Conversations initiative. They are receiving generous food donations, and have geared up for energy assistance. A drive-through food distribution event is scheduled for March 25. The Juvenile Review Board is the busiest it ever has been. The Senior Center and transportation services are getting more active too.