

Manager's project update: Jan. 17 meeting

Below please find a brief summary and update of ongoing projects.

Highlights:

With the announcement that the 1.2 million dollars for our Rt 44 sewer project was included in the National Budget reconciliation vote we are moving ahead with getting the Intertown agreements moving.

CHS walls work is now complete and passed all required testing.

The High school HVAC question passed allowing this project to move forward, hopefully this summer. The full scope will depend on whether we get the School HVAC grant.

Public Works/Engineering

LOTICIP grants: Awarded South/Swamp Lotcip design to VHB. First design meeting scheduled for 1/13. Awarded Daly Road II grant application to Jacobson Engineering with application due in mid-February. This scope will continue the Daly Road project from where the funded Lotcip grant ends (entering design stage) through and including the rotary.

Todd Penney will be able to get back to work on getting the plans and specs for the Community Connectivity grant for sidewalks on Main Street from Hemlock Point Lane to approximately Cheney Lane. A spring 2023 construction is now planned.

The State-designed Hop River Road Bridge replacement bids were rejected and it will be rebid in a few months for construction in 2024.

We did not receive either of the grant applications for this year's Local Bridge grant round, one located on Bunker Hill Road and the other on Parker Bridge Road. We will need to evaluate whether to fix one with the bond funds, or try for grants again next year since a lot of our competition is out of the way, and our bond is for 4 years. We also have to fully replace the Broadway culvert and will look for grant funding or consider use of bond funds. We reviewed the new 100% rural roads grant (TRIP) which has an early February application date and based on the scoring matrix will be looking at a pedestrian based project of making the South Street sidewalks ADA accessible and adding pedestrian-activated cross walk lights on Main Street and at GH Robertson School. This also is due in early February.

We received a report from Jacobson Engineering on a study of the 16 larger Town bridges. Two appear to qualify for the 100% funding level; Depot Road and Brigham Hill (both over the Willimantic River). The Council gave us funds to proceed with applications. We have submitted both pre-applications. Brigham Hill is \$5.2 million and Depot Road is \$7.4 million. We await to hear the results of these submissions.

We continue to have productive meetings with Greenskies, the company considering acquiring the Microgrid project including the \$4,000,000 grant. We submitted a full application for a Federal FEMA BRIC grant on the December 2 deadline for over a million dollars for the underground wiring for this project. Prospects for this grant are unknown but DEEP suggested we apply. We expect to hear soon. I also have a call this week with our attorneys on a revised draft Microgrid agreement. The Board staff is reviewing a similar agreement. We also are looking at proposals for additional solar at other locations.

Construction of the first girls' softball field is on hold for winter and the top soil has been stockpiled for spring spreading and seeding to allow fencing and possible irrigation to be installed. The STEAP grant

application paperwork for the second softball field is being signed and sent back to the State. We are getting it packaged to go out to bid soon to allow spring construction. We also need to plan the best uses for the \$500,000 of anticipated State bonding for Miller Richardson park, ADA and equity projects. The Recreation Commission will be spearheading this grant.

Our wetlands permits for the Nathan Hale trails grant was withdrawn due to incomplete survey work; it will be resubmitted soon. Jacobson Engineering was hired to conduct a design study for a small bridge to cross Rufus Brook on Bear Swamp Road as part of the trails grant.

Staff is preparing a new trails grant from South Street to the Skungamaug River to replace the lost fishing access. This is also due in early February.

Public Safety - Police: The Chief is nearing a January decision on the promotion of one Sergeant. We have an acceptance for a certified Officer who will start in early February and is retiring from another department.

Fire EMS: Our new fire truck is in town and needs radios and a few item before going into service. Work continues on reviewing ways to make the ambulance service more financially sustainable. A strategic plan conducted by the department was adopted and committees are being set up for implementation.

Finance: The high school roof is now ready for solar which may merge into the Microgrid project. The possible middle school renovate-as-new concept discussion was set aside awaiting the outcome of the new HVAC grants. This new grant round was much more competitive than we thought, but we should hear in February. An adjourned Town Meeting to authorize the reallocation of surplus roof funds and to borrow a bit more to allow us to implement the grant passed on January 10th. If we do not get the grant we will only complete the high school unit ventilator work. We expect to be able to get some projects out to bid for work next summer. School walls work is now officially complete. We continue to work with the Finance Committee and Town Council on the complicated American Rescue Plan funding planning. The draft of annual audit has been received and will be presented in February.

Development Group: We are following up on meeting with the Town of Manchester on the local agreements required to allow an extension to the Bolton Lakes sewer system. The Bolton Lakes Sewer Authority discussed it favorably and have it on the agenda for a vote this month. The Federal budget includes 1.2 million dollars to assist in funding the work. We are also paying attention to the treatment plant in hopes of getting Federal Rescue Act funds for a connection to Windham or expansion. We have hired Tighe and Bond to update a sewer facilities plan. DEEP agreed with the scope of work and will cover around 50% of the cost of the study, with the WPCA paying the rest. This study could lead to future Federal Infrastructure funding. We continue to meet with developers and finance groups interested in the Bolton town line area. Construction for the Hytone Farm anaerobic digester project is underway with consideration of a phase two to focus on food waste...and an offer to sell the Town discounted power. We expect applications to PZC in a couple of months. PZC's cannabis regulations are complete and went to a fairly quiet public hearing. Adoption is likely later this month. Two citizens in town received State licenses for transportation of cannabis and are expressing interest in establishing some type of related business in town. The four-town Economic Vitality group is continues to meet to work out a regional events calendar and submitted an ARP grant for economic development consulting. Construction for the new dentist's office next to Dollar General is making progress, and an oral surgeon is also moving into the building. The Economic Development Commission created a subcommittee to focus on the future development at the Bolton town line. New regulations by both towns will be required. The house at Caprilands was purchased for relocation and reconstruction in New York. Disassembly is complete. Two restaurants are finally going through the permit process to allow re-opening.

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 are running out of time for negotiations with the Public Works union. Selected a Lead Mechanic and are finalizing an offer to a Mechanic II. We have made a conditional offer to a candidate for the part time Senior Center Assistant position. Had a candidate accept an offer to serve as a Certified Police Officer. Considering one finalist for the part time Engineering Tech. My UConn MPA intern is helping on several personnel issues (evaluations, salary study, and job descriptions), programs/events, and special projects such as a community orientation guide, web site updating, BRIC grants and assisting on a crowdfunding project through the Sustainability program to make some improvements to the band shell and nearby area. The Lion's Club will assist in getting the number of donors to match the \$7,500 grant. The deadline to respond to the RFP for an executive search firm for the Manager recruitment has passed, and 3 proposals were received. Interviews being set up by the Council.

Other projects:

Work is underway for the housing unit renovations at Orchard Hills under the CDBG grant. The sewer line replacement is mostly complete and they will be moving into the unit renovations now.

We received CT DEEP's permission for work at Creaser Park. We have awarded the bid for the demo of the front two cabins. The demo permit has been issued. The fire department may do some training there before they are taken down. The cabin nearest to the pavilion can be converted into public bathrooms and a small meeting space, and can be rented out with the pavilion to provide a better level of service for events like weddings. It may be something to consider if ARPA money is available. The final building will be stabilized while the condition is further assessed, options discussed, and funding allocated.

The Microgrid project continues to be analyzed for financial viability and discussions are underway with a new financing partner. Greenskies came out for a productive site visit and we submitted a full application for a FEMA BRIC grant for over a million dollars. We await hearing the results. We are trying to coordinate the CHS solar into the project to reduce the amount of natural gas used. CT DEEP is still supportive of the project. We also met with a vendor who is interested in installing solar over our dumpsters at the transfer station. Also have an offer to buy power from the anaerobic digester at below market price.

We started some work on the Trails grant, but winter set in. Hired Jacobson Engineering to review alternatives for a stream crossing on Bear Swamp Road. Spazzarini Construction did a few days of work on the Nathan Hale Road section of the trail. Looking at another trails grant due in February to go from South Street to the Skungamaug River to restore lost fishing access.

Had a meeting with the Library contractor to push them along since they are behind schedule. The foundation is finally complete and walls will start soon.

We were awarded some funds for the two water grants we submitted with CT Water. We are evaluating them with CT Water. In related news CT Water reaffirmed they will be replacing water mains in the Pilgrim Hills neighborhood ahead of our road work. A coordination meeting has been scheduled.