

Manager's project update: Dec. 5 meeting

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

Highlights:

Have hired a Planning Technician/Zoning Enforcement Officer, and Maintainer-Custodian. Both are starting soon. Second round interviews for Lead Mechanic are scheduled.

Major road progress: Squeezed in shimming Silver Street and Barnsbee Lane. Holding off the final wear course of paving on the new binder on South Street until spring.

Both the High School HVAC grant and BRIC grant for the Microgrid should be submitted on time this week.

Public Works/Engineering

LOTICIP grants: The Swamp Rd/Rt. 44 project paving is complete. Landscaping mostly complete. The new Town of Coventry welcome sign is installed. State accepted the signal. The speed radar sign on Swamp coming into the intersection has been turned on. The South Street @ Homestead project contractor has finished up the drainage swales and had been hired to do several days of work on the Nathan Hale Rd trails grant, including extending the sidewalk to the Strong Porter Museum

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.

We received 4 proposals for design services for the LOTICIP grant for the intersection of Swamp and South, including the South Street curves, and a dip in Swamp Road. We will invite 2 in for interviews. Design completion is expected in 2023 and construction likely in 2024. The engineering expense will come from the savings from the Hop River Bridge match. A public involvement meeting is anticipated in February.

The South Street road reconstruction and sidewalk project near the Homestead is approaching completion. The paving is complete and backfilling and matting along the new sidewalk is complete. We are extending the sidewalk to the Strong Porter Museum with some savings in the local match for Hop River Bridge.

The State-designed Hop River Road Bridge replacement bids were opened Oct 27th with 10 bidders. The State has rejected the low bid as not meeting the State required minority set aside of 15%. The vendor is appealing. It very likely will lead to litigation and a one year delay in construction and a rebid with new inflationary prices. We will see how it works out over the next month but already have lost 2 months of utility work and materials fabrication. The State will be using Federal funds to pay 100% of the project costs including inspection.

We submitted two grant applications for this year's Local Bridge grant round, one located on Bunker Hill Road and the other on Parker Bridge Road. We did not get either grant so 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 found a new 100% rural minor connector grant which we will submit to "widen" the road for bikes and

pedestrians which would require culvert work too. CTDOT just changed the rules making this grant much more competitive.

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 continue to have productive meetings with Greenskies, the company considering acquiring the Microgrid project including the \$4,000,000 grant. They spent a few hours on a site visit recently to refine the proposal. We are planning to submit a full application for a Federal FEMA BRIC grant by 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.

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 arrived and we are processing most of it to get approval to bid in November. The State Historical Preservation Office is requiring a site evaluation for Native American artifacts, which has been conducted and we await the findings. We hope the study will be completed to allow a December bid for 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.

We are in the queue for wetlands permits for the Nathan Hale Rails grant and hired Jacobson Engineering to design a small bridge to cross a stream on Bear Swamp Road.

Public Safety - Police: The Chief is nearing a January decision on the promotion of one Sergeant. We hired two part time dispatchers to get staffing levels back up. Interviews are being scheduled for the last police vacancy. We have interviews scheduled for already-certified officers.

Fire EMS: The replacement fire truck ordered last year is being inspected in two weeks and scheduled for delivery soon after. Work continues to develop cost reductions or revenue enhancements 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 postponed to allow the State to provide guidance on the new HVAC grants. The new grants were announced with a December 1 application deadline. We are expecting to file on time. We will need Town Meeting authorization to reallocate surplus roof funds and borrow a bit more to allow us to implement the grant. A Town Meeting and vote will be required and scheduled. If we do not get the grant we will only complete the unit ventilator work. We expect to be able to get some projects out to bid for work next summer. Some school walls work is scheduled and materials on hand to be competed over the Christmas break. We continue to work with the Finance Committee and Town Council on the complicated American Rescue Plan funding planning. The annual audit started with field work complete.

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 last month. A community funding request for this project was selected by Congressman Courtney and passed by the House. It is now up for consideration in reconciliation with the Senate budget. We are also paying attention to the treatment plant in hopes of getting Federal Rescue

Act funds for a connection to Windham, with a positive first meeting held. We have hired Tighe and Bond to update a sewer facilities plan. The first meeting with DEEP was held to further detail the scope of work for the plan. We believe we will get State funding of 50% of the cost of the study. 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 an exciting tour this week and much discussion of a phase two for food waste. We expect applications to PZC in a couple of months. PZC's moratorium on cannabis retail sales was extended to allow the Commission to review our attorney's draft regulations. Two citizens in town received State licenses 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. A new logo was selected. Construction has started for the new dentist's office next to Dollar General 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 has a buyer with relocation and reconstruction in New York. Disassembly has started.

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. We hired a Planning Technician/Zoning Enforcement Officer, and Maintainer/Custodian. Second round interviews are scheduled for two of the applicants for Lead Mechanic. We need to re-advertise for part time Senior Center Assistant candidates. Advertising went out for a part time Engineering Tech with only two applicants at the deadline. We will interview a finalist for Planning Tech for the Project Manager position. 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.

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 are seeking pricing from multiple vendors for demo of the front two cabins. 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 are submitting a full application for a FEMA BRIC grant for over a million dollars this week. 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.

We are scheduling DPW for some work on the Trails grant on the Bear Swamp section of road (not the stream crossing) this fall. Hired Jacobson Engineering to review alternatives for a steam crossing on Bear Swamp Road. Spazzarini Construction has been hired for several days of work on the Nathan Hale Road

section of the trail. The improvements to the trails near Laidlaw Park are complete with volunteer labor from the Protected Spaces Stewardship group and some funds from the Health District.

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.