

Manager's project update: Dec. 19 meeting

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

Highlights:

Promoted internal candidate for Lead Mechanic position and made offer for Mechanic II position. Made conditional offer for Police Officer who is already certified.

The High School HVAC grant, BRIC grant for the Microgrid and sustainability drainage study grants were submitted.

We rejected all bids for the Hop River bridge replacement. It became clear that it could not be constructed in one season due to supply chain and project permit delays. It will be rebid as a two year project with some utility and road/culvert work this summer and bridge removal and replacement the summer of 2024.

Holiday distribution made to 34 families.

Public Works/Engineering

LOTICIP grants: The Swamp Rd/Rt. 44 and the South Street @ Homestead project are substantially complete with minor spring touch up work anticipated. The detailed post bottoms were just installed.

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 narrowed the four proposals for design services for the LOTICIP grant for the intersection of Swamp and South down to one and will work on getting the contract in place. 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/March.

The South Street road reconstruction and sidewalk project near the Homestead is substantially complete. We start work on a separate project to extend the sidewalk to the Strong Porter Museum with some savings in the local match for Hop River Bridge. It is in winter shut down.

The State-designed Hop River Road Bridge replacement bids were opened Oct 27th and the town decided to reject all bids. There were issues with the low bid not meeting the State required minority set aside of 15%. This and other supply chain issues made it clear that the bridge could no longer be built in one season which is very important given the nature of Hop River Road. With permission of the State and Feds all bids we rejected all bids and will rebid in several months for a two year project. This summer would be local road/culvert work and utility work and next summer bridge removal and replacement.

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 are evaluating options to submit a competitive grant.

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.

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 required a site evaluation for Native American artifacts which found nothing significant and State is allowing us to proceed. We expect a January bid 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.

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 held interviews for already-certified officers and have made a conditional offer subject to a background investigation and physical.

Fire EMS: The replacement fire truck ordered last year is being inspected in two weeks and scheduled for delivery in a few weeks. 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 and submitted by the December 1 application deadline. It was much more competitive than we thought it would be. 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 is scheduled for December 19th and a January 10th vote. 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 completed 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. Still waiting for the Federal budget negotiations to be completed to assure us with have the grant to pay for the work. 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 are in line

for a State grant to fund 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 and follow up on a proposed phase two to focus on food waste...and the offer to sell the Town power. We expect applications to PZC in a couple of months. PZC's cannabis regulations are complete and going to public hearing. Some minor changes are expected. 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 was purchased for 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. Selected a Lead Mechanic and made an offer to a Mechanic II. We are considering a person for the part time Senior Center Assistant position. Considering the two applicants 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 RFP for an executive search firm for the Manager recruitment is out.

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 submitted a full application for a FEMA BRIC grant for over a million dollars. 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 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. 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. 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.