

Manager's project update: April 18, 2022 meeting

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

Highlights:

The Town Council budget was completed, staff placed legal ad and prepared information for the newsletter and budget in brief. All set for the April 23rd Town Meeting.

The Library renovation project bid was opened and all bids exceeded budget. The Architect is working with the apparent low bidder to look for cost savings and staff will have discussions with the Finance Committee for options. It should be noted that the \$850,000 grant has a mid-June deadline.

Police Chief Interviews were held on April 4th. The top two candidates are scheduled for second round interviews with a target of a May 2nd Council ratification vote.

Working hard on submitting two community funding applications for Congressman Courtney's consideration due April 15th, and one for Senator Murphy due next week.

Public Works/Engineering

LOTICIP grants: The Swamp Rd./Rt. 44 project is underway again. Spazzarini Construction. September deadline.

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. It is hoped to be a summer 2022 construction project.

Both the softball project and transfer station preliminary designs are complete. Bidding planned in a week with construction this 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. Also exploring solar canopy for dumpsters funded by new State grant with next round next year. Conduit can be installed with the first phase in anticipation of this grant to avoid digging through new pavement.

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. We are getting proposals from the 2 firms on the CRCOG pre-selected list. 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.

Plans for the South Street road reconstruction and sidewalks near the Homestead have been completed and we are out to bid with an April 19th opening. We expect a June start.

We signed the methane venting project contract for the Miller Richardson football field, funded in part by a STEAP grant. This includes a bid alternate for a recreational softball facility in the rear left corner. Construction is starting with a June 15th completion.

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. Utility work may start in fall of 2022. We selected a construction inspecting firm through a public RFP process and interviews, and we selected GM2 to watch this project.

We need to replace two culverts located on Bunker Hill Road and Parker Bridge Road. We just submitted two grant application for this year's Local Bridge grant round. This grant, if we are awarded one or both, would pay 50% of construction. Our share will need to be bonded and could be over a million dollars. These two projects are complicated by a pending Andover bridge replacement on Bunker Hill Road scheduled for this summer. 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 also 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 still at a critical juncture. Tritec has withdrawn their buyout offer. We have meetings this week with two alternative funding groups but the deadline for DEEP is very close. Solar on the high school roof as an alternative to the carport plan was approved by the Board with a very attractive rate. This could be incorporated into a possible design change if the Microgrid proceeds. However, due to lengthy State approval processes for the High School roof (still waiting), it is doubtful the roof can proceed this year and the solar needs to be in place by April of 2023. These delays may cause us to lose the solar, and future grants will need to be sought.

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. Plans and specs are complete and it should be out to bid real soon. 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. Also looking at a future solar canopy option over the dumpsters.

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 (still waiting).

DPW also has finalized the sale of used equipment and parts and we are out on the Gov Deals auction site. We are hoping to bring in enough money to assist in the purchase of a Fire Administrator Vehicle and a curbing machine.

Public Safety - Police: We had successful Police Chief Interviews using an outside panel on April 4th. We shared the results of the public survey on leadership qualities with the panel. I am calling back two candidates for final interviews. We are now recruiting for two officers to get to full staffing, and trying to reserve a slot in the July Police Academy. Initial interviews have found at least one already certified candidate and a conditional offer of employment was made subject to background checks and other testing. A second candidate is still being reviewed. Our new cruiser is in and in service. The cruiser which was hit by another vehicle is back, but waiting for some decal work. We have decided to wait for the new Chief to be appointed to make the Sergeant appointments. Our Boating Officer will not be returning this summer and we are starting the recruitment process. I started meeting with Vernon, Mansfield, Tolland, and Bolton on working together for a regional animal control facility and maybe services under a State grant called RPIP which is back with an August deadline. The grant would need to be through CRCOG, which is on board with the concept. The police dock is being relocated to Patriots Park along with the Police Boat. Will be in the water next month. Also looking for part time dispatchers.

Fire EMS: The replacement fire truck has been ordered and with a September build date. Building improvements at the Merrow Road substation are now underway. The department has submitted the second phase of a voluntary OSHA compliance process which reviewed our policies and facilities. Our alternative ambulance replacement has been ordered and due to supply chain issues delivery for the chassis has been delayed until fall. Gearing up for CoventryFest fireworks on June 25th.

Finance: We are awaiting a bond sale date for late April for existing projects. We are now fine-tuning pricing for ventilation at the high school and will have a presentation of a renovate-as-new project for the middle school on April 19th. There is a June State deadline, and a November vote would be required. 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. Applications for roof funding are in the final review process. We no longer believe that this process can be bid and completed this summer.

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 are being integrated with the upcoming budget. Only one bid as received for town auditing services.

Development Group: We held our first meeting this week on the local agreements required to allow an extension to the Bolton Lakes sewer system. A community funding request will be submitted. We also submitted an ARP grant request which is pending. Jacobson Engineering is finishing up cost estimates. 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. A request for engineering consultants to assist is scheduled for release next week. We continue to meet with developers and finance groups interested in the Bolton town line area. Hytone Farm is seeking building permits for an approved anaerobic digester. They have developed an approach to avoid Army Corps permits and we expect revised plans very soon. PZC 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, is seeking community input and has 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. A community information meeting was held on March 30th and is available on the web for those who missed it. The study is anticipated to be completed by late spring. Cassidy Hill Vineyards has hired both an attorney and engineer to prepare plans and assist them with our planning concerns of compliance. They also are working to resolve issues with the State Liquor Control Commission.

The Economic Development Commission created a subcommittee to focus on the future development at the Bolton town line. They also are scheduling the employee “recognition of good service award program” for late April. We are submitting community funding requests for a water tower for the village and sewers for the Bolton Town line which both have economic development impacts.

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 starting negotiations with the Police and Public Works unions. We had an interview panel for a new Police Chief on April 4th and have second rounds for 2 candidates scheduled. We are advertising for a replacement Cemetery Sexton and soon will be out for boating officer and Youth services. We are doing first-round testing for a Maintainer I, and scheduling interview panels for Senior Assistant and Assessor.

Other projects:

DiBlasi Engineering conducted final checking on a few locations in CHS to allow final design work on wall repairs, which will include a construction cost estimate. Work will be conducted 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 are still waiting for final State authorization to bid. The State delays will delay construction until next year. We are proceeding with looking at a “renovate-as-new” option for only the middle school 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. The Architect will present a concept plan to the building committee on April 19th of initial findings on renovate-as-new. There are June deadlines for this program.

The Library project bids came in over estimate, reflecting the market conditions. We are working with the low bidder for options and the Finance Committee on options for use of ARPA money. There is a mid-June deadline to have a contract in place or risk losing the State grant of \$850,000.

The CDBG re-spending funds to install touchless bathrooms and doors at the Senior Center and community buildings at Orchard Hills are almost complete. 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 early summer now.

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. A drive-through food distribution event was held on April 29th. Energy assistance is winding down. Deadline for fuel authorizations for deliverables is coming up in May.

We are finalizing a new path forward for the cabins at Creaser Park and plans are being submitted to DEEP for review. It looks like for phase one we will demo the front two cabins since they are not really savable. The back cabin is on a slab and it will be gutted and converted to a storage building likely with a garage door. 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 have 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.