

Manager's project update: April 4, 2022 meeting

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

Highlights:

The Town Council budget review sessions are at the final decision stage for an April 4th deadline to post the notice for the April 23rd Town Meeting.

We held a staff walk through at the Hale Trail and agreed that town crews will be able to handle most of the trail work except a section from Judd Road to over Rufus Brook. It will be a stunning trail.

The Library renovation project bid opening is scheduled for April 1st.

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. A public workshop took place on Wednesday March 30th. A video of the workshop is available online.

Police Chief Interviews are scheduled for April 4th.

We submitted two grant/loan applications for water system interconnects in partnership with CT Water.

Public Works/Engineering

LOTICIP grants: The Swamp Rd./Rt. 44 project is underway. Spazzarini Construction is ordering supplies. Work has restarted.

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. Construction specifications for softball are in final review, 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. 60% design plans due this week. 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 LOTCIP 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. Meetings have to be held with several of the impacted property owners.

Plans for the South Street road reconstruction and sidewalks near the Homestead have been completed and we are out to bid with an April 7th opening. The State insisted on additional pavement thickness which can be covered with the grant contingency. All easements and paperwork have been filed. We expect a June start.

We are signing the methane venting project contract on March 31 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. We expect construction to start soon.

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 and interview process and GM2 will be birdogging the project.

We are looking at several culvert replacements on Bunker Hill and Parker Bridge Road for the next Local Bridge grant round, with applications due in April of 2022. 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 still at a critical juncture. Tritec has withdrawn their buyout offer. An alternative group is reviewing but there is an April 15 DEEP deadline. 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, 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. 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. 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.

Public Safety - Police: We are interviewing for a Police Chief using an outside panel on April 4th. We have shared the results of the public survey on leadership qualities with the panel. The survey was featured on the home page of our website through February 25. We are now recruiting for two officers 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. Our Boating Officer will not be returning this summer and we will need to recruit for this too. An updated Job description is on your agenda for approval at tonight's meeting.

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 moved on to the second phase of a voluntary OSHA compliance process to review of our policies and facilities, which should be completed next week. Our alternative ambulance replacement has been ordered and confirmed with a possible June delivery for the chassis and several months of build time.

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 to consider a "renovate as new" option. An initial report was held and we expect a more final report in April. 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 are in the final review process. We are no longer confident 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 will need to be integrated with the upcoming budget.

Development Group: We hope to get moving on the local agreements required to allow an extension to the Bolton Lakes sewer system. A mid-April meeting has been scheduled with Bolton and Vernon 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 held. A request for engineering consultants to assist is scheduled for release next 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. A new issue of possible Army Corps permits has been raised and alternatives are being pursued. 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, 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 a video 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 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.

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.

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. Many new issues on COVID-19 leave, and OSHA regulations, have been reviewed and proposed changes to the personnel rules were approved by the Council. We have an interview panel for a new Police Chief scheduled for April 4th. Over 150 responses to our survey on desired characteristics of the candidate were received and shared with the panel. The Department will also be conducting a community survey in April 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 are advertising for a replacement Cemetery Sexton with the revised job description now adopted.

We have hired a new DPW Maintainer I, who has started, unfortunately we received a resignation of a DPW Maintainer I who has taken a job with the Town of South Windsor as an Engineering Tech, so we are recruiting again to replace that position. We are conducting second round interviews for a Revenue Collection Clerk due to the recent promotions. We are re-advertising for the Senior Center Assistant position. We also have started advertising for a new Assessor and have contracted with another Town's Assessor to keep up with the field work and assist with citizen's questions in the meantime.

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 no longer looks possible to get some areas worked on during April vacation, so it will all be during the 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 call to question the ability to do the work this summer. 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. The Architect presented initial findings on renovate as new on March 22nd. Final concepts will be in April due to June deadlines. It appears that this option is more prudent for just the Middle School.

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. We are also working with a firm interested in building a car wash in town.

The Library project is out to bid with a bid opening on April 1, Construction could start in April with completion in December. We are looking for a Clerk of the Works to monitor construction.

We are in construction with CDBG re-spending funds 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 late springtime.

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 was held on March 25th had 40 cars participated.

We are finalizing a new path forward for the cabins at Creaser Park. 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 a 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.