

Manager's project update: March 21, 2022 meeting

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

Highlights:

The proposed Town Manager's budget went through a very quiet March 10<sup>th</sup> public hearing and is under the Council review and modification process.

We have negotiated the grant award contract for the \$350,000 award under the State Trails grant for Nathan Hale Road and Bear Swamp Road, and can now start charging all time as an in-kind match. A staff walk through is being scheduled for later this month to fine tune our schedule and assign tasks.

The Library renovation project is out to bid. Over 8 bidders have picked up plans.

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. Public workshop is planned for Wednesday March 30<sup>th</sup> in the annex.

UCONN delivered classroom ventilators on Monday March 7<sup>th</sup> to Coventry High School.

Public Works/Engineering

LOTICIP grants: The Swamp Rd./Rt. 44 project is underway. Spazzarini Construction is ordering supplies. Work is scheduled to restart April 1.

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. This has slipped to 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 3 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 7<sup>th</sup> 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.

Bids were opened for the methane venting at the Miller Richardson football field, funded in part by a STEAP grant. A bid alternate included a recreational softball facility in the rear left corner. We expect spring 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. We have scheduled interviews for construction inspectors.

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 in 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.

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: I have asked former Chief Palmer to help with the initial stages of Police Chief Recruitment. The public survey was launched and was featured on the home page of our website through February 25. Results will be shared with the interview panel. 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. Jeff Spadjinske's appointment as Acting Chief leaves us with only two other sergeants. Our Boating Officer will not be returning this summer and we will need to recruit for this too.

Fire EMS: The replacement fire truck has been ordered and will take at least five more months to build. 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. Our alternative ambulance replacement has been ordered and confirmed with a possible June delivery. The ambulance fund deficiency was discussed with the Finance Committee.

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 of considering a "renovate as new" option. An initial report is scheduled for March 22<sup>nd</sup>. 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 meeting needs to be set up with Bolton 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. 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 on possible army Corps permits has been raised which may delay this project start. 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 is scheduled for March 30<sup>th</sup>. 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.

We have a signed one-year extension of the Farmers' Market lease with the Homestead. This will allow the CT Landmarks to complete a consulting project of their holdings before entering into a longer contract. Vendors are signing up for spaces and programs are being developed.

The Economic Development Commission created a subcommittee to focus on the future development at the Bolton town line. They also will finalize the results of the citizens' survey on their good service award program this month.

#### 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 need to start 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 are pending before the Council. We have advertised for a Police Chief, and received 20 applicants which are being screened. We are now arranging a screening and interview process. Over 150 responses to our survey on desired characteristics of the candidate have been received. 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 continue to discuss options for a replacement Cemetery Sexton with a revised job description now adopted.

We have hired a new DPW Maintainer I, who has started; unfortunately we just received a resignation of a DPW Maintainer I who has taken a job with the Town of South Windsor as an Engineering Tech. Steven Prattson has started as our new Building Official. We are

recruiting for a Revenue Clerk due to promotions. We have hired a new Minutes Clerk for Finance and Steering who started on 2/28, and just interviewed several persons 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.

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 will present initial finding on renovate as new on March 22<sup>nd</sup>.

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 the end of the month. The construction could start in April with a completion in spring.

We are in construction for CDBG re-spending fund 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 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 is scheduled for March 25. The Juvenile Review Board is the

busiest it ever has been. The Senior Center and transportation services are getting more active too.

We are finalizing a new path forward for the cabins at Creaser. It looks like in 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.