

## Manager's project update: February 22, 2022 meeting

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

### Highlights:

The pavilion roof was installed at Laidlaw Park, just minor items left for an opening before the spring season.

While a tentative agreement in principle has been reached between Coventry Microgrid LLC and Tritec, a signed agreement is still not in reach. Time is becoming a risk factor. Both parties' attorneys are working out the final language. CT DEEP will allow a limited extension of key benchmarks. The parties will need to reach an agreement by the end of the first quarter of 2022.

The Pavement Management Study was presented to the Council on Feb. 7<sup>th</sup>. It may be wise to at least consider a bonding question for roads with the budget. They recommend a minimum of \$3,000,000. We may need to add culverts too. The demo showed how close we are to letting certain roads go from prevention mode to replacement mode.

We received notice on 2/16/22 of a \$350,000 award under the State Trails grant for Nathan Hale Road and Bear Swamp Road. We had submitted the requested 30% budget reduction and received some feedback that they would like to add some back if possible.

We now have all required authorizations from the State for the \$1.5 million Orchard Hills renovation project. The first of two bids is out...working on generators first.

ARP arts/culture grant requests are in process, and most are being presented to for Council consideration. Supplemental information is still be sought for two applications.

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.

UCONN is giving the school district 200 UCONN designed and constructed classroom ventilators, which is enough for each classroom and more than one in larger areas. The first 100 or so are being picked up this week for the elementary schools. The balance will be in March. Laura Stone will be coordinating the media releases.

## Public Works/Engineering

LOTICIP grants: The Swamp Rd./Rt. 44 project is underway. Spazzarini Construction is ordering supplies. During the winter months the overhead utilities will be relocated, allowing a quick start in spring.

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. This has slipped to a summer 2022 construction project. We are acquiring easements now.

Both the softball project and transfer station preliminary designs are complete. Construction specifications are nearing completion, with bidding planned this month and a construction start in early spring. 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.

We are still waiting for authorization 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. 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 are pushing back against a public information meeting at this stage until a detailed survey is complete. We would like to get into design and have that meeting at the traditional preliminary design stage. Meetings have been held with several of the impacted property owners.

Plans for the South Street road reconstruction and sidewalks near the Homestead have been submitted to the State for authorization to bid. All easements and paperwork have been filed. We believe bidding will be in the next few months for a spring start.

Bids were open for the methane venting at the Miller Richardson football field, funded in part by a STEAP grant. The plans include a recreational softball facility in the rear left corner. They are being evaluated but are close to budget. We hope for a spring construction start.

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 are waiting for a decision, but the local match may be waived under the Federal Infrastructure Act.

We are looking at several culvert replacements on Bunker Hill and Parker Bridge Road for the next Local Bridge grant round in the spring of 2022. We are ready for grant submissions for these two expensive culverts, both of which are in our CIP budget. 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 CROC 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 a holding pattern while Tritec and Coventry Microgrid negotiate a buyout. We understand the parties have reached an agreement in principle, but the written agreement is not moving at an acceptable pace. DEEP has given a verbal extension on the deadline, but it is not without limits. If they reach agreement Tritec will fund the required Eversource interconnect plan and cost estimate for the transfer switch. The Office of Consumer Counsel will need to review pricing to Orchard Hills residents when available. We will need to restart negotiations for pricing and contract terms and will work on this through several task groups and all boards. It is scheduled that this will be completed by June. Optimistically construction could start this summer.

We have hired B & L (formerly Anchor) 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 which we are now asking for cost estimates, tasks the town could do, and a possible phasing schedule. We hope to bid this month. The initial cost estimates far exceed 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.

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 will be featured on the [home page](#) of our website until February 25. We are still recruiting for one more officer 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 months. We have decided to wait for the new Chief to be appointed to make the Sergeant appointments. With Jeff Spadjinke's appointment as Acting Chief this leaves us with only two other sergeants.

Fire EMS: The replacement fire truck has been ordered and will take another six 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. An order has been submitted to replace older (expired) Air Pacs.

Finance: We are scheduling a bond sale for March 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. 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 were just re-submitted, and should be approved this month. We are hoping to get out to bid soon.

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. Efforts at updating online assessing data and mapping are also underway. We are working with CRCOG on finding the best and most cost effective means to accomplish this.

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 meeting set up for later this month. 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. 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. We have selected SLR to draft an affordable housing plan as required by State law. A survey is now available on the project web page. The study is anticipated to be complete by late spring. Cassidy Hill Vineyards has hired an engineer to prepare plans requested by the planning commission to come into compliance.

We just received the grant paperwork for the joint Mansfield/Coventry Eagleville Fanwort project and submitted Hydrilla grant paperwork for this summer and Eric Trott submitted a grant application for this year’s treatment of Hydrilla on Coventry Lake. The grant for the Nathan Hale and Bear Swamp Trail was submitted and short listed. We revised our application to reduce the grant request by 30% which will allow the major components to be completed. We were just notified of an award in the amount of \$350,000.

Caprilands Estate is objecting to a short sale of Dr. Cook’s house which reduced the amount of funds available to the estate. Any proceeds received will be governed by the State’s

Attorney General's office, which liked the idea of setting up a trust to keep Adelma's legacy alive. It is slowly moving forward.

We have a signed one year extension of the Farmers Market lease with the Homestead. This will allow the Landmarks consulting project of their holdings to be completed before entering into a longer contract.

#### 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, are being digested and information continually monitored. We are gathering vaccination data and then will review next steps with the Council. We have advertised for a Police Chief, with a March 4 application deadline. We are now arranging and screening and interview process. Over 150 responses to our survey on the characteristics of the candidate have been received. The Department will also be conducting a community survey in March 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 proposed job description getting further review by the Cemetery Commission prior to Council consideration.

We have hired a new DPW Maintainer I, who has started. Steven Prattson will start as our new Building Official on March 2<sup>nd</sup>, Ida Cabral was promoted to Assistant Collector of Revenue, we have hired a new minute's clerk for finance and steering who will start this month, and are reviewing applications for senior center assistant. We are also advertising for Police Chief and Revenue Clerk.

#### 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 may be possible that some areas can be worked on during April vacation with the balance 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 await State authorization to bid hopefully in March. 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.

Economic development projects have taken a back seat to other urgent work. A local barber shop is hoping to open in Ackert Electric's building. Captain Hale Financial is open on RT 44.

The Library project is nearing going out to bid with interior finishes and design decisions. Timing still looks like an early March bid and start of construction in spring.

We now have approval to use some CDBG re-spending funds to install touchless bathrooms and doors at the Senior Center and community buildings at Orchard Hills. The project is underway. 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. We also worked to share federal arts funding with our local groups. Many of the projects will be considered by the Council.

The EDC authorized an excellence in service award program for local employees which has started this week. It is in the newsletter on the back page with a QR code to gain access to the nomination form.

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. The juvenile review board is the busiest it ever has been. The Senior Center and transportation services are getting more active too.