

Manager's project update: January 19, 2021 meeting

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

- Bill Watkins, Director of Public Works will start work on January 19, 2021.
- We continue to evaluate our COVID response plans for staffing due to the significant rise in cases in our Town, Region, and State. We are also working with our Health District and Region on vaccination plans. Police/Fire/Ems are getting shots and teachers and essential town employees will start being scheduled soon. We are working on assisting with information for the 75+ aged group now. We continue to work with the Health District on a case by case basis and Covid impacts to our workers.
- Folly Lane Bridge had a minor delay on the shipping of the bridge rail. Work will be starting this week. The bridge will be open several days after.
- Two replacement police officers were sworn in at a very small, socially distanced, ceremony on January 4th.

Public Works/Engineering

- 1) LOTCIP grants: We expect rights of way to be complete by the end of January. Bidding planned for April and construction start in June with a December completion.
- 2) Folly Lane Bridge is Bridge rail arrived and installation will start the week of the 18th. Then the bridge will reopen. In spring it will likely be closed for a couple of days to allow close-out work. We continue to work on the load rating of Pucker Street Bridge. After some back and forth the bridge manufacturer has agreed to re-run the calculations in a software product the State can use for their evaluation at their cost. We hope this will lead to a final resolution. We got some feedback on Safe Routes to School project close-out and are getting closer.
- 3) We have preliminary design work completed for the Community Connectivity grant for sidewalks on Main from Hemlock Point Lane to approximately Winterberry Lane. We hope this will be a spring project. We hope to have a public involvement meeting in February.
- 4) The softball committee will be meeting on the 21st to review plans and cost estimates for either two fields in the gravel pit or on top of the landfill and also a report on health concerns for recreation used on a closed landfill. Still waiting on news on potential Federal grants. Wendy Rubin is monitoring and Lisa Conant has offered to assist in a grant application when they become available.
- 5) Todd Penney received approved for the revised plan for the crosswalk light on Main at Ripley Hill. We are seeking bids due on January 28th. I am concerned that the complexity added by CTDOT will require additional funding.

- 6) Laidlaw Park deep hole tests were conducted and look good. A septic system using the toilet trailer, which we acquired through State surplus, should be possible to install. Permits to allow the existing irrigation well to be used for the bathrooms were submitted to the State Department of Public Health on June 6th. We are in a slow-moving well permit process. We are continuing dialogue on whether the new Board is still desiring this.
- 7) LOCIP-funded field irrigation of the Miller Richardson baseball infield on the major league field is complete, waiting for the Town to have time to move and set up the water tank. It has moved up the list and we still hope to get the tank in place over the next couple of weeks so it can be ready for spring.
- 8) We have signed a contract to use LOCIP funds to start fixing one of the cabins at Camp Creaser. It is likely the remaining cabins will need to be torn down if the State allows. They have rotten floors inside. We are fixing the crawl space on this cabin which is slated for early March.
- 9) We are still waiting for authorization to proceed on the LOTCIP grant for the intersection of Swamp and South, including the South Street curves, and a dip in Swamp Road. We will need to hire an engineering firm and appropriate funds for that task. Jacobson Engineering needs to respond to a couple of construction questions. Construction is hoped for the summer of 2022.
- 10) We have submitted the 90 percent design for review for the South Street road reconstruction and sidewalks near the Homestead. We received two surprises for this project. One is that State now wants an archaeological survey of the area of the proposed sidewalk. We are expecting pricing from three approved historical consultants. The second issue was a possible requirement for an Army Corps of Engineering permit. Todd Penney developed a solution to modify the sidewalk to get below Army Corps permit thresholds, saving us a year and a lot of application costs.
- 11) To repair the turf issue at the Miller Richardson football field, we have been awarded a STEAP grant based on Anchor Engineering's report. We have State permits and have Anchor Engineering's bid specs, but we are still waiting for a contract with CT DEEP for the grant and any mandatory language required in the bid. The State is looking at curve warning signs changes on State Roads. Due to the concerns raised after the installation on Town roads, we asked for a public information meeting, which is taking place on January 14. We declined the center rumble strip offer.
- 12) The State preliminary design of the Hop River Road Bridge is almost complete. The December 15 public information meeting went well. The main issue was concern for the history of the area. The project will now go into final design and in spring/summer seek permits, with bids in late fall of 2021 for summer 2022 construction.

- 13) We are looking at a couple of culverts for the next Local Bridge grant round in fall. We have two expensive culverts on Bunker Hill and Parker Bridge Road, which are in our CIP budget. This grant pays 50%. We are seeking help from Jacobson Engineering for a concept plan and application preparation for one or both.
- 14) The DEEP Microgrid project (\$4,000,000 grant) continues to move forward. We received the necessary PURA approvals and had a good meeting with the Office of Consumer Counsel as required. We are still a bit away from a point where pricing can be finalized. All parties will then need to reach an agreement for the power purchase. We continue our weekly conference calls with all parties. A virtual net metering application for the two school solar arrays was accepted as complete and is in the queue. We will need to wait until more projects are authorized by the State since the annual cap was reached. The Town will need to have ownership interest in at least the power line crossing Route 31.

Public Safety:

Police: Two new officers were sworn in on January 4th in a small socially-distanced ceremony. One officer has started remote learning classes and the other is instead taking a few State-required training sessions, since he was already a sworn officer in another state. Both new cruisers have been received and are being outfitted. One of the old cruisers will be deployed at DPW to free up the red Suburban, which can be reassigned to Fire Police. In-car computer upgrades and server upgrades are underway.

Fire EMS: We continue working on rebranding issues for Department 18, focusing on modifying existing uniforms now that the signage is complete. The Association contracts are now under review for submission to the Town Attorney. The refurbishment of the engine tanker is complete and the truck is back in service. The replacement of the small rescue truck is in final stages of installing the tool compartments. The old rescue truck will be converted to a bush truck to replace the current vehicle, which is having electrical problems. Work by the transition committee is pretty much completed, but they will remain in place to serve the fire team and Council. The Council will consider recommendations in the upcoming budget process.

Finance: The audit is complete and has been submitted to the State and GFOA.. Finance reviewed and will be presenting to the whole Council for possible acceptance. It was what is commonly called a clean audit. FEMA and State grants are have been submitted and we scrambled to meet new end-of-year Covid Relief Fund grant deadlines. The banking RFP will be restarted soon. We will need to look at camera upgrades next year. We are making progress with the grant final reimbursement for Safe Routes to School, and have finally closed out the Lake Gate grant and received the funds. Still have some serious issues with the Pucker Street Bridge grants too. Looking into applying for the GFOA budget award this year. The office has hired a company for cyber security training and review, which is now underway with monthly online lessons for employees. All employees were re-enrolled in

health insurance plans to implement cost saving designs. Employee tax paperwork is out and budget work has started.

Development group: EDC continues working on follow up to several business visits and outreach to landowners and interested developers. Several Nichols College interns are back working with new businesses to help with marketing, social media and financial planning. It has been suggested that we have an unveiling of the web sites as a ZOOM event. We are still a couple weeks away from that being ready. We have submitted the requested additional information to address CT DEEP's concerns regarding the proposed connection to the Bolton Lakes sewer system. The four town Economic Development group is starting to meet and my UCONN intern will be helping on this. Dollar General is under construction on Rt. 44 across from CVS. Plans for a medical building next door to this site fell apart, but we are exploring other options. CLCC has opened their farm stand and they are have gone back to Planning and Zoning to share potential plan changes to reduce construction costs and create a more village-style complex or small hamlets. CLCC was featured in a Project Innovation story on NBC CT on January 14. <https://www.facebook.com/tedkopyyNBC/videos/228286255539567>.

Staff has met with DEEP and the landowner on Woodbridge Road to attempt to resolve the ongoing fishing easement conflict. Hull Forestry has submitted a proposal for forestry management of several sections of the Nathan Hale Greenway (Rt. 6 parcel). The walk was successful and revised plans are still expected. We are working on providing GPS locations for the proposed trail. This should bring in limited funding for signage and amenities, but not really trail development. A skid road, which would allow emergency access, is all that is anticipated, but that is not far from our well-worn path goal. At this point Bolton will also participate, and Andover will survey and forest, but using a different approach.

The Annual Lake Forum is will be skipped this year since the committee doesn't like the ZOOM format. We have received the final lake survey report and Dr. Kortman's annual report, which was generally positive and all concur on a recommended plan for next year.

The Senior Housing task force has finished the survey and first draft of a report. They are asking for more time due to staffing changes and Covid issues.

Farmers' Market planning for the summer season is underway with hopes of an open market maybe with some limits on numbers of folks.

HR issues:

Personnel rules appendices are being working on, with the draft of an updated Affirmative Action plan completed by our UCONN intern, which is scheduled for review at this month's Steering Committee meeting. We will start negotiations next month with all Town and School AFSCME groups for pension. We have hired Bill Watkins as our new DPW Director and he will start on January 19th. We have posted for Mechanic's Helper (instead of the vacant Mechanic I) for a few years to save some money. Testing should take place in a week or so. If we select an in-house candidate we will then recruit for the vacant PW Maintainer

I. We will also soon start the recruitment for the part time position in the Town Clerk's office budgeted for January. Many issues on COVID-19 leave and travel policies are being digested and information distributed.

Other projects:

DiBlasi Engineering confirmed that the most of the remaining walls of concerns were scanned during Christmas break so some design work can be started. The Media Center will be scanned during spring break. This may allow some summer corrective work. The School Building Committee has approved bids for the fire door projects which is underway. We are interviewing HVAC firms for the high school/middle school next week. Due to new COVID air standards, we will not have enough money unless grants become available. We have awarded bids for just the middle school gym HVAC units and CHS front office controls to be replaced. This should be done soon. Since the roofs were approved in the bond, the committee interviewed five architectural firms and selected Quisenberry, which did our last roofing project. The Library did receive State Bond approval, and finishing touches on an RFP to select a design build firm are underway. We need to wait to have the grant contract in place before we can start the design build solicitation process. Bill Trudelle is talking to several firms on the State bid for the fire alarm work at the High/Middle school complex which could save time and money on the bid process and allow summer work.

The Stewart parcel was acquired and property monuments are installed. Over the winter we will mow the walking trail and purchase signs. The family is planning a dedication in late March. We will have at least a sign in place.

We received great news that Orchard Hills received a \$1.5 Million grant for unit renovation work. Waiting for the contract paperwork from the Department of Housing.

We are working with UCONN to determine if we have any land suitable for a research center on autonomous vehicles.

A public information virtual meeting on curve signage changes on State Roads is scheduled for January 14, 2021.

We have signed up for a new version of software with Civic Plus called Civic Send, which will enhance our communication with the public.