

Manager's project update: March 15, 2021 meeting

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

- The Manager's proposed budget is out and going to a virtual public hearing on March 11. The Council has until April 5 to complete the budget.
- The School Building Committee architect for the school roof projects has started and is working on setting up the project with the State. It appears that the project estimate for the High School is not adequate to cover the project due to some unanticipated chimney removal, drainage, a seven dollar a square foot cost increase and estimates of square footage. We are waiting for an updated estimate from the architect, but it is clear that the High school roof will need to wait a year and we will push for GHR. They have a timetable which would allow summer construction depending on how long the State takes to process the application. We had a start-up meeting with the selected engineering firm for the High/Middle school ventilation project. We will need to see how Federal Aid may help cover costs for that project.
- We have submitted the State paperwork for the Library grant for the final State Historical review, received pricing and scope of work from the architect and received a very generous donation and challenge of \$75,000 for the project from Sondra Astor Stave, and set up a fund to receive and record other donations. The Library fundraising will be kicking off soon.
- On Friday Feb 26thⁿ Human Services had a second a drive-through food distribution event in the Town Hall driveway loop. It had 42 participants. Another distribution is anticipated on March 26.
- 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 this month. We continue to work assisting with information for the 55+ aged group now.
- Swamp/Rt. 44 intersection final plans are in for final review to allow bidding. There is a long production delay for the traffic signal poles, which may require that portion of the project to lag over into spring of 2022.
- The State has informed us they have awarded the bid for the replacement of the culvert crossing RT 44 in front of Highland Park Market. Utility work in advance of the project is already underway. A project meeting has been scheduled. There will be some construction delays but we successfully argued to widen the crossing to allow two lanes of traffic during most times.
- We are ready to start the forestry management project on drier sections of the former Route 6 corridor in the northern section of town. Informational brochures and posting are in process. The forestry skid trail has been simplified to a straighter route compared to

the concept trail, but wetlands information was very helpful in establishing the skid trail. The proceeds will be deposited into the open space fund.

Public Works/Engineering

- 1) LOTCIP grants: The Swamp Rd/Rt. 44 intersection project plans have been submitted for final review. We have all the rights of way squared away. The project is currently planned for April bids, with construction starting in June and a December road completion. We have learned that the mast poles for the traffic signals have a very long manufacturing lead time, which could delay the signals until spring of 2022. This would delay use of the new intersection until the signals are in place.
- 2) Folly Lane Bridge is Bridge now open. In spring it will likely be closed for a couple of days to allow close-out work.
- 3) We continue to work on the load rating of Pucker Street Bridge. The recalculations were submitted and CTDOT has already responded seeking a few additional items. We got some feedback on Safe Routes to School project close-out and are getting closer, but still no closure.
- 4) 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 summer project. We hope to have a public involvement meeting in April.
- 5) The girls' softball committee has submitted their recommendation directly to the Council, selecting the gravel pit site over the former landfill site. An equitable comparison between possible locations was prepared by Anchor Engineering to do a side-by-side cost comparison for locations, and one or two initial fields, and core facilities versus a fully built out facility. 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.
- 6) The bids for the crosswalk light on Main at Ripley Hill was awarded and light has been ordered. It will take several more weeks for delivery so we are looking at April, at the earliest, for installation.
- 7) 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. Coventry Soccer is now on board with the concept and wants input into the location.
- 8) 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 is on the pre-season list to complete.

- 9) 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 now delayed until May.
- 10) 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 have hired Jacobson Engineering to respond to a couple of construction questions needed to get grant moving. Construction is hoped for the summer of 2022. A reminder that the engineering expense is on the Town and funds will need to be approved by the Council. It is expected to be a significant amount since this is a \$3,000,000 grant.
- 11) We have submitted the 90 percent design for review for the South Street road reconstruction and sidewalks near the Homestead. Per a State demand, we have hired a firm to conduct an archaeological survey of the area of the proposed sidewalk. It has been held up by the snow, but they found some former studies which will not allow the widening of the exit from the parking field, so minor revisions have been worked out with CT Landmarks. Inland Wetlands asked for impervious sidewalks so we are seeking additional funds.
- 12) 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 award still has not been received but we now have a contact person at DEEP.
- 13) The State is looking at curve warning sign changes on State Roads. We participated in a public information meeting on January 14th with no opposition. This will be a three-year project.
- 14) The State preliminary design of the Hop River Road Bridge is almost complete. The December 15th 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. The State is seeking design exception for a curve issue on the Columbia side of the River.
- 15) We are looking at a couple of culverts for the next Local Bridge grant round in fall. We have two expensive culverts in need of repair on Bunker Hill and Parker Bridge Road, which are in our CIP budget. This grant pays 50%. We hired Jacobson Engineering for a concept plans and applications for an anticipated fall grant round. Funds for these plans are coming from Town Aid for Roads.
- 16) 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. We are waiting for DEEP to finish the review of the revised plans. 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 with the likelihood of a spring award. The Town will need to have ownership interest in at least the power line crossing Route 31.

17) In a surprise development, we have learned the State has found money to replace the Hop River Trail Bridge over the Hop River in the vicinity of Kings Road. Funds will be available this April, with a year to be spent on design and permitting. Construction is envisioned starting in 2022 and completion in 2024. There is no Town funding or oversight of this project. We may obtain sections of cast concrete culverts currently under Flanders River Road for repurposing.

18) CTDOT has awarded the bid for the replacement of the culvert going under Rt. 44 in front of Meadowbrook plaza this season. The road will be widened to allow two lanes of traffic during much of the construction. We were able to convince them to include stone facing on the parking lot side of the outlet structure. A project meeting is scheduled and we will meet the contractor and get a construction schedule. Utility work is already underway.

Public Safety:

Police: The department is working on the changes required by the Police Accountability Act. Chief Palmer has put together a tracking plan including expenses. Our two new officers are both in training. Officer Proctor has about 1 more week of field training. One of the two new cruisers is on the road. Officer Oliva Beausoleil has submitted her resignation so we will be looking for another officer.

Fire EMS: We continue working on rebranding issues for Department 18, focusing on modifying existing uniforms. The Association contracts are now under review by the Associations, nearing submission to the Town Attorney. The replacement of the small rescue truck is in final stages of installing the tool compartments. Hoping to have in service next month. The old rescue truck will be converted to a brush truck to replace the current vehicle, which is having electrical problems. The old brush truck will be sold. 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. An AFG grant was submitted this month. They are very competitive so here is hoping!

Finance: Budget has taken top priority. We have hired Munistat for our new financial advisory services due to the sudden closure of the Connecticut office of Hilltop Securities. The banking RFP will be restarted soon. We are making progress with the grant final reimbursement for Safe Routes to School, and still have some issues with the Pucker Street Bridge grants too. Looking into applying for the GFOA budget award this year. FEMA grant work is underway.

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, but it still seems stuck in an interagency battle. The four-town Economic Vitality group is starting to meet and my UCONN intern will be helping on this. Dollar General is almost ready to open on Rt. 44 across from CVS. Courtside drinks is also almost ready to open (next to Wicked slice), and a nail salon will be taking the last open space on the upper level. We have reached out to the developer of the Dollar General who originally also mentioned an auto parts store to see if there is interest in the property next door. CLCC has opened their farm stand and they 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.

Husky Pizza is open where Bea's Country Kitchen was. Reid's has been leased to an out of town restaurant owner but no permits have been pulled. We had discussions with the owner of Meadowbrook Plaza who has plans for some reshuffling but believes he will remain full at the conclusion. An appraiser has signed a lease for where Nailed It was on Main St. Staff has reached out to owners and there are actually only a couple vacant places seeking renters. These include one upper unit and the downstairs at Vinton Village, Coventry Fitness and the ribbon place underneath. The Penalty Box building is in a pause due to COVID, with decisions on next steps in a few months. The former Coventry Antiques and Sanborn garage locations are a bit harder due to environmental concerns. Commercial Land is now on the market on Woodland Road near Lake Street. The house next door to the School Admin Building is once again scheduled for demolition, which will make it more marketable.

Staff has met with DEEP and the landowner on Woodbridge Road to attempt to resolve the ongoing fishing easement conflict. The State produced a brochure on this property to assist expectations or broader use than just fishing. We have authorized Hull Forestry to proceed with a forestry management project in several sections of the Nathan Hale Greenway (Rt. 6 parcel). This should bring in limited funding for signage and minor 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. Hull Forestry has prepared a brochure on the whys and hows of forestry management similar to one they used with a recent Joshua Trust project. Marking of trees is complete. We expected work to start soon on the drier sections. We have worked with several neighbors on things such as moving the Skid trail further from their homes and asking for a damaged tree to be included.

The Annual Lake Forum 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. We brought the team together to look at long-term strategies and grant opportunities. Eric Trott has submitted a grant application for treatment costs. We are also working with Mansfield on a river management plan for the Willimantic River and Eagleville Lake to develop a long-term plan on Fanwort treatment. It will look at reducing the areas for chemical treatment to critical use areas. The match for this grant proposal will be in-kind services. We are waiting to hear on the grants. A brief update will be held for all at the upcoming consortium meeting (April 29).

The Senior Housing task force has finished their survey and first draft of a report. They were given more time for completion due to staffing changes and COVID issues. They continue to meet and make progress

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 still being worked on. The updated Affirmative Action Plan was the largest part of that. We have the first negotiations session scheduled for all Town and School AFSCME groups for pension. We tested and promoted a Public Works Maintainer I to a Mechanic's Helper (instead of the vacant Mechanic I). We are now recruiting for the vacant PW Maintainer I position. We will also soon start the recruitment for the part time position in the Town Clerk's office with reduced hours. Many issues on COVID-19 leave and travel policies are being digested and information distributed.

Other projects:

DiBlasi Engineering is working on corrective plans with the results of the CHS walls scanned during Christmas break. 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 are underway.

We interviewed and selected ICDS as the HVAC engineering firm for the high school/middle school project. 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. The controls should be done soon, but heating units will be delayed until summer. The units were backordered and won't arrive until after the end of the heating season.

Quisenberry was selected as the architect for school roofs, they also did our last roofing project, and they are underway and having discussion with the State. They are pushing ahead with GHR and if they can get timely approvals from the State, summer construction is still a possibility. The high school roof appears to be more expensive than anticipated due to other issues such as pitch, chimney removal, drainage and square footage, as well as a major cost increase per square foot. We are awaiting for a budget estimate and will need to consider next steps when that is received.

The state paperwork for the Library was received and has been submitted. The Committee is reviewing a scope of work from Ken Best of DRA. In very exciting news, Sondra Astor Stave made a commitment to donate \$75,000 as a challenge to try to bridge the estimated project shortfall. A separate town fund to receive this and other donations was approved to allow fast access by the Town building committee so decisions can be made during construction. The Library is kicking off a fund raising campaign.

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. Still 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. Received the concept plans and reaching out to interested parties who may be able to help. It may well end up in Mansfield but will be a regional asset.

We are seeking permission to use some CDBG re-spending funds to install touchless bathrooms at the Senior Center and Community buildings at Orchard Hills. We also are looking at ADA funds for our museums in Town.