

Manager's project update: May 17, 2021 meeting

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

- The Annual Budget passed and we starting on year end and American Rescue Plan funding use planning. Items with long lead times are being ordered.
- We received the contract documents for the 1.5 million dollar Orchard Hills renovation project and are getting them set for submission so we can get the project out to bid this summer.
- DPW is making progress on sweeping and prep work for summer roads and to have fields ready. The Miller Richardson water tank is in place and we are working with the vendor to get it operational.
- Summer road work has started with full depth reclamation underway at Ridgebrook Drive and High Meadow Lane. Underdrain is being installed at the end of North Farms Road ahead of full depth reclamation scheduled for May 17th.
- We are still waiting for the final State historical review for the Library. They asked for some inside photos. Those were sent and we are still waiting for a response. We can't proceed and sign the architect's contract without this approval. The Library fundraising initiative appears to have raised over \$120,000 so far.
- On Friday May 21, Human Services will have a fifth drive-through food distribution event in the Town Hall driveway loop.
- We continue to evaluate our COVID response and are also working with our Health District and Region on vaccination plans for younger aged folks. We are finalizing plans for a further re-opening of Town Hall, Senior Center and Senior Rides in early June.
- Swamp/Rt. 44 intersection final plans are edging closer to bidding. A long production delay for the traffic signal poles is anticipated, which will require that portion of the project to lag over into spring of 2022.
- The State replacement of the culvert crossing RT 44 in front of Highland Park Market is underway.
- The forestry management project on drier sections of the former Route 6 corridor in the northern section of town has started. No complaints or non-compliance issues so far.
- Congressman Courtney accepted our Community Funding project for the extension of the Main Street Sidewalk from Daly Road to Cheney Lane. It was then submitted and accepted for consideration by the Transportation Committee. So now we wait

for the Committee's report and the Federal Budget process which is scheduled to be in place by Oct. 1.

Public Works/Engineering

- 1) LOTCIP grants: The Swamp Rd/Rt. 44 intersection project plans are almost ready for bid. We await final State review and authorization. The project is currently planned to be bid out in May/June with construction starting in July and a spring 2022 completion.
- 2) Folly Lane Bridge is now open. The project construction is complete except some touch up work and the paperwork.
- 3) We continue to work on the load rating of Pucker Street Bridge. The revised recalculations were submitted today, and we again await CTDOT's review.
- 4) We held a very positive project information meeting on the preliminary design work completed for the Community Connectivity grant for sidewalks on Main from Hemlock Point Lane to approximately Cheney Lane. We believe current funding will only get us as far as Winterberry Lane. We hope this will be a fall project. We submitted a Federal grant request to get the sidewalk extended to Daly Road. The project was selected by Congressman Courtney and submitted and accepted by the Transportation Committee for consideration. Likely will not hear a final decision until October.
- 5) The girls' softball committee has continued to meet with Finance and is getting closer to coming before the full Council. Their preference remains the former gravel pit site, over the former landfill site. Anchor Engineering did a side-by-side cost comparison for the locations, and one or two initial fields, and core facilities versus a fully built out facility. The committee seems more accepting of the alternative landfill option too. Staff will work with Anchor Engineering to make some final plan tweaks, based on additional input on fencing and outfield size needs. 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) Laidlaw Park deep hole tests were conducted, and the soils look good. It should be possible to install a septic system using the toilet trailer, which we acquired through State surplus. Permits to allow the existing irrigation well to be used for the bathrooms were submitted to the State Department of Public Health in June 2020. We are in a slow-moving well permit process. Coventry Soccer is now on board with the concept and wanted input into the location, so a meeting was held and additional sites were asked for consideration.
- 7) LOCIP-funded field irrigation of the Miller Richardson baseball infield on the major league field is complete. The water tank has been moved and installed and contractor is lined up to finish the installation.

- 8) We signed a contract to use LOCIP funds to start fixing one of the cabins at Camp Creaser. We planned to fix the crawl space on one cabin, and the company crew felt it was too dangerous to work in the crawl space so we are looking at options. This assessment contradicted the salesperson's field visit.
- 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 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. We may be able to split it 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.
- 10) We are finishing up the 90 percent design for review on the South Street road reconstruction and sidewalks near the Homestead. Per a State demand, we have completed an archaeological survey of the area of the proposed sidewalk. No impact is expected from the findings. Inland Wetlands granted a permit and asked for a section of impervious sidewalks, which is estimated at an additional \$18,000, which could be cheaper than other wetland mitigation alternatives. We have instructed our engineer to proceed with final design to get it for final review. Bidding hopefully by the end of June.
- 11) To repair the turf issue at the Miller Richardson football field, we were 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. Understand the draft contract is in the Attorney General's office. Still anticipate summer construction.
- 12) The State preliminary design of the Hop River Road Bridge is complete. 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 hired Benech Engineering for the final bridge design and permitting. The Town of Columbia granted a design exception for a curve issue on the Columbia side of the river. Columbia is proposing adding a dry hydrant for fire protection for the area.
- 13) 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 will pay 50% of construction. We hired Jacobson Engineering for concept plans and applications for an anticipated fall grant round. Funds for these plans are coming from Town Aid for Roads. Construction may be included in a future road bond.

- 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, and DEEP just approved the revised plans. They also now want to engage in a review of pricing. We are still a bit away from a point where pricing can be finalized, but project financing seems more viable. A virtual net metering application for the two school solar arrays was accepted as complete, and is in the queue with hopes of award soon. The Town will need to have ownership interest in at least the power line crossing Route 31. We submitted a Community Funding grant request for this too, but did not receive the grant... but were promised help in finding funding. A FEMA BRIC grant round is coming up in a few months so we can try that option.
- 15) In a surprise development, we learned that 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 spring, 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.
- 16) CTDOT has awarded the bid for the replacement of the culvert going under Rt. 44 in front of Meadowbrook Plaza. 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. The project is starting and should be complete by October. The project office is where Swiss Cleaners was.

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. Officer Provost has completed field training and is on the street. Officer Santiago will be completing the Academy in early July. We are again recruiting for trained officers and will be conducting background checks of the finalist this month. We are still waiting for final state installation of a new Live Scan finger print scanner, and finishing training to allow the change to new rifles. Our new cruisers are on line and we are ordering a leftover 2021 cruiser for a July delivery. Justice Assistance Grants are again available since the ban on "Sanctuary States" has been removed. Final proposals for installation of the camera system for the conference room is being obtained.

Fire EMS: The revised Fire Association contracts have been reviewed by the Town Attorney and are back to CVFA. North Coventry is also considering dissolving the Association instead, and may send a letter to the Council to address some important legacy issues related to this. The replacement of the small rescue truck is in final stages for lighting and signage. Hoping to have in service by the end of May, with an unveiling in the Memorial Day parade. The old rescue truck is being converted to a brush truck to replace the current vehicle, which is having electrical problems. The old brush truck is up on GOVDEALS for auction. Work by the transition committee is pretty much completed, but they will remain in place to serve the

fire team and Council. We held interviews for the Fire Chief selection on May 4th, and are submitting a recommendation to the Council for possible ratification on May 17th. This will give time to have the rest of the officers selected by June. An AFG grant was submitted for radios. They are very competitive so here is hoping! We should hear in fall.

Finance: The Budget passed in a 2 to 1 vote with very low turnout. We worked with Munistat to confirm pricing estimates for possible future bonding and to review possible refinancing at the same time. The banking RFP will be restarted soon, but the banks keep merging. We have made significant progress with the grant final reimbursement for Safe Routes to Schools. FEMA grant work has been submitted. We will be getting more than expected, and President Biden retroactively waived the 25% match. Now on to very complicated American Rescue Plan funding planning and year end close out, and insurance renewals.

Development group: EDC continues working on follow up to several business visits and outreach to landowners and interested developers. The Nichols College interns were delayed until summer but still plan to work with 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 this summer. I have had further discussions regarding CT DEEP's concerns about the proposed connection to the Bolton Lakes sewer system. It appears that we will have a dual track approach of finishing the process and seeing whether the law passes. Either path will lead to a June decision. The four-town Economic Vitality group is meeting to work out a regional events calendar. Dollar General and Courtside Nutrition are open. A nail salon is being worked on next to Courtside. We 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. They now have an option on the house 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. Hytone Farm had a positive decision with the Planning and Zoning Commission, and will start working on any necessary regulation changes and permitting for their digester project.

Reid's has been leased to an out-of-town restaurant owner, but no permits have been pulled. They are now in the process of putting together plans. The new tenants used to run a restaurant named Reverie in Branford CT. <https://www.reveriekitchen.com/>. We had discussions with the owner of Meadowbrook Plaza who has plans for some reshuffling, but may end up looking for a new tenant or two. An appraiser has signed a lease for where Nailed It was on Main St. Staff has reached out to owners and there are only a couple vacant places seeking renters. These include the downstairs at Vinton Village, Coventry Fitness (has interest) and the ribbon place underneath. The Penalty Box building is in a pause due to COVID, with decisions on next steps soon. Final environmental testing is being done this month at the former Coventry Antiques site, which will help market that parcel. In exciting news, Sanborn Garage has a purchase agreement from a family-owned Japanese car repair and sales company. Commercial land is now on the market on Woodland Road near Lake

Street. The house next door to the School Admin Building is supposed to be scheduled for demolition, which will make it more marketable. They are not moving fast enough so we will need to start formal enforcement. We are also working Tardiff Farms on Flanders Road to reopen the farm stand/landscaping center which was there. They have minor permit issues to resolve.

Hull Forestry has started the 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 no trail development beyond the skid road, which would allow emergency access. Hull Forestry has prepared a brochure about forestry management similar to one they used with a recent Joshua Trust project. No calls or complaints so far.

The Annual Lake Forum was skipped this year since the committee doesn't like the ZOOM format. Eric Trott has submitted a grant application for treatment costs and was awarded \$50,000. We also worked with Mansfield on a river management plan for the Willimantic River and Eagleville Lake to develop a long-term plan on Fanwort treatment, and they were also funded. That project will look at reducing the areas for chemical treatment to critical use areas. The match for this grant proposal will be in-kind services. A brief update was held at the recent consortium meeting. We have released an online version of the Watershed Health Pledge to the community, and have a window cling decal for those who complete it. To date, 31 pledges have been received.

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. They are conducting site visits. We finally received the Orchard Hills grant and are getting the contract read for submission.

Farmers' Market planning for the summer season is underway, with a modified open market plan. Opening is June 6th at 10:00 AM. DOAG Commissioner Bryan Hulbert will be in attendance, and maybe some other State officials. This will be back to the open field.

HR issues:

Personnel rules appendices are still being worked on. Exit interview surveys were sent out to former employees back to 2019. We have conducted several negotiations sessions for all Town and School AFSCME groups for pension and now have cost estimates. We have made a conditional offer for the vacant PW Maintainer I position and have started the recruitment process for Recreation Director, with an interview panel set up for May 25. We will also soon start the recruitment for the part time position in the Town Clerk's office with reduced hours per the budget. 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 was scanned during spring break and it only took two days. This may allow some summer corrective work. The School Building Committee has approved bids for the fire door projects with installation delayed until summer.

We interviewed and selected ICDS as the HVAC engineering firm for the high school/middle school project. We expect cost estimates by the end of May. Due to new COVID air standards, we will not have enough money unless grants become available. We have awarded bids for the middle school gym HVAC units and CHS front office controls to be replaced. The units were backordered and have arrived but won't be installed until summer.

Quisenberry was selected as the architect for school roofs. They also did our last roofing project, and they are underway and having discussions with the State. They have recommended that we stop pushing ahead with both projects this year since it will not be likely to get good bids for this summer, and instead seek late fall bids for next summer. Pricing is also exceeding our funding due to rapid product price increases. The high school roof appears to be much 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 waiting 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 has accepted a scope of work from Ken Best of DRA. We are still waiting for the State Historic Preservation Office to sign off on the project so we can execute the agreement with the State Library for the grant. In related good news, the Library did get a 100% grant to fund the engineering for the joist replacements.

We are still 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 three museums in Town.

We submitted two federal Community Funding Projects grants for consideration by Congressman Courtney, and he selected the Main Street sidewalk project, which was submitted and accepted by the Transportation committee. We should learn the outcome by fall as part of the federal budget process. The Congressman's office also offered assistance in getting a grant for the microgrid project.

Plans are underway for a scaled-back Memorial Day Parade. Laura Stone has arranged the military flyover and parade road permits. We are also planning a ceremony in front of the Town Hall on Flag Day.