

Manager's project update: January 3, 2022 meeting

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

- A tentative agreement in principle has been reached between Coventry Microgrid LLC and Tritec and a signed agreement is hoped to be signed soon. CT DEEP will allow an extension of key benchmarks. The Town partners will need to reach an agreement by the end of the first quarter of 2023.
- Covid has roared back and we are tightening our policies, collecting data on our employee's status, and helping the State distribute test kits. Youth Sports and after school programs have been impacted.
- We had a first demo of the Pavement Management study. I have asked the consultant to prepare a demo for the Council on Feb. 7th. It may be wise to at least consider a bonding question for roads with the budget. The demo will show how close we are to letting certain roads go from prevention mode to replacement mode. We also have several culverts needing replacement.
- We were shortlisted for the State Trails grant, but that list still is oversubscribed, so we have been asked to reduce the state grant by at least 30%. We believe if we focus on repairing the drainage and lessen the trail resurfacing we can still provide the connectivity which helped us score well. We have resubmitted and will hope.
- We now have all required authorizations from the State for the 1.5 million dollar Orchard Hills renovation project. Our team is trying to get the bids out as soon as possible.
- ARP arts/culture grant requests are in process, and should be ready for Finance to review and submit to the Council for 1/17 meeting.
- We received 3 quality submissions for consulting services to assist the PZC on a State-mandated affordable housing study. We interviewed, and the panel selected SLR, which has a unique way of getting community input.
- Police received a Justice Assistance Grant for \$25,000 and needs to submit uses by 12/31
- Hop River Road bridge replacement has been delayed a construction season (2023) and our local share is increasing at least \$91,000.

Public Works/Engineering

- 1) LOTCIP grants: The Swamp Rd/Rt 44 project is underway. Spazzarini Construction removed the house and started site clearing. During the winter months the overhead utilities will be relocated allowing a quick start in spring. Materials will be ordered over the winter.
- 2) Todd Penney continues to work toward getting the plans and specs for the Community Connectivity grant for sidewalks on Main from Hemlock Point Lane to approximately Cheney Lane. This has slipped to a summer 2022 construction project. We are acquiring easements now. A historic survey has been completed and we have received clearance to proceed from the State Historic Preservation Office. The State has removed several trees on Main Street which were proposed for removal as part of our sidewalk project. This will decrease our project cost and allow a few more feet of sidewalk.

- 3) With the softball plan referendum approval we have completed wetlands and topo mapping and preliminary design for the current transfer station site. Construction specifications are nearing completion with bidding planned for February and construction start in early spring.
- 4) At Creaser Park we have abandoned plans to fix the cabins. We are likely demolishing them instead. A meeting with DEEP was held on all park issues also including tree removal, future pond work, and options for nine more holes of disc golf. It was a productive first meeting with the need for additional input. Staff is working on alternative plans including crowd sourcing construction of a greenhouse with some Sustainable CT matching funds.
- 5) We are still waiting for authorization 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. 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. CRCOG is suggesting we have a public information meeting at this stage. Due to lack of Town staff time we have extended Jacobson Engineering's contract to hold a public involvement meeting in a month or so to keep this project moving.
- 6) Plans for the South Street road reconstruction and sidewalks near the Homestead have been submitted to the State for final review. All easements and paperwork have been filed. We believe bidding will be in the next few months for a spring start.
- 7) 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, and CT DEEP permission to bid. The bid specs are being fine-tuned to allow a bid alternative of a practice softball facility in the rear left corner with bidding planned in February for spring start. The bid option will call for a substitute of a dirt pitching area instead of grass turf and a separate back stop fence price. This will not interfere with any future football (or other sports) use, since the backstop will be off that area of play. This was made possible because the WPCA moved gravel from the treatment plant to help level the practice football field area as part of the project.
- 8) The State preliminary design of the Hop River Road Bridge is complete. The project has reached the 90% design stage. The project has slipped to 2023 construction and price increased. At this point it looks like we are \$91,000 short on our share of the match.
- 9) We are looking at several culverts replacements for the next Local Bridge grant round in spring of 2022. We are ready for grant submissions for these two expensive culverts in need of replacement on Bunker Hill and Parker Bridge Road. 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 now complicated by a pending Andover bridge replacement. We need to coordinate the three projects to assure access to houses and through 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.
- 10) 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 and hope to have a signed agreement soon. A DEEP deadline has been verbally given an extension due to this progress. Tritec will then 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 the end of April. Optimistically construction could start this summer.

- 11) We have hired B & L (formerly Anchor) to design a new transfer station next to the DPW facility using ARP funds. It will have concepts for future needs which may not be built now. We have received a draft concept plan which we are asking for cost estimates and a possible phasing schedule.
- 12) 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.
- 13) We have tested and interview several DPW Maintainers and will conduct background checks and make an offer next week.

Public Safety: Police: Jeff Spadjinske, Acting Chief and I have been meeting weekly. We are starting the recruitment process for a new chief. Officer Jose Pansini will start on January 3rd with a brief swearing in ceremony at 5 in the Station. He has just finished up 2 years' experience with the New London Police. We are still recruiting for one more to get to full staffing and are trying to reserve a slot in the July Police Academy. Our new cruiser is in and being outfitted. We have decided to wait for a new Chief for the Sergeant appointments. With Jeff Spadjinke's appointment as Acting Chief this leaves us with only two other sergeants. The Detective slot will be filled by Officer Kelsey Carpenter in January. The Department was issued a grant for \$25,000 for a Justice Assistance Grant and have a December 31 deadline for submission of plan. They will decide their needs and priorities.

Fire EMS: The replacement fire truck has been ordered and will take a year to build. Getting prices for building improvements at the Merrow Road substation which were budgeted. With the completion of the first stage of the voluntary OSHA, the review of our policies and facilities, we will move on to additional areas of fire safety. Our ambulance replacement has stalled again with the vendor now backing out. The choice on how to proceed now will be a Town Council issue with the Department recommending purchasing a new one if they can locate a reasonably priced one... versus ordering a new one with a long delay. It is clear additional funds will be needed. Alternatives have been lined up if our old ambulance fails again, for short term use only. The State has authorized a 4.1% rate increase for ambulance runs which will help, but not solve, the deficit in that fund due to going to paid 24/7 staffing. An order has been submitted to replace older (expired) Air Pacs.

Finance: Munistat presented the Finance Committee a borrowing and refinancing schedule for April to fund the school roof replacement, softball fields and Library. We are now fine-tuning pricing for ventilation at the high school and middle school, and conducting 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 school needs at the High and Middle Schools. This

approach may allow the State to fund HVAC and AC projects as well as already programmed replacements for windows and minor ADA work. We have proposed to the State to try shift the roof top air intake work into the High School roofing project which may lead to increased State cost sharing and avoid cutting open a new roof. Applications for roof funding were submitted, but rejected by the State, who is seeking clarification of funding amounts. We are having the Council make this clearer and will resubmit. We continue to work with the Finance Committee and Town Council on the complicated American Rescue Plan funding planning. The FY 20/21 year-end close out is in good shape and preliminary audits given to us for review. The Auditors will present on Jan.10, 2022. Efforts at updating online assessing data and mapping are also underway. The Supplemental Motor Vehicle list was completed with revenues exceeding budget estimates. These bill were out on time.

Development group: We are now proceeding with the local agreements required to allow an extension to the Bolton Lakes sewer system. WPCA submitted an ARP grant request which is pending. We are meeting with developers and finance groups interested in that area. Hytone Farm is seeking building permits for an approved anaerobic digester. PZC has adopted a moratorium on cannabis retail sales and has appointed a subcommittee to work on whether to allow one store, and if so, under what conditions. Richard Roberts, our PZC attorney, is suggesting that, when appointed, this committee seeks input from the Council. The PZC also met with the designer of a potential dentist office considering building next to Dollar General and approved new regulations which would allow the building to move forward and allow parking in the rear. They have purchased the parcel and will now seek formal wetlands permits. The four-town Economic Vitality group is meeting to work out a regional events calendar and submitted an ARP grant for economic development consulting. Several will require Commission action to make the uses fully legal. We have selected SLR to draft an affordable housing plan as required by State law. The study is anticipated to be complete by late spring.

We have not received the grant paperwork for the joint Mansfield/Coventry Eagleville Fanwort project, but did just get the Hydrilla grant paperwork. The grant for the Nathan Hale and Bear Swamp trail was submitted and short listed. We revised to reduce the grant request by 30% which will allow the major components to be completed. If this revised application is approved the grant will pay for gravel, drainage and signage with in-kind service planned as our match.

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, and it is slowly moving forward.

We started negotiations for an extension of the Farmers Market lease with the Homestead.

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 in January. Many issues on COVID-19 leave, and new OSHA regulations, are being digested and information continually monitored. We are gathering vaccination data and then will review next steps. We

need some action from Conn OSHA before the Federal regulation would take effect...assuming the Courts do not override it. We are finalizing a Police Chief Recruitment plan which will include some community input. The Department will also be conducting a community survey in March as part of the reaccreditation process. The Sergeant Promotion testing is complete with the process on hold for now until we have a new Chief. We are also interviewing for both a new Tax Collector and Building Official over the next week, and for the DPW Maintainer I we are at the reference check stage. We continue to discuss options for a replacement Cemetery Sexton.

Other projects:

The Walls Committee, Contractor, and Engineer walked through CHS to determine the best and most cost effective approach for each remaining wall which needs strengthening. DiBlasi Engineering will give us a proposal for this final design work which will include a construction cost estimate. CHS and GHR roof plans were updated and with the additional funds from the November vote we are on track for a February/March bid. The HVAC approach for the High and Middle Schools has been agreed upon and the engineer has given the roof architect the locations of fresh air intakes to allow the work to be included in the roof plan bid. The full HVAC project is not yet ready for a referendum but we may be able to do the High School 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 also exploring 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%. Unfortunately the study is fairly expensive.

I just gathered some economic data for a possible intermediate medical center who may be interested in locating in town. A local Barber shop is hoping to open in Ackert Electric's building. Captain Hale Financial is opening on RT 44. We continue to work with several businesses to get them in zoning, wetlands and building code compliance.

On the Library project we have preliminary plans and cost estimates and are still fine tuning to stay on budget. Finishing work on interior finishes, and issues. Timing still looks like a February bidding and start of construction soon after. Borings in the area of the addition are scheduled.

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 just waiting for materials to arrive. We also were approved for ADA funds for our three museums in Town. I have met with the glass museum on a proposed scope. 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 of couple housing rehab projects to be addressed. So likely springtime. We also worked to share federal arts funding with our local groups which had a December end-of-month deadline. We have several applications and staff should be able to have a recommendation for this month's Finance meeting and Council consideration at the second January meeting.

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

Human Services is reconvening their Advisory Committees and trying to reinvigorate the Human Rights Commission and staff Community Conversations. They are receiving generous food donations, and have geared up for energy assistance. They helped 34 families for Holiday and provided meals to all the residents at Orchard Hills. The juvenile review board is the busiest it ever has been. The Senior Center and transportation services are getting more active too.