

Manager's project update: February 7, 2022 meeting

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

Highlights:

We continue to distribute masks at town hall and have given out over 2,000. We are on a second round, but are taking a breather to allow other work to catch up. No test kits for community distribution are forthcoming but we received additional tests for teacher, students, and essential workers and disadvantaged citizens (including Orchard Hills).



The pavilion kit is being installed at Laidlaw Park. It will be done in time for 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.

We had a first demo of the Pavement Management Study. The consultant will present findings to the Council on Feb. 7th. 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 will show how close we are to letting certain roads go from prevention mode to replacement mode.

We remain on the shortlist for the State Trails grant for Nathan Hale Road and Bear Swamp Road. We submitted the requested 30% budget reduction and have received some feedback that they would like to add some back if possible. We take that as a positive sign.

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 supplemental information has been mostly received from applicants. The review panel's recommendations should be ready for the February Finance meeting to review and submit to the Council for your second meeting in February.

SLR is proceeding with the grant-funded consulting for a State-mandated affordable housing study, and work is underway. An interactive community housing survey will be underway this month.

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.

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.

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 final review. All easements and paperwork have been filed. We believe bidding will be in the next few months for a spring start.

We are out to bid 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. 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 now 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 CRCOG will have a LOTICIP culvert round which covers 100% of construction costs.

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.

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.

We have hired a new DPW Maintainer I, who is starting next week.

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 being outfitted. 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. The Detective slot has been filled by Officer Kelsey Carpenter. The Department was issued a grant for \$25,000 for a Justice Assistance Grant and submitted our purchase plan by the December 31 deadline.

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. With the completion of the first stage of the voluntary OSHA compliance process, the review of our policies and facilities, we will move on to additional areas of fire safety. Our alternative ambulance replacement has been ordered and confirmed with a possible June delivery. Medicare is also offering a modest rate increase which we are requesting. It 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 a borrowing and refinancing schedule to the Finance Committee 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 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. We need guidance to integrate these plans with the upcoming budget. The Grand List was completed on time with significant growth. 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. 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. 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. Richard Roberts, our PZC attorney, met with the commission to outline the process, and they are recommending proceeding with the development of zoning regulations to permit and regulate cannabis establishments in Coventry, with a memo to the Council contained on your the Feb. 7th agenda packet. 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 coming survey will be launched this month. 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 Egleville Fanwort project and submitted Hydrilla grant paperwork for this summer. 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 still are getting positive feedback on the application with hints of not taking all the offered reductions. Hope to hear within a month.

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 started negotiations for an extension of the Farmers Market lease with the Homestead. Due to complexities we verbally agreed to a one year extension which is being put in writing.

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. 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. We are about to advertise for a Police Chief, with a March 4 application deadline. 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 promotion testing is complete with the process on hold for now until we have a new Chief. We promoted both a Tax Collector and Assistant Collector, and will be starting recruitment for a Revenue Clerk. I have made an offer for the position of Building Official subject to Council ratification on Feb. 7th. Our new DPW Maintainer I starts next week. We continue to discuss options for a replacement Cemetery Sexton with a proposed job description ready for Council consideration. We are still recruiting for a Council Clerk and part time Senior Center Assistant.

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. We have 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 are on track for a 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 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%.

I just gathered some economic data for the developer of 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 into zoning, wetlands and building code compliance.

The Library project is nearing going out to bid with interior finishes and design decisions. Timing still looks like February bidding 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 which had a December end-of-month deadline. We have several applications and staff gathered additional information for a February Finance meeting and Council consideration at the second February meeting.

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.