Manager's project update: January 21, 2020 meeting

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

Highlights: A few key items, which will be discussed further below:

- The Swamp Road intersection design continues. The State is requiring a total signal replacement, which will affect design fees (our cost), and most likely delay construction one year. The increased construction cost will be covered by the grant.
- Final change notices for revaluation will be mailed out soon. Vision appraisal has discovered a rounding error in their software, system wide, which will require very small value changes in the final notices. We believe we can get these corrected and still complete the grand list by the end of the month.
- Cumberland Farms project started with April/May opening scheduled.
- Tax sale was conducted and the one parcel sold for a high value. The owner may sell it during the redemption period. This is fine with us since we get our money either way. The Brewster street parcel was rescheduled for April 1.

Public Works/Engineering

1.) Loticip grants: CDM has completed preliminary design of Swamp Rd. The State is now requesting a total signal replacement, which will add to our design cost and probably delay construction a year. The Northfields concept was designed and we are starting to push it as the preferred alternative since the State did not really like our Northfields/RT 44 intersection modification either. We will try to use this to get them to pay for a portion of the new connector instead. We met with the most affected owner along the route of the connector and they were not initially supportive of the concept. We will continue discussions after preparing a landscape plan and appraisal. We own the Swamp Road house but will need other easements. The South Street project has finally made it through CTDOT and we responded to their questions. It is likely we will be looking for design funds in February from CNREF.

2.) Folly Lane Bridge replacement permitting continues and Wetlands will review this month. It has been suggested that a dry fire hydrant be added. We should be able to be out to bid this winter for Spring/Summer 2020 construction. We have an issue with needing to remove several trees before bat mating season so we may need to do that at our expense or lose a full construction season.

3.) The School parking lot was tweaked to allow cueing for nine buses. This will be a next summer project. Todd Penney has its design on his long list of projects.

4.) CT Water's vendor has made major progress in the Northfields area. They started up again and have had frequent water main breaks which is calling to question whether a winter shut down is best. We awarded the bid for the first phase of catch basin work and have reached an agreement for continuing with the low bidder via a change order.

5.) The survey and wetlands work is complete to design the Community Connectivity grant for sidewalks on Main from Hemlock point Lane to around Winterberry Lane. We will
meet with a handful of other property owners. This will be a summer project. Due to workload issues, Todd Penney will getting outside design help for the preliminary project design and we hope to have a public involvement meeting in February.

6.) We have taken the Crosswalk project back from our traffic engineer due to the cost of their proposal to prepare a permit application. We learned that Willington just installed a similar crosswalk light on Rt 32 so Todd will be able to gain firsthand knowledge to prepare and submit a permit to CT DOT for the crosswalk at Ripley Hill and Main.

7.) We are seeking concept plans for design options and costs for the three possible softball field locations now that we have the money. We have selected Bushnell Associates for the WPCA location and Anchor Engineering for the Football field and town gravel pit area. I will be updating the committee this week at their meeting.

8.) We are trying to move forward with repairing the turf issue at the Miller Richardson football field based on Anchor Engineering’s report. They recommend some vent piping be installed and the clay cap in those areas be repaired. COVRRA funds will be required to implement corrective action to provide a venting system. The price is creeping up since we now need a CT DEEP permit to repair the cap.

9.) LOCIP-funded field irrigation of the Miller Richardson baseball infield on the major league field is complete waiting for the town crew to have time to move and set up the water tank. On the schedule for the next couple of weeks to assure spring operation.

13) Laidlaw Park is being scheduled to be tested for a possible septic system to allow a toilet trailer, which we acquired through State surplus, to be used at the park.

14) The Public Works and Recreation Department is working with volunteers on the installation of a 9-hole disc golf course at Creaser Park funded with LOCIP funds. We are trying to get this done. The holes are dug and we await signage before installing the baskets due to liability concerns. It is likely only six holes will be ready before spring.

Grants

1) We have been awarded a $20,000 historical grant to evaluate the Caprilands house and grounds. We selected Evelyn Cole Smith Architects out of Putnam. They should complete the report in about 3 months. In the meantime, we will work on a draft RFP for adaptive reuse, which will attach this report as an appendix. We are now also pursuing the option of the Town providing insurance coverage under a license agreement to slow the need to flip the property.

2) The DEEP Microgrid project continues to move forward. We are still a bit away from a point where pricing can be finalized. All parties will 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. It is likely that we will need to wait until more projects are authorized by the State.

Public Safety:

Police: Starting to get ready for an on-site accreditation review in early spring. Sgt. Spadjinske has left for 10 weeks at the FBI academy. Chief Palmer will be coming to the 1/21 Council meeting to discuss a grant the department has been awarded on prison holding procedures, and a new round of grants for school resource officers.
Fire EMS: In conjunction with CVFA and NCFD we are looking at the future options for the fire service. The merger study committee continues to make progress and likely will have a report for the 1/21 Council meeting. We have continued to obtain refurbishment pricing for the Engine Tanker, which was included in this year's budget. Contract changes to the paramedic contract with Windham Hospital are complete. We also received our rate increase result for ambulance service. The LED lighting project at all four firehouses is complete.

Finance:

The revaluation project is at the final review stage and on time for the grand list completion. A minor software glitch in Vision appraisal was found and is being corrected. The banking RFP has been put on hold for a little bit. The auditors have submitted the audit, which was presented to Finance this week, and needs to be accepted by the Council. The tax sale has a January 14th sale date and one parcel was sold in competitive bidding. The other parcel will go on sale on April 1. Budget work is underway with Capital and operating budget deadline passed. On to data entry and review. The Council will need to consider options but the Orchard Hills project, which failed to get funds in the last round, is still a top priority. A public hearing on the options is scheduled for Feb. 18, 2020. RFP for consultants is on the street.

Development Group:

EDC continues working on follow up to several business visits and outreach to land owners and interested developers. We are focused on addressing CT DEEP denial of the requested connection to the Bolton Lakes sewer system. DEEP inspected our treatment plant for the first time in years and restarted the review of our permit renewal. This will likely start a process to require us to implement nitrogen reduction.

CERC continues working on the regional Econ-dev multi town study. The first draft is in for review by the Towns and a meeting was held of all the town staffs. We expect an application within the next several months for an undisclosed retail operation on Rt 44 where Dr. Watson had an office. We continue to work with Hartford Healthcare on finding a new home for Dr. Keenan in town. EDC is starting a 12-week intensive business workshop on Facebook marketing. Eight have signed up. We are also lining up another Google workshop presented free by Google.

Staff continues to monitor the Caprilands saga and a discussion of what role, if any, the Town will have in what comes next. We are also starting to look at alternatives to preserve the land, maybe in a farmland protection program. We are looking at alternatives for insurance.

HR Issues:

Personnel rules were adopted and work on the appendices now needs to become a priority for Steering. We have signed contracts with the Police Union, and the Public Works Union. We have hired Catherine Alfano as our part time position of Senior Center Assistant. We also conducted the first of two sexual harassment training for all employees offered by CIRMA free. We will be starting negotiations with the Town Hall and Supervisors unions for July 1, 2020 and
all AFSCME groups for pension. We also will start a recruitment for a replacement for Courtney Chan, Human Services Administrator.

Other projects:

We continue to work with CRCOG and neighboring towns on the crumbling concrete foundation issue. We now have 135 households tested under the CRCOG program. Under the CDBG regional testing program we still need one last income eligible applicant. CRCOG’s Ad-hoc Study Committee on Crumbling Foundations was successful in getting State aid. The insurance trust opened up for new applications this week and got 130 applications on the first day. While some bond funds were awarded, more are needed, and we have been promised that we are on the agenda for the next Bond Commission meeting in January. A new low interest loan program is now available for uncovered costs.

The CHS Walls Code Compliance Building Committee is pushing for an update on the wall scanning to address wind code concern. While initial results looked very favorable, later scans showed some rebar gap. The committee will meet with DiBlasi engineering this month to review. The School Building Committee has submitted revised plans to the State for the fire doors. Bill Trudelle will meet with them to answer questions. We have selected Fuss & O’Neill to prepare a design build RFP for the remainder of the project to coordinate with the Microgrid project.