**Town Manager Update**

*July 26, 2022*

Regarding the proposal for a special Town Meeting on August 29:

* I’m proposing adding to Article 1 the cost for the appraisal of the Bardin property, $6,150 for the three parcels. The Assessors recommend a full appraisal rather than their “using procedures customarily accepted as valid by the appraising profession,” based on its APR status. Article 1 currently contains the funds necessary for the operation of the Transfer Station (as you’ll recall, with the expected revenues offsetting those costs, more or less, during the tax-setting process).
* Article 2 proposes to add $174,588 to the borrowing authorization for the Town Hall renovation project. This is based on the latest estimates from both the architect for the direct work and our Building Superintendent for all related work (leases, storage, moving, etc.).
* Article 3 proposes adding funds to the borrowing authorization for Dalton Division Road. This could be either $146,100, representing the cost for engineering as bid, or $240,000, which would add the estimated cost for the related preparation of right-of-way acquisition, which will be the Town’s responsibility. Please let me know your preference. I will note that further finds will be needed for the actual right-of-way acquisition, which will involve some permanent taking of property and associated legal work. We will not know the actual cost of acquisition until the preliminary work has been done. Further, I am proposing that this money come from the General Stabilization account: the original vote was a debt exclusion, which means that it would have to be followed by a ballot vote. Not only would this would overwhelm the Town Clerk’s office (it would come in the midst of two other elections, and would have to be treated separately, with its own registration, ballot, and other requirements), we are already pushing the 45-day limit of the period in which the proposal is valid. If the Town wishes to covert this into additional borrowing, that could be done at the next annual Town Meeting and Election.

Please let me know if you would like to discuss any of this further before the next Select Board meeting.

For a Walker Brook grant proposal update: I understand our hopes were high that we could take advantage of this year’s subsidized local match, dropping to 10% instead of 25%. However, it seems the timing will not work if the current deadline holds; there is a chance, though, that the deadline could be extended and we could still apply. Since this is a federal grant, under FEMA, bidding is required by federal procurement rules (though it would not be for a state grant). The bid would include writing and submitting the grant proposal, as this is an area of expertise in which many firms have substantial experience (for example, it requires a benefit-cost analysis, which is an area of special expertise). We would need at least two months for a truly competitive process, four weeks to respond to the request for proposals and at least four weeks to write the grant proposal (including the benefit-cost analysis). The current timeline is for the final design memo, on which the RFP would be based, to be ready at the end of September, with the grant proposal due October 9, though again, the deadline could be extended, perhaps to January.

For a Division Road update: Fuss & O’Neill proposed $946,100 for the job; CDR|Maguire proposed $1,198,900, a difference of $252,800. I was originally confused about how the two proposals covered right-of-way preparation, but satisfied myself they were offering comparable work—just what was required in the RFP. There will be additional right-of-way costs the Town is responsible for; a good estimate for the necessary preliminary work on those, not including final acquisition or legal fees, is $94,050, but these funds will not need to be provided for another two years.

Other procurement briefs:

* I have published the advertisement for the Water and Fire District’s desired used fire truck, with a response date by August 25; it is scheduled to appear in the Goods and Services Bulletin, as required, August 2.
* I created an Invitation for Bids for the DPW to pave the Pinegrove basketball courts, and worked with the Superintendent on specifications for a sewer camera.
* I have received a proposal for appraising the Bardin land, the next step in selling those parcels, for $6,150, and have added that to the operating budget revision for the special Town Meeting. I plan to have an Invitation for Bids for potential buyers ready by early Fall.
* Beyond those projects, I am also researching the procurement rules for the fiber ring (our Community Compact grant) to start that project this fall as well. Both companies who provided estimates for our grant proposal are on state contracts.

For a Civil Service update, I expect the Town will need to complete a report outlining why the Town finds it favorable to leave the system. This appears to be a requirement of the Civil Service system. I do not fully understand why this is necessary, as I had understood it was a purely legislative matter, but I have informed our legislators of the situation and will continue to move forward, together with the Chief, with whatever is necessary to remove the Town. Other towns have had to do so and I have a copy of Falmouth’s, which is a good guide, as it was successful.

Just a brief note on the contracts with Casella: the Town waste contract is under Casella’s consideration, with services proceeding without a contract on an interim basis; the Transfer Station hauling contract is waiting for Town Meeting funding.

Municipalities will continue to have the option to hold public meetings remotely till March 31. 2023. The provision to mandate hybrid meetings for all boards and committees was notincluded in the final version of the bill, nor was a simple permanent extension of the current allowance for the option of remote meetings.

The Health Agent has been working on five sub-standard houses in town, and I believe she may be looking for policy guidance from the Board soon regarding one of them, inhabited by a resident who has so far refused to engage with the Town of any social services. Three of the houses have been condemned, of which one is in receivership; another in in receivership without being condemned. The final house is being worked on and may not need Town action.

I am also attaching the latest COVID reporting for your information at the request of the Health Agent. Please remember that these cases reported do not include self-tests that are not reported to towns.