**Town Manager Update**

*February 5, 2024*

Large construction projects require contractor approval by the state’s Department of Capital Assets Management and Maintenance, or DCAMM. They also require an evaluation at the end of the project. I submitted an evaluation for Cape Cod Builders, who did the Town Hall renovation project, which I worked on closely with John Barry, our architect. John was not pleased with their work and called them the third most difficult contractor he had ever dealt with in his long career. Our former Buildings and Grounds Superintendent was also dissatisfied with their work. Based on that, the evaluation we submitted did not give them a passing grade. We have received various communications from Cape Cod Builders threatening legal action if we do not give them a passing grade. As the architect and I do not believe they deserve a passing grade, I intend to hand off all further communication to Town Counsel.

There is some good news regarding the Bardin property. The Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources has notified Thomas and Esther Balardini that their plan has been deemed sufficient to proceed with the purchase of the land. A closing date of March 20 has been set.

The first draft of the state cherry sheets, showing state aid and assessments, is in, as the Governor has submitted her budget. This first draft of numbers shows a net increase of $54,001 in state aid over last year.

We’ve gotten our state cybersecurity audit report. The group that did it has asked for a final call to review the report, with our consultant, so I do not have any comment at the moment, but I’d be happy to send it to anyone who’d like to look at it in the meantime. The main recommendations seem to be getting additional software for internal monitoring, and for cost considerations, we are going to ask them to suggest priorities.

I have a request from the Open Space Committee to add $20,000 to the Town Meeting articles for a grant reimbursement program for invasive species, one of the priorities of the forestry plan for The Pines. The project must be fully funded but is 75% reimbursable.

I have been approached by a business owner regarding a sewer lateral pipe that the Town should have replaced as part of the Housatonic Street project. The line recently broke; the owner had the pipe replaced and has proposed that the Town contribute $6,000 toward the total $16,000 replacement cost.

We also have a request to purchase an easement, as we did some work as part of that project for which an easement was promised but not purchased. We expect a plan and proposed cost by March 8; I have an estimate of $15,000 included in the proposed money articles for Town Meeting.

Finally, the Finance Committee has requested a joint meeting with the Select Board for budget review on the third Monday in March, March 18. This special meeting has already been scheduled as the meeting at which the Select Board would sign the Town Meeting warrant, as the CBRSD final numbers come out March 14. This would allow review of the final budget with those numbers.