**Town Manager Update**

*September 23, 2024*

For those concerned about the Orchard Road project, the time between the Town notification of the grant and now has been spent in obtaining the necessary easements. The state contract was executed January 24. We hired a designer very quickly and I received an e-mail on February 22 informing me that easements would be necessary before going out to bid. I found the name of a recommended appraiser and wrote them the next day for quotes (for both Orchard Road and the L.P. Adams easement) and they replied they would get me quotes. I got the money for the quotes from the Select Board from ARPA funds and hired an appraiser. We got preliminary plans and figures and brought the items to Town Meeting for the necessary approval. We have final plans and costs; I received the Orders of Taking from Town Counsel and got them signed by the Select Board August 19. I approved and submitted the final plans and the orders of taking with the Registry of Deeds. As of September 12, I was still waiting for the final notice of taking, offer letter, application for eminent domain damages payment, pro tanto receipt, and eminent domain release from Town Counsel. We are now waiting for the eminent domain release. When the easements are finalized, we will be prepared to bid the work. All that said, it was already late in January, when the grant contract was signed by the State, to bid a project for this construction year. By the time the easements were approved, construction companies were well into their planned season. We will be bidding during the usual time for such activity, the fall preceding the construction season in which the work is to be done. This is when companies are looking to schedule their next year and are at their most competitive, which we anticipate will lead to lower prices.

I have been talking with the other CBRSD municipal managers about the possibility of having a comprehensive agreement for regional vocational school transportation. The original thought of the managers was to have an intermunicipal agreement for a series of three-year contracts, but I understand CBRSD might be looking to make it part of the regional CBRSD agreement. I have spoken with Dick Lacatell, who is concerned that if the current formula for allocating costs is included, Dalton may be at a disadvantage, and who suggested a formula based on miles travelled. He did acknowledge, though, that with three separate and widely spaced vocational schools, and the number of students going to any of them varying widely, the situation was different from current CBRSD transportation.

I have been given to understand that the relationship between the Health Agent and the Stationery Factory has improved considerably, and I have written for confirmation of that to the relevant manager, though I have not yet received a reply.

I spoke with representatives from MEMA regarding Walker Brook. They understand the situation and agreed that the project as currently developed would probably not be competitive. They suggested other grant programs and also agreed that finding out the extent of the current blockage would be the best next step.

The Building and Grounds Superintendent and I are pursuing a lead for engineering for both inside and outside for Town Hall basement plumbing, which has been difficult to find so far.

I have begun communications with the Dalton Police Officers Union regarding negotiations for their next three-year contract. The other unions usually prefer to follow the DPOU.

I would like to sign onto a letter supporting the Northern Tier rail line, though it would not go through Dalton, as it would be good for the region, from which we would benefit to some degree. Unless the Board would like to put this matter on a future agenda, I will go ahead and sign. [N.b.: The Select Board desired discussion, and with a deadline of October 12, signing on was declined.]