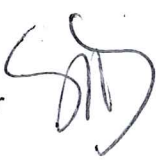


Town Manager Report/Update

To: Board of Selectmen

From: Stephen L. Delaney
Interim Town Manager 

Date: April 8, 2021

Re: Update for Your Meeting of April 12, 2021

Items/Questions from the meeting of March 22, 2021

1. **Zoom for future meetings.** The logistics are presenting a challenge to incorporate Zoom as part of in-person meetings at Town Hall. We are working closely with Don O'Neil to determine if we can utilize existing equipment, or if additional equipment is necessary, and if so, at what cost. This is a work in progress, and we will keep you advised as we get further into the process.
2. **Opening plan for Town Hall.** We are watching/reviewing the guidance from the State relative to a further opening of Town Hall to public access. The logistics for such a full opening, if warranted, will be a challenge. I am not recommending a full re-opening at this time given the ongoing health concerns. Although not ideal, I am impressed by the level of service that our staff is able to provide all residents during this trying period.
3. **RFP for water rate study.** At our last meeting you had asked that we begin the process of drafting a Request for Proposals to undertake a water rate study and related examination of a cost benefit analysis of contracted services vs. town operated water and sewer services. Before I drafted such an RFP, I wanted to take a moment to share the likely components that I think should be included in such a study to be sure that the RFP reflects the goals of the Board of Selectmen. Possible elements of a study:
 - a. Rate analysis based upon current operational configuration
 - b. A cost benefit analysis of contracted services vs. town operated services, with a rate analysis for both options
 - c. Capital needs assessment with related financial implications and financing options
 - d. Based upon current users of both utilities, and the potential for growth to offset expenditures, a prognosis for the long term financial health of the water/sewer utilities

4. **Question on debt service related to water and sewer budgets.** There is no debt coming off these budgets this fiscal year.
5. **Hydrants.** There was a question related to hydrants...how many and are any out of service. We have 345 hydrants, with none out of service. The flushing program began this week.

Other topics

6. **Audit.** The FY20 audit is complete and the final audit report is expected on, or before, April 12, 2021.
7. **Mellen Road informational letter.** I had sent out an informational letter to all residents on Mellen Road, with a copy to all members of the Board of Selectmen. An additional copy is appended to this document.
8. **Town awarded \$243,600 grant from the Mass DOT Shared Streets Program.** The work associated with this grant will focus upon pedestrian safety improvements in the upper Central Street area, including routes connecting Murdock High School, Memorial Elementary School, and Broadview Assisted Living Center. Work will include, among other items, ADA compliant curb ramps, cross walk delineations, and pedestrian flashing crossing lights. A big thanks to Planning and DPW staff who spearheaded the effort to land this grant!
9. **Veterans' Services.** Our effort continues to implement a satisfactory plan for the replacement of the Veterans' Services Agent as a result of Scott's untimely passing. We have been utilizing the part time services of an agent from another community on a temporary basis, with mixed success. There have been a few glitches in paperwork, which have prevented the timely distribution of benefits to several veterans, which is not acceptable. We are correcting problems as they are discovered, and we are working on a longer term solution, which could include a part time person, or perhaps joining a regional group, which in my view, would be the ideal solution. I will keep you posted.

TOWN OF WINCHENDON

OFFICE OF THE TOWN MANAGER

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March 31, 2021

To All the Residents of Mellen Road:

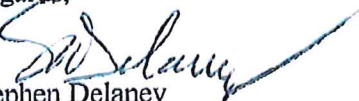
On behalf of the staff here at Town Hall, I wanted to take a moment to give you all an update on our effort to get to the "finish line" of getting the road formally accepted. It has been quite a process, with a few more critical steps to go.

Here is a quick summary of where we are on several key items:

1. Formal Survey of the complete road layout. This is just about complete. I expect that the finished layout will be complete by the end of April.
2. Town Meeting Article. With the survey complete, an article (See attached draft article) will be placed on the May 2021 Annual Town Meeting Warrant requesting approval to acquire the easements from the residents, and to petition the State for the approval of a Special Act.
3. A Special Act. A Special Act is needed due to a portion of State land being part of the layout. Because a portion of the road encroaches upon State land we must petition the State Legislature for a "Special Act" granting the Town an easement over the land that is included within the layout. We do not anticipate a problem with getting the Special Act approved, but we do anticipate that it will take several months to get the approval from the State.
4. Acceptance of the Road by Town Meeting. Once the easements and legislative act are both complete, the request for formal acceptance of the road can be presented to a town meeting for approval. The timeline? The optimist in me hopes that this can be accomplished for a possible fall 2021 town meeting, but we cannot control the timing at the state house. I am sure that our legislative delegation will be of assistance in this effort.

I hope that you will find this information useful. As things progress, we will be happy to keep you informed. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact this office.

Regards,


Stephen Delaney
Interim Town Manager

C: Board of Selectmen

attachment: draft article

ARTICLE ____:

DRAFT

To see if the Town will vote to authorize the Board of Selectmen to acquire, by purchase, gift, eminent domain or otherwise, for public way purposes, easements or other interests in land in the location more or less depicted as "Mellen Road" on the plan entitled: "_____", as said plan may be amended, a copy of which has been placed on file with the Town Clerk, to enable the Town to lay out and accept said Mellen Road as a public way in the Town, and further to see if the Town will vote to authorize the Board of Selectmen to petition the General Court for special legislation in the form set forth below, provided that the General Court shall make changes of form only to the bill unless the Board of Selectmen approves amendments to the bill before enactment by the General Court within the scope of the general public objectives of the petition, and to authorize the Board of Selectmen to approve such amendments, or take any other action relative thereto.

**AN ACT AUTHORIZING THE CONVEYANCE OF AN EASEMENT IN LAND IN
THE TOWN OF WINCHENDON**

SECTION 1. Notwithstanding sections 32 to 37 of chapter 7C of the General Laws or any other general or special law to the contrary, the division of capital asset management and maintenance, in consultation with the department of conservation and recreation, may convey to the town of Winchendon an permanent easement for public way purposes in an existing way identified as Mellen Road on a layout plan prepared by the town, containing approximately _____ square feet, as it abuts land known as the Winchendon State Forest located in the town, which land is under the care and control of the department and held for conservation and recreation purposes, and is identified on the town of Winchendon's assessors' maps as parcel 12-0-37, subject to such additional terms and conditions consistent with this act as the commissioner of capital asset management and maintenance, in consultation with the commissioner of conservation and recreation, may prescribe. The deed or other instrument conveying the easement to the town of Winchendon shall provide that the easement shall be used solely for public way purposes.

SECTION 2. Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, the town of Winchendon shall be responsible for all costs and expenses of the conveyance of the easement to the town pursuant to section 1 of this act as determined by the commissioner of capital asset management and maintenance, which shall include, but not limited to, the costs of any engineering, surveys, recording fees and deed preparation related to the conveyance of said parcel to the town of Winchendon.

or take any other action relative thereto.