

**TOWN OF WALPOLE
INFRASTRUCTURE PUBLIC MEETING
SEPTEMBER 20, 2022**

Selectboard Present: Steven Dalessio (Chair); Peggy L. Pschirrer Absent: Cheryl Mayberry
Committee Presenters: Paul Looney; Rod Bouchard
Staff Present: Mike Rau (Road Agent); Jonah Merkle (Police Officer/Dept. Representative) Sarah
Downing (Manager of Administration)
North Walpole Village Commissioner: Celeste Aumand

Twenty-four or more members of the public were present.

CALL TO ORDER: Mr. Dalessio called this Public Meeting on regarding Infrastructure projects to order at 7:00 PM. This meeting was being recorded.

Mr. Dalessio welcomed and thanked the audience for attending the meeting. Selectboard member Peggy Pschirrer, Power Committee Chair, Paul Looney and Police Committee Chair, Rod Bouchard were introduced.

The meeting began with Mr. Dalessio speaking on the topic of roads, dams and bridges. There was a big rain last July that caused about 2 million dollars' worth of damage. A shout-out of thanks was given to Mike Rau, the Road Agent and to the Highway Department crew for having Town roads in passable condition within 24 hours of the extreme weather event.

Mr. Dalessio began with an overview of the process, which can be hard to understand. The first step is to look for FEMA money to help pay for the repairs. Walpole was very fortunate to have enough money in reserve to immediately fix roads without waiting for FEMA funding. It takes quite a bit of time for this funding to be allocated. From the displayed PowerPoint, Mr. Dalessio went on to state FEMA will reimburse the Town 90% of the cost to return the damage to pre-event conditions. The funding can only be used to restore it back to its original condition. State will pay an additional 5% of the remaining 10% that FEMA does not cover. Reimbursements for expenses are coming into the town slowly. Town has +/- \$250,000 in American Rescue Plan Funds (ARPA).

The next step is mitigation. These funds are used to stop the damage from reoccurring. All these projects have things that must be done. To apply for mitigation monies, engineering work needs to be done upfront. We are at this phase with engineering occurring for some of the projects.

Mr. Dalessio continue to speak on mitigation projects that are currently underway. He began with the School Street flooding area. The Town knows this is a major problem location. The area runs from School Street to Main, towards Ford Avenue. The problem with the project is defining the type of water runoff from Prospect Hill. A "stream", "seasonal brook", or a "manmade gully" each have a different set of requirements. The manmade gully has the least number of requirements. Mr. Dalessio is hoping that by the spring or summer of 2023, there will be answer to this question with work to begin in 2024. A walkthrough with NH DES has been completed. A lot of damage and blockages were found in the gully. In the meantime, the Road Department will keep catch basin clear of debris. The cost estimate is +/- \$650,000. Access is an issue with having to cross private property to reach to gully.

The next mitigation area is Butternut Brook from Wentworth/Old Keene Road to Ford Avenue. The culvert under Wentworth Road at Old Keene Road is damaged somewhere under the road. It's a project that once it is started, it must be finished. The amount of damage cannot be determined until the area is opened.

Butternut Brook has significant erosion. The outlet at Ford Avenue is not adequate. The status is that FEMA, DES and mitigation inspections have been completed.

The underside of the bridge at High and School Streets is beyond repair and will need to be replaced. This project falls under mitigation. The required engineering work is in-process with hydraulic studies which will determine how big the bridge needs to be to avoid future damage. Mr. Rau confirmed that this bridge had been replaced in 2005.

The bridge under Old North Main at Colonial Drive also has an underside that is beyond repair. Again, once work starts, the Town must be able to finish it. Engineering work is in process. There are no cost estimates available currently. Fuss and O'Neill is the engineering firm working on these projects.

The Cold River Culvert was repaired under FEMA funding. However, under mitigation findings it may be too small. The mitigation engineering is in process. The cost estimate is not available. During the July 2021 rain event, the road washed away, and land locked a couple of houses. Within the same day, the area was repaired enough to allow traffic access. Thank you to the Highway Department for a really good job.

There has been a question of why North Walpole is not on the list. Those projects are not forgotten. Once the current projects which will take a year or longer are complete, those projects will be added to the list.

Mill Pond Dam is a red listed dam. The Dam Bureau has issued a letter of deficiency. Engineering work has not started and there are no cost estimates to fix the dam/culvert.

Reservoir Dam has been classified as a high hazard dam. Engineering work has started. The estimated cost for repair or removal could be as high as 1 million dollars. Celeste Aumand asked what high hazard meant. Mr. Dalessio explained that under this classification, the projection is if the dam failed there would be a huge amount of damage to the Town. A cost benefit analysis is being undertaken right now. No decisions have been made about the dam related to removal or repair.

Mr. Dalessio moved onto an update regarding bridges. The Houghton Brook Bridge over Wentworth Road engineering is completed, and the project is out for bid. The estimate is cost to repair is \$520,000. The Town received an Aquatic Resource Mitigation Grant for \$250,000. The estimated completion will be in 2023. There will be some Town resources used in the project.

The Vilas Bridge Waste Line Bypass has an engineering study in process that will cost +/- \$85,000. American Rescue Plan (ARPA) funds are being used to pay for the study. Mr. Dalessio said the intention is to use the Vilas Bridge waste line as long as possible and then to tie into the Green Street line. Mr. Boas asked if the estimated \$2 million dollars for the project would be a bond that would be paid by the water and sewer users? Mr. Dalessio could not speculate on this. Mr. Boas said that there had been recent newspaper articles that the Vilas Bridge repair was moving up to 2028. Mr. Dalessio said that the funding for the bridge repair was back to 100% funding due to an influx of grant funding. Ms. Aumand asked that during the bypass if traffic would be held up. Mr. Dalessio replied until the plan is ready, he cannot answer this question.

Mr. Dalessio opened the meeting for questions and/or comments. Mr. David Johnson asked is it would be easier to drain the Reservoir Dam rather than spend 1 million dollars to repair or remove? Mr. Dalessio responded that at minimum the DES would require for the dam be removed which could be just as

expensive as repairing the dam. There will be public information session to discuss the project. There is a high recreation value to the dam. Mr. Joe Coneeny asked if the dam was needed for the Town water system. Mr. Dalessio said that it used to be, but not anymore.

Ms. Aumand asked about the plan to fix the catch basins for Mountain View Road. There are only two basins for the handling stormwater. Mr. Dalessio stated that it needs to be properly engineered. The cost could be between \$50,000 to \$75,000. This project will be added to the list of projects.

Mr. Baucom asked about the School Street project. Mr. Dalessio said that the current drainage pipes need to be dug up and resized. There was a discussion of the issues with the current drainage pipes.

There being no other discussion, Ms. Dalessio introduced Mr. Paul Looney to speak on Community Power.

Mr. Looney did not have a PowerPoint but handed out a “road map” to the project. He explained that after the Town voted to implement Walpole Community Power at the 2022 Town Meeting, the following milestones have been or will be achieved.

The NH Public Utilities worked on approving administrative rules. This was completed on 7/30/2022.

The next step is to gain approval from the JLCAR (Joint Legislative Council on Administrative Rules). This is a group of NH House and Senate members. On last Friday, September 16th, they approved the rules and sent them back to the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) for a final approval.

The Walpole Energy Aggregation Plan has been modified to correspond with the rules as approved.

The Walpole Community Power committee voted to present the changes to the Selectboard on September 22, 2022.

Once approved, the revised plan will be submitted to the PUC for approval. They have 60 days to approve or deny.

Once the Walpole Community Power Plan is approved, Walpole will request data from Liberty which will be the basis for a request for proposal (RFP) to vendors. The committee will send an RFP to the 3 vendors they have met with.

The committee is estimating this will be a first quarter of 2023 implementation. There will be proposals to review. The committee will recommend one to the Selectboard for approval.

Walpole Community Power will be implemented in the second quarter of 2023.

There are about 35 town in NH interested in Community Power. Eleven have gone through the approval process with the remainder starting the process. Once all have completed the process, approximately 25% of electric use in NH would be sourced through the Community Power Coalition of NH (CPCNH).

Mr. Looney asked if there were any questions. Mr. Coneeny asked if they would be working with resellers? Mr. Looney stated that CPCNH is a non-profit. However, they will need to have contracts to buy power. The answer is yes, they must buy through third parties.

Ms. France Menk asked if solar was being considered? Mr. Looney said that when they move forward with one of the vendors, his expectation is that those vendors will start power purchase agreements for supplying power in community. There is no solar project with the Town of Walpole. The Town does not own that much property. Over time, there will be opportunities to be part of solar of projects that may be in another town. Mrs. Pschirrer stated some of the vendors are buying power from wind and solar projects along with hydro power. The cost of the increase in Liberty Utility rates is tied to the increase in natural gas costs. Mr. Looney added that 60% our power is generated with natural gas.

Mr. Charlie Lennon asked if community power would be available to residential, commercial and industrial customers. Mr. Looney said yes.

There were no additional questions. The microphone was passed to Rod Bouchard of the Police Building Committee. Mr. Bouchard stated the committee has been meeting since Nov. 17, 2022. There were two members of the committee in the audience, Cheri Watson and Andrew Dey.

The work they have been doing over the past 10 months has been assessment to figure out what is needed in the Town for a Police Department building. Mr. Bouchard reviewed the following bullet points on the printed handout.

The current building is located at 4 Russell Street, North Walpole. It can be a bit tricky getting in and out of there at times. The facility is separated from most of the town by railroad tracks that can cause delayed response.

The building is approximately 1800 Sq. Ft. built in 1996 on .2 of an acre lot to the rear of the North Walpole Fire Station. It is 26 years old and has outlived its usefulness in size and capabilities. It is out-of-date. Ms. Aumand asked if the Town would sell the building back to North Walpole Village Precinct for \$1. Both Mr. Dalessio and Mr. Bouchard said they had no idea since the project has not progressed that far. There is a question if there is a need for meeting space. That is a question that will be forth to the community.

Travel from 4 Russell Street to outlying areas of Walpole can take as much as 24 minutes to arrive on scene. Average time to outlying areas is over 14.5 minutes.

The building does not meet many/most of the current operational standards and requirements as outlined in the Police Facilities Planning Guidelines from the International Association of Chiefs of Police.

The Russell Street Facility **Does not have:**

- A proper and safe holding cell.
- Separate space to handle domestic violence cases.
- Adequate or sufficient workspaces for the officers.
- A separate evidence room of with mandated security and adequate space.
- A safe area for processing and holding dangerous drugs and narcotics.
- A private space for meeting with attorneys or bail bond staff.
- An acceptable interview/interrogation room.
- Sound proofing for security and privacy requirements.
- A separate break room for officers and staff.
- The ability to meet ADA requirements.

- Adequate secure areas for public and non-sworn staff.
- A safe and secure entrance to escort arrests into and from the facility.
- File storage and IT requirements that meet current and future requirements.
- A space for maintaining training certification requirements and additional training needs.
- Public meeting spaces for emergency and non-emergency use.

The current building needs extensive physical repairs and upgrades and has been modified haphazardly over its 26 years of very hard use.

A new facility should be more centrally located on or near Routes 12 and 123 to reduce call response times and would be significantly closer to the village area.

The operational costs for a new building should be substantially reduced by using present energy saving equipment and construction technology and should offer public meeting spaces.

A new facility will greatly enhance the ability to recruit and retain personnel potentially resulting in better community policing and increased safety for residents.

Several Federal and State grants may be available to help lower costs to the town's taxpayers. Additionally, a private fundraising effort is contemplated to further reduce construction and operating costs.

Mr. Bouchard stated that a list of what is required and would be nice to have will be created. The building size has not been determined. The project will take some time since there is a lot of work involved.

The committee has visited 4 police departments and the County jail to see how the operations process works. The committee is trying to figure out what we need. It is not a quick, simple easy process. Costs will also be a driver of the project.

There was a question about the committee meetings. Peggy Pschirrer said the next meeting would be on Oct. 5th in the Town Hall starting at 6:30 PM. They are public meetings.

Mr. Coneeny said it all sounds very reasonable. He encouraged the group that they maintain transparency and to keep people informed. Mrs. Pschirrer said from their visits to other Police Stations, they have realized that the Walpole Police Station is woefully inadequate. Mrs. Pschirrer pointed out that a new Police Officer, Jonah Merkle, was attending the meeting. She thanked Mr. Merkle for attending.

Mrs. Joann Sommer asked what is holding things up to move the project forward? Mr. Dalessio said it was a significant project for the Town. Mr. Bouchard said they were being very deliberate, which takes time.

Mr. William Sommer, a retired police officer, felt that a budget was needed and wonder how the Town is to pay for the new Police Station. Mr. Dalessio that the budget has not been established. Mr. Bouchard that the budget would be the end product of their work. They are capturing their ideas on paper. The question of a deadline voiced. Mr. Bouchard said they will continue working on the process for the next 3-5 months.

Mrs. Pschirrer stated that we are not looking to fix something for just the next 10 years. When we work on these projects, we need to think long term, not short term. We need to think about tomorrow's needs. Mr. Dalessio agreed that it was the same concept used for the roads, bridges and dams.

Mr. Dalessio closed the meeting at 7:49 PM. The Selectboard thanked people for attending the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,
Sarah Downing, Recording Secretary Pro Tempore



Steven Dalessio, Chair



Peggy L. Pschirrer

Cheryl Mayberry

(Note: These are unapproved Minutes. Corrections will be found in the Minutes of the September 29, 2022, Selectboard meeting.)