



Town of Lee
Board of Public Works
MEETING MINUTES of April 8, 2024
Town Hall Courtroom

Members Present: Chairman Dave Forrest, Clerk Robert Wright, Jim Ethier, Ashley Shepardson

Others Present: Town Administrator Chris Brittain, DPW Superintendent Lenny Tisdale, Highway Supervisor Zach Sorrentino

Chairman Dave Forrest called the meeting to order at 1pm.

Jim Ethier made a motion to approve the minutes of the March 25, 2024 minutes. Ashley Shepardson made a second motion which was approved (3-0). Chairman Forrest recused himself and abstained from the vote because he was not present at the March 25, 2024 meeting.

Guardrails

A Lee Resident has had three accidents by her house on Stockbridge Road in the last 5 years. The most recent caused property damage when the driver slipped on the ice, hit a tree, and crashed into her fence. She has made a request that guardrails be put in front of her property to prevent any further damage. Neighbors in the area do not want guardrails installed in front of their property because it would lower the property values, so this would be a small section just in front of her house, approximately 190 feet. Her property is located on an inside curve where guardrails are not usually placed. Chairman Forrest said that in the name of public safety, the Town is required to do something. That stretch of Stockbridge Road is a high accident area with this location being one of the least concerning. Superintendent Lenny Tisdale said that any funding would have to come out of Chapter 90 and will cut into paving projects. The 190 feet of guardrail will cost approximately \$15,260 due to requirements from MassDOT. If the guardrail is extended on both sides of the road for one thousand feet, it could cost upwards of \$100,000. It is too late to be an article on the town warrant to appropriate funding at Town Meeting for FY2025. Forrest asserts that the Town cannot leave a gaping hole and suggests jersey barriers. There was a discussion of options between Town Administrator Chris Brittain, Superintendent Tisdale, and Chairman Forrest that included jersey barriers, pressure treated wood posts, and steel posts. Tisdale responded that he would reach out to the other town residents on this section of road again to determine their willingness to have guardrails installed in front of their homes. Chairman Forrest said that he did not mind going in there to do the minimum but the Town must do something. He hates having the local people question who is responsible for public safety.

Chairman Forrest advises that we discuss this project again after hearing the latest update on the Willow Street Bridge due to the already existing budget constrictions.

Willow Street Update

Town Administrator Chris Brittain provided an update. The Town had to make improvements to Willow and Pine Street which tapped into the current paving funds allocated for FY25. TA Brittain was able to find some equity that was left for a water main replacement project that would go from Center Street into East Center Street to the end of Main Street. The money was set aside for design work, totaling \$122,000. The State said that \$100,000 of the funds can be

reallocated because it originally came from free cash. The remaining \$22,000 came from a special stabilization fund which does not exist anymore. The Divisional of Local Services will decide. State TIP grant will pay for the permanent bridge. What will be done between now and the permanent bridge has yet to be decided. The detour is working, but Congressman Neale and Representative Pignatelli are trying to get federal and state funding to pay the \$3.5-4.5 million for a temporary bridge. If a temporary bridge is not going to be used, more work will need to be completed to stabilize Meadow Street and Pine Street.

Chairman Forrest asked if the Town had received a bill from LB Corp for their work on Meadow Street. Tisdale responded that the Town can pull off of the emergency contract at any time. Because 90,000 lb. trucks are traveling on the road, the area must be stabilized as it is already showing deterioration between the railroad tracks and the Oak'n Spruce.

The Town of Lee has the most bridges in Berkshire County. The Bridge to Oak'n Spruce off Pleasant Street is due to be inspected by MassDOT on Tuesday, April 9th and the road will be closed during the inspection. Chairman Forrest wants to wait until the inspection is completed and we get the results from MassDOT to decide what to do for the two bridges. If MassDOT decides to lower the weight capacity or to close the Meadow Street Bridge, the Town will reach out to engineering firms and a temporary bridge will become more of a necessity. The Meadow Street bridge does have newer abutments so it is a different situation than the Willow Street Bridge. TA Brittain pointed out that the Town would be better off to improve Meadow Street and Pine Street than pay for a bridge that will be thrown away in a few years. Consensus was that a temporary bridge would be a waste of money when other routes are possible. Ashley Shepardson made the point that large trucks are already not using the Meadow Street bridge due to weight restrictions so it is only for resident access to the Pine Street neighborhood and Oak'n Spruce. It may be an inconvenience to drive around, but it would save the Town approximately \$5 million dollars.

The Town had already lined up a series of bridge projects which will now be postponed.

Chairman Forrest recommends telling tax payers at Town Meeting that the Town is in a jam and that something needs to be done with these bridges. Tisdale said that he is pretty confident that the State would pick up the bridge on Meadow Street as well because it is so crucial to the Oak'n Spruce. Chairman Forrest also stated that if the Meadow Street Bridge is closed after the inspection the Town will have to go back and reassess the budget but warns that the longer the Town puts off road maintenance, the roads will come back and haunt us.

Chairman Forrest asked how far out bridge construction is, pending engineering and going out to bid. TA Brittain responded that it would be three years at the earliest. Tisdale added that it will take at least three years for Chapter 85 review due to endangered salamanders, fish, and dragonflies. Tisdale and TA Brittain will keep the BPW updated.

Tisdale provided an updated paving list for this Spring which includes Abby Court, Parkview Terrace, Mountain View Terrace, Hartwood Street, and Bradley Court. Roads for FY25 include East Center St sidewalks, East Center St overlay, Sturgis Street, and Maritta Avenue. TA Brittain also addressed the Town Warrant and that the paving section will be left blank with no street list because the final paving list has not been completed due to funding changes because of the Meadow Street Bridge. Chairman Forrest said that he did not think that they had decided and that they are still up in the air. Roads that were promised for FY24 will be completed though funding may be moved from FY25. Crack sealing will still happen.

Superintendent Tisdale reported that Fair Share funds will be needed to cover paving on Railroad Street. The Town will have to go through Goncalves, the company that was used to put in the new water main on Railroad and Robert Street, instead LB Corp, who would not be able to do the project until next Spring if they had to bid for it

Mechanic's Truck

Chairman Forrest mentioned that he had been told that members of the Highway Department were seen driving around in the mechanic's truck. Patrick Li, the Town Mechanic, told the Board that he had sent out the F250 so the Highway Department was using the mechanic's truck in the interim. Li also added that he does not need the truck everyday and that it is available for use by the Highway Department if necessary. The truck is registered under the Highway Department.

Chairman Forrest also inquired about the status of the new truck's plow. They had decided on a slide in poly sander, but had not chosen a plow. Highway Supervisor Sorrentino said that he had not looked at plows because the sidewalk machine was priority. Sorrentino says that these purchases are small capital because they are parts and equipment that is readily available. Chairman Forrest said that he hoped that Sorrentino would come with a recommendation though he said that he does not see where a V-Plow has a major cutting edge. Chairman Forrest also asked if Sorrentino had decided on a body type for the new F600. Sorrentino replied that is up in the air because the biggest electrical sander is nine feet which holds five yards. For the Town to go electric, they will have to have an F600 that has nine foot bed space, no more, no less. Otherwise, they will have to extend or expand the back. They will have to measure from cab to axle and work with the specs from Ford.

Flushing

At a meeting with Tighe & Bond Chairman Forrest mentioned that he was told that they had the flushing plan and could provide it. Dave Leinert, who is a former employee of Tighe & Bond had created the plan when he was working for himself. Chairman Forrest was happy that it had been found but pointed out that there is still only one employee in the Water Distribution Department.

John Archer from Water Distribution informed the Board that Tighe & Bond does assist with nighttime flushing and that he will reach out to them for further information. Chairman Forrest stated that he would like the Town to get back to daytime flushing. Archer said that he preferred nights and explained his reasoning. Archer also gave an update on what he has accomplished and his future plans for the Water Distribution Department. He has been working with Tighe & Bond to help locate pipes and meters as part of the lead service line project. He has started painting hydrants throughout town with the correct color caps which indicate each hydrant's fire flow. He meets with Mike Towler and Jon Lucy and is looking for someone to train him to use the valve exercising machine properly. He has been working with Sorrentino to locate curb stops and valves which can be difficult as some have been paved over or buried. Administrative Assistant Samantha Lovett mentioned that he completed his first quarterly meter read as well as rereads. She is also looking into training classes with NEWWA and Rural Mass Water.

Chairman Forrest asked about man hole structures collapsing and Tisdale replied that LB will pick it up when they pave Abby Court. Chairman Forrest asked if the Town had someone in house that fixed manholes. Sorrentino said the Highway Department fixes them and that they have a list of catch basins and manholes that they need to fix.

Clerk Rob Wright asked for clarification that the Town owns both bridges, the one on Willow Street which is closed, and the one on Meadow Street, which is due to be inspected.

Chairman Forrest made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 1:56pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Samantha Lovett