



Peter B. Webster
Town Manager

MEMORANDUM

TO: Board of Selectmen

FROM: Peter B. Webster, Town Manager

DATE: April 9, 2010

SUBJECT: Information for the Selectboard

Parsonage Sale

I've met with four Selectboard members to tour the parsonage next door, and have had one meeting with the church subcommittee charged with the parsonage sale. I have contacted a number of potential commercial appraisers (an MAI certification is important), and am moving forward with an appraisal on the property. This is a decision that needs to move forward expeditiously, and the appraisal is the first important step to making that big decision. I believe the church will give us the time needed to reach a decision and then, if a Town purchase is the decision, to take it to a Town vote.

Safe Routes to School Project

This project continues to hinge on the disposition of Church Street—whether it is a Town Class I road or State-owned road. As you know, the Transportation Bill that includes the decision from your last Board meeting (to take over Rt. 10A coming into town, and Church Street, but not the River Road portion) has been challenged by the Senate when the bill crossed over—according to Jim Masland, it may be an “all or nothing” decision if the Senate Transportation Committee prevails. I hope to have more on this from either of our representatives for your discussion Wednesday.

Assuming Church Street becomes a Class I road July 1, my intent is to move this project forward for final design changes, public hearings with the neighborhood on some of the landscape issues, project out to bid, as soon as possible for construction late summer/fall.

Communications Study

With the great assistance of Neil, we went out for proposals on this overdue study, and had four solid responses. We are further reviewing three of them, and they are all in the low \$20k range, which is about where we expected this cost expense to be.

Solar Project

Meetings of the Energy Committee and Finance Committee have continued, with the spreadsheet being further refined as additional information is acquired. We have decided to re-bid this project out for a number of reasons, one being the need for this project to adhere to the “Buy American” stipulations attached to the grant we have received. This will delay the timeline of this project, but there will eventually be public hearings scheduled after a joint meeting of your Board, the Finance Committee and the Energy Committee.

Tree Warden/Tree Fund

I’ve shared my thoughts with you in an earlier email, but will condense that in the following: I’d like to suggest a change in our policy in the way we handle insurance receipts for damaged or destroyed Town street trees. We have significant equity accruing in our Town-owned trees as they mature, as you’ve seen from the recent reimbursement of \$9,050 for a 14” tree that was planted at Foley Park about ten years ago. I’d like to see these funds reserved in a dedicated tree fund, one that residents could also contribute to, for the continued maintenance and expansion of our existing street tree inventory. Jake Blum works very hard to get these insurance claims, and we currently allot \$12,000 in his line item, entirely for tree removal, none for replacement plantings.

Tax Collection Policy

You previously have been sent a revised proposal for a more proactive policy for collecting delinquent taxes. I would like your Board’s approval for this change, as it will permit me and our Finance Director to do a better job of collecting these delinquencies. Currently we are in better shape at this point in time than in recent years—currently delinquent--\$151,839, in 2009 at this point it was \$167,247, in 2008 \$123,217 and in 2007 \$175,982. So despite the current economy, there is no trend of an increasing list of delinquencies.

Utilizing Non-Violent Prison Inmates for Public Works Project

In response to a suggestion from Nancy Hoggson and a practice that some other towns are making use of, I am suggesting that we occasionally employ work crews of 6-10 inmates from the State prison work camp in Windsor. There are significant benefits to this program, according to the towns of Hartford and Hartland, and the Town of Springfield is also planning to take advantage of the program. I have spoken with Paul Brosseau, the Work Crew Foreman Supervisor from the Southeast State Correctional Facility, about just how the program works and am satisfied that the workers come fully insured, supervised by a work crew foreman (non-inmate), and come with their own tools and lunches. Andy and I believe we can help trim his summer road crew budget by utilizing this labor force.

As you may have noticed, this is a different format from previous Town Manager's reports. I will add to this report verbally on Wednesday, describing some of my recent meetings and actions. This report will now be more focused on agenda items so you are better prepared at our meetings. If you have any questions about specific agenda items or any other Town issues you may want addressed, please email, call, or stop in with those concerns.