

The meeting was called to order at 6:05 pm in the main floor of the Fremont Town Hall. Present were Committee members Mark Pitkin, Road Agent, Leon Holmes Jr, Steve Harms, Jack Downing, and Greta St. Germain Selectmen's Rep; and Town Administrator Heidi Carlson.

St Germain stated that the Selectmen had approved the Road Agent's request to install a new sander in the Town's one ton truck, funded from the Highway Equipment Capital Reserve Fund. Pitkin said that he was planning to take the truck for the install to be done in the fall.

Some historical information from the Planning Board's files regarding previously submitted Capital Improvement Planning was circulated for members to review. There was some discussion about the highway items that should be added to the CIP, including trucks, equipment, and road infrastructure upgrades.

Copies of the recent in-house posting for a part-time summer seasonal laborer were distributed for Committee members to read. If no in-house applicants come forward, the position will be publicly posted.

Minutes of the 17 May 2010 Highway Study Committee Meeting were reviewed. Downing moved to approve the minutes as printed. Harms seconded and the vote was approved 5-0.

The sealcoating proposals were discussed. Pitkin has made arrangements to have approximately one mile of Beede Hill Road done sometime in September.

It is estimated that it costs approximately \$20,000 per mile to sealcoat. For the work to be done this year, the Town will supply the sand. Alternatively the cost to pave one mile of road might exceed \$80,000. The cost to reconstruct one mile of road is difficult to estimate because it depends on what you find when you reclaim and tear up the existing as to what needs to be put back in to it (ie: gravel to raise, etc).

There was discussion on reclamation and grinding of roadways and the costs and pros and cons to doing this versus sealcoating to get a few extra years. There are a lot of considerations to these cost comparisons.

It was noted that the Town of Brentwood appropriates \$250,000 in the road reclamation fund annually; and they add \$50,000 annually to a Capital Reserve Fund.

Pitkin said he shot some grades on Shirkin Road and feels there may be some options there in terms of the road pitch and how to fix the water problem down there. He continues to work on this. He mentioned the possibility of a culvert on the Thayer property to an existing pond (across from the Tonas property) to assist with the water; or talking with the Town of Epping to redirect it to their existing drainage network.

Leon Holmes had talked with vendors and obtained proposals for a new backhoe. Copies of proposals received from Milton Cat (Caterpillar) and Nortrax (John Deere) were distributed. Two additional backhoe quotes are still pending.

The Caterpillar proposal was lower in price. These units are a bit larger than the estimates that St Germain had obtained last year because these units are a bit larger. Holmes said in his conversations with dealers that the Cat 420 specified is a unit that most towns are using now.

There was very lengthy discussion about the equipment costs and the lease/purchase prices as compared to the annual rental costs for hired equipment. The costs, in addition to the purchase of equipment, must also include operators (an employee); maintenance, fuel and insurance.

Pitkin stressed that the cost of the equipment is the easiest part of the purchase, and that the ensuing employee costs, maintenance, fuel, insurance, etc, were what add to the bill.

There was lengthy discussion about how to map out the future changes to the Road Agent salary, and how to transition, such as was done with the Fire Chief position, to a part-time position with a suitable salary. There are considerations for someone being a Town employee (and receiving a stipend); how many hours and what job description would accompany that; as well as for the amount of work that might also need to be contracted out, and if the Road Agent would still also be a contractor. The idea of how the Road Agent makes it feasible for himself (financially) was discussed, as were current rates for equipment operators, laborers, and a variety of other scenarios.

Some conversion to a more “paid” Road Agent position would be a real change in the way Fremont looks at the position, and as more equipment is purchased, this may be something to consider. It may not be feasible to hire someone at a higher rate of pay (such as what a Road Agent might be worth) depending on how many hours equipment was to be operated per week.

There are various pieces of information to consider, not all of which are tangible or measurable at this point in time. There was discussion about historical records that are available with hour and estimated rental costs for equipment in past years.

There was then discussion about having a building before equipment was purchased, so equipment would be stored inside and maintenance could be done. The “cart before the horse” theory was discussed again. It is felt that Fremont has so many things to consider, that a long-term plan needs to be put together. There is a need for equipment, a building, and road infrastructure improvements, all of which will be costly.

Discussion then turned to bonding for projects such as road construction. Carlson presented a variety of information on the process involved in borrowing money from the NH Municipal Bond Bank, including the application process, statutes regarding what type of capital projects can be bonded, and fees and costs. Principal and interest schedules were reviewed on sample amounts of \$500,000; \$750,000; and \$1,000,000. These project the estimated tax rate increase as well, depending on the number of years to pay back the loan. These ranged from five to twenty years.

On a smaller amount of money (perhaps \$250,000) the Town could also look at local banks for a more traditional style loan. There are several options depending on the amount and what the financing is to be used for.

There was a lot of discussion about how to plan out a few years of major road repairs. The Federal Arbitrage regulations were reviewed as well, and it is believed that you could have up to three years to use the funds. In road construction, there is a “season” for the work and it would not be the same as the bonds Fremont issued for construction of public buildings or the purchase of land.

Pitkin was asked what roads he would look at, and will work on prioritizing a list, maybe 5 to 10 roads. The priorities would depend on the current condition of roads and traffic considerations.

For the meeting next week the Committee will focus more on the site plan and layout of a building. Pitkin and Holmes, as primary users of the building and site, were encouraged to put their information together, as they know far more about the dynamics than the Committee. The Committee offered to review their thoughts and plans, but felt that they were the best equipped to lay out what their needs were. (Space, door size, windows, bathroom, number and type of outlets, etc) Thom Roy will also be consulted as well for code considerations, as well as to help put a final specification together.

The existing site plan will have to be amended due to the revised plan of retrofitting the existing building to a maintenance shed. The septic system and well locations need to be revisited as well. The septic plan is outdated and would need to go back to DES in any event.

Pitkin then said they were thinking that a pole barn would suit their additional needs, and thought they would likely be able to do on their own, similar to what they did in Brentwood, which they had viewed recently.

In follow-up to the last meeting, Carlson indicated that budget line items could be added as needed by the Department to track expenses. The part-time labor position may be separated out for this year to track what money may be spent once someone is hired.

Future meeting dates were set for June 28, 2010, July 12, 2010 and July 26, 2010.

Holmes and Pitkin will continue to work on the road mileage listing. This is a rainy day project.

St Germain offered to assist by typing or making phone calls as needed for the renovation plan at the highway shed.

St Germain moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:30 pm. Downing seconded and the vote was unanimously approved 5-0.

The next meeting will be held on Monday June 21, 2010 at 6:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Heidi Carlson
Town Administrator