

The meeting was called to order at 6:08 pm in the main floor of the Fremont Town Hall. Present were Committee members Mark Pitkin, Road Agent, Leon Holmes Jr, and Greta St. Germain Selectmen's Rep. Town Administrator Heidi Carlson was working in the building and participated in parts of the meeting.

St Germain received a message from Jeanne Nygren to contact Jackie or Steve at Milton Caterpillar. She had not yet returned the call, but advised the Committee this had to do with the maintenance comparison information that they had supplied, in follow-up to questions at the last meeting.

Heidi Carlson advised that the contracts for snow plowing had been sent to Town Counsel and approved. Pitkin was asked to get names and addresses for the contracts to Heidi so that they can be prepared and sent out for review by the vendors.

Members reviewed the materials list from Seacoast Mills Building Supply for both a two bay and a three bay salt storage pole barn. It was discussed and agreed that a three bay barn would be best to allow for current and future needs.

Pitkin said that he and Holmes Jr could do most of the work in coordination with a framer to put the building up. The three bay pole barn is approximately 1,575 square feet and will hold 800-900 yards of material. Pitkin determined the final cost would be approximately \$18,000 to \$20,000 to get materials and that labor costs were estimated at an additional \$6,800. There was discussion of consulting a framer to see if better information on these costs could be determined.

Pitkin and Holmes Jr continue to work on prospects for poles. There may be a free alternative from a local vendor, but if they have to be purchased, they have been priced at \$350 each. I

Question arose as to how the vote would be taken to expend money from the Highway Building Capital Reserve Fund. Carlson explained that the Selectmen are not agents of the fund, so a warrant article is necessary. The Committee discussed putting that on the warrant along with the question of designating the Selectmen as agents of the Highway Building Capital Reserve Fund.

It was felt that the estimate for materials and labor needed to be put together and do an RFP similar to what was done (though it may not need to be as thorough), to get good information on pricing for presentation to the Selectmen, Budget Committee and voters.

There was discussion about how much more work should be done on this before it goes to the voters. Carlson said that the more detail and precise the estimates, the better. There is a good deal of public education necessary for this as well. There are significant changes underway with regard to all aspects of highway maintenance in an effort to catch up to where the Town should be if it had been planned for properly in past budgets. Currently there are limited funds remaining in the 2010 budget to complete upgrades of any significance.

Pitkin will need to move what little money is left in his budget to complete the Beede Hill Road Project, which has been started but not yet completed.

Discussion turned to the work in progress road mileage worksheet. The calculation to date is just under 40 miles. This does not include parking lot areas for any town buildings or schools, and does not include private, State, or Town Class IV roads. The data was accurately obtained with a measuring wheel.

There was discussion about time spent in trucks plowing the school and other municipal lots. Pitkin said that the School is usually last to be done when school is not in session. He said that three trucks each go in for at least one hour; and 3-4 hours per storm is used plowing the school. There was discussion about this cost over a winter season. Leon Holmes Jr said this does not include the loader moving snow around as needed to accommodate snow removal.

There was discussion about the possibility of bonding roads for damage caused by heavy hauling and a comparison to another local town doing something similar. Pitkin said that 80,000 to 100,000 pounds of truck weight will deteriorate roads quickly over time.

There was discussion about the Shirkin Road drainage issues. Substantial work has been done to remedy these issues. There are still trees that need to be removed to complete the Shirkin Road drainage project at an estimated cost of 6,000.00. Pitkin does not have that in the remaining budget for 2010. There was discussion about the heavy traffic load which is coming from businesses in Epping such as Buxton Oil, Eastern Propane, Fletch's Sandblasting and the Seacoast United Soccer fields.

There was discussion about whether Epping should be consulted about a similar arrangement in terms of bonding or planning for the upkeep for deterioration and maintenance. Pitkin said that Fremont is bandaging Shirkin Road (which is only 12 years old) just to keep it passable.

There was discussion about bonding of roadway construction/reconstruction and the bonding versus simply budgeting approximately \$150,000 per year for roads, to save the initial cost. Carlson and Pitkin had discussed this earlier. Carlson presented information about the cost of borrowing money in a "bond" situation, and suggested that a more thoughtful and economical approach might be to plan on \$150,000 per year being added to the operating budget. There are a lot of overhead costs involved in bonding for large projects.

There was discussion and general consensus that adding it to the annual budget was a good plan to look ahead for the future and build up on what needs to be done. It was suggested that this be planned annually. Other towns were referenced who increase the amount every year to keep up with inflation and additional roads being added to inventory.

Pitkin said that ½ mile of reclamation plus shim is approximately \$150,000. He also suggested thinking ahead and building back in a highway reconstruction capital reserve fund.

Pitkin said that everyone uses the road system, including all Town and School services, as well as all of the residents and that this is not an area we can neglect any longer.

There was discussion about towns all around Fremont having new pavement connecting to Fremont roads, and Fremont does not have the funds to do the same. Pitkin stated that we should add a line item to the budget specifically for this purpose to try and get caught up. The Committee agreed.

Brentwood annually places \$50,000 into a Capital Reserve Fund for equipment.

There was discussion about the roadside mowing cost, and having the tractor rental for one week. This was due to start today, but there were problems getting the tractor delivered.

There was some discussion about backhoe rental. There have been some changes in the amount of rental time due to budget limitations, and also a different work plan of the Road Agent. This led to discussion of the purchase versus rental of equipment. It still may be more cost-effective at this time to continue to rent a backhoe versus own one.

Fremont does not currently have the full amount of the cost of a backhoe in the Capital Reserve Fund. There was discussion about a lease/purchase possibility, as well as concern about depleting the Capital Reserve Fund to zero. CRF money cannot be used on lease payments, so that needs to also be considered.

Pitkin has been watching the budget and working to keep it low to keep the Town's cost down. There is concern about whether we have the money for it now.

St Germain shared earlier obtained information from a CPA regarding purchase versus rental. Simply looking back at the 13 month data on file, Fremont rented a backhoe in a 13 month period at the cost of \$70,000. The Committee has a quote for a new backhoe at \$114,500 which includes the needed attachments. The purchase price does not include an operator (wherein the rental rate does for the most part). The CPA commented that normal maintenance on a new piece of equipment should not be that much, and that the new backhoe would be paid for in 1.5 years at the \$70,000 rental cost estimate.

St Germain will ask Heidi Carlson to check on status of use of Capital Reserve Funds and a warrant article to designate the Board of Selectmen as Agents of the Fund.

There was further discussion about building up the Capital Reserve Fund for items such as replacement of the one ton truck. At this time, the Committee wants to focus primarily on money for road repair, reclamation, and proper maintenance.

Harms came into the meeting at approximately 7:30 pm. He was caught up to date on discussions from this evening.

There was general discussion about the economy and what people are facing individually. There is a strong sentiment that the Committee and the Selectmen do not want to increase taxes, but that the road maintenance is an "evil necessity" that needs to be looked at, and no longer neglected.

Minutes of the 28 June 2010 Highway Study Committee Meeting were reviewed. St Germain moved to approve the minutes as printed. Holmes seconded and the vote was approved 3-0.

The Committee decided that the building renovation specifications are still in progress, but that they have no further comments. Pitkin will speak further with Thom Roy to finalize these. Carlson also needs to include some additional administrative information prior to completion and distribution.

It is noted for the record that the July 12, 2010 meeting was cancelled and reposted (that day) for July 19, 2010. The Committee cancelled the meeting of July 26, 2010.

The Committee set future meeting dates of Mondays August 2, 2010 and August 16, 2010. Carlson will post these meetings.

The August 2, 2010 meeting will be a work session with a blank budget worksheet.

Respectfully submitted,

Heidi Carlson
Town Administrator