

APPROVED

BOARD OF SELECTMEN EMERGENCY MEETING

Monday March 18, 2019 – 11:0 AM – Richmond Town Hall, 1529 State Road

PRESENT: Mr. Neal Pilson, Chair (via phone conference); Mr. Roger Manzolini (via conference call), Selectman; Mr. Alan Hanson, Selectman; Mr. Mark Pruhenski, Town Administrator; Mr. Peter Beckwith, Highway Superintendent

Gravel Road Conditions – Action Plan: Mr. Pilson called in and was put on speaker phone. Mr. Pruhenski called Mr. Manzolini and he was placed on conference call.

The purpose of the emergency meeting was to be sure that everything was being done that can be done and to get an update on what to expect over the next few weeks concerning the ongoing problem with conditions on Richmond's gravel roads. Mr. Pilson asked for an update from Mr. Peter Beckwith, the Highway Superintendent.

Mr. Beckwith advised the Board that he had "Road Closed" signs posted on every dirt road in Town on Friday. He was unable to anticipate what the conditions might be in the next several weeks, but he did feel that most of the frost came out in one day. He noted that the frost heaves are hard at this time, but with the sun on them and temperatures starting to rise, he will have to deal with them soon. In the meantime, the Highway Department has been putting stone out since the morning in two groups. They will continue with that process throughout the day.

Mr. Pilson asked if he understood that Mr. Beckwith believes he has seen the worst of the problem, assuming an absence of additional flooding rain. Mr. Beckwith concurred. He added that he has been in contact with several other towns in the area and he has been advised that the damage is the worst seen in anywhere from twenty to thirty years.

In response to Mr. Pilson question about the quality of the gravel Mr. Beckwith is using, he replied that he has been using one and one-half inch crushed stone. However, he explained the problem he is experiencing with supplies. Given that there is no space available to stockpile large amounts, that is not an option. He did note that there is a small supply of white driveway mix he intended to start using until he found it had frozen solid and then became mud when it thawed, which made it unusable. While the staff were laying down the gravel, the grader broke down and it took a couple of days for them to get it back to the shop, further slowing the process.

Mr. Pilson wondered if it would be helpful to post Constables at the roads along with the signage for better compliance, particularly with heavy trucks that can do the most damage. It was decided that, given the extent of the roads needed to be closed and the number of available Constables, that would not work.

Mr. Pilson suggested considering paving a portion of some of the bad roads. Mr. Hanson noted that the problem with that is that the process involved in blacktopping roads is extensive and expensive. There was a discussion of the pros and cons involved in blacktopping parts of dirt roads, but no decision was reached. Mr. Hanson suggested that some of the worst of the mud holes be identified, dug out and filled with material to prevent them from becoming mud holes in the future as the quickest and cheapest solution. Mr. Beckwith agreed that the Town could spend anywhere from \$10,000 to \$20,000 to fix a one-hundred-foot stretch. He explained what was involved.

Mr. Pilson noted that there were certain to be questions raised at the Annual Town Meeting, for which he would like to have some options with estimated costs available to provide a response. Mr. Beckwith noted that mud season occurs every year in this area and anyone buying a house on a gravel road must know what to expect. Mr. Pilson acknowledged the sense of that observation but noted that politically it just doesn't work. He also noted that a few years ago the Town voted not to blacktop its gravel roads because they like to live in the country. But the townspeople are going to insist on answers and the Board will have to be prepared to provide those, even if they include expensive solutions. He asked that some options be prepared.

Mr. Manzolini suggested that Mr. Beckwith come up with an estimate for blacktopping a one-hundred foot stretch and then use Mr. Hanson's idea of addressing the worst spots. He felt that would be a reasonable way to proceed. Mr. Beckwith pointed out that residents whose roads were not included in the "worst spot" designation will complain they are being discriminated against. The answer to that is to determine how many homes are affected by any one spot and do the repair on those spots that have the greatest impact or where there is no other access by taking a different route (such as Osceola Road, which is isolated). Mr. Manzolini said he believed it would be possible to come up with a reasonable prioritized way to deal with the problem.

Mr. Pilson asked how these repairs will be funded. Mr. Beckwith advised that there is money in his budget to fix the gravel roads this spring. Mr. Pilson said he has no problem going to the townspeople and asking for additional money for these repairs.

Mr. Hanson suggested doing a reverse 911 call to advise people who live on the dirt roads to ask their suppliers to stay off those roads until the problem is resolved. Mr. Pruhenski will send out that reverse 911 call and will include a notice that the Highway Department is working in multiple locations, beginning with the highest priority areas. Deliveries from FedEx and UPS can be dropped off at Town Hall and suppliers should be asked to keep large delivery trucks off the roads unless absolutely necessary. Mr. Pilson asked that he add to that notice that four-wheel drive is essential to traveling on roads under these conditions.

Mr. Pilson said that it sounds to him like Mr. Beckwith has done a good job in tackling this problem and Mr. Manzolini agreed.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:27 AM by unanimous consent.

Signed:



Mr. Neal Pilson, Chair