

BOARD OF SELECTMEN / SEWER COMMISSIONERS MEETING

Tuesday August 20, 2019 – 6:00 PM – Richmond Town Hall, 1529 State Road

PRESENT: Mr. Roger Manzolini, Chair; Mr. Neal Pilson, Selectman; Mr. Alan Hanson, Selectman; Ms. Danielle Fillio, Town Administrator;

ABSENT:

GUESTS: State Rep. Mr. Smitty Pignatelli; Ms. Francisca Heming, Mass. DOT; Mr. Patrick Tierney, Mass DOT; Sergeant Randy Thomas, State Police; Trooper James Somerville, State Police; Mr. Erik Kristensen, DOT R.O.W.; Mr. Peter Beckwith, Richmond Highway Superintendent; Mr. Steve Traver, Richmond Fire Chief; Various Town Residents (see attached)

Mr. Manzolini opened the meeting at 6:00 PM and recognized the presence of Rep. Smitty Pignatelli, Ms. Francisca Heming, Mass. DOT Highway Director, Mr. Patrick Tierney of Mass DOT and two State Troopers, Trooper James Somerville and Sergeant Randy Thomas. Mr. Manzolini thanked those people for taking the time to attend this meeting.

OPM for Town Building Project: Mr. Manzolini began the meeting requesting a recommendation from the Municipal Building Committee. The Building Committee has reviewed the proposal they received for the Project Owner's Manager and recommended that the Board of Selectmen go forward with the P3 Firm (Project Planning Professionals). It was felt that their proposal was well done and tailored to the needs of the Town of Richmond specifically. The firm has done a number of small libraries and town halls, so they have experience with the kind of work being sought. Their work has been consistently at or under budget and on time and they are experienced with the State Library Grant system. The Building Committee offered its help with any part of the negotiation with the firm that the Board and the Town Administrator might deem helpful.

Mr. Manzolini said that Ms. Fillio knows what the next steps in the process need to be, which the Board will discuss with her and then consult with the Building Committee.

Safety Improvements on Dublin Road and Rte. 41 Intersection – Discussion: Mr. Manzolini recognized Ms. Andrea Harrington, Mass. District Attorney who arrived at this time.

The intersection under discussion has not changed in many years, but recently there have been two fatalities there within two weeks. Coming out of Dublin Road and making a right turn onto Rte. 41, the sightlines are obstructed, making it difficult to see oncoming traffic. That needs to be addressed as well as the situation on the opposite side of Rte. 41 – coming out of Dublin Road, where there is no guardrail.

Mr. Manzolini invited the experts to make recommendations to improve the safety of that intersection. Mr. Manzolini noted that there is a reporter in the audience who is recording the proceedings.

Ms. Heming of Mass. DOT spoke to the issue, noting that the recent fatalities were the first they have been made aware of. She explained the steps that the DOT has taken since being made aware of the problem, including scheduling a Road Safety Audit in mid-September, which will allow them to make effective decisions as to how to improve safety at that intersection. In the meantime, they have obtained permission from the property owner to remove the trees that are obscuring the sightlines and they are planning to do that immediately, which should help. However, there is a huge berm causing problems with sightlines and that will take more planning before work can begin on removing it.

Mr. Manzolini asked if the Road Safety Audit might be scheduled sooner than mid-September. Ms. Heming responded that mid-September is not that far off. They have made this issue a priority, but there are so many various reports necessary to be brought together that it takes time. Mr. Manzolini asked whether this report would provide sufficient data for them to make adjustments to the embankment. Ms. Heming replied that work on the embankment will require more than this survey to complete a long-term plan. Dealing with the embankment will require engineering surveys, etc. In the meantime, they are putting short-term corrections in place such as a bigger sign approaching Rte. 41 warning that cars driving on Rte. 41 may not be aware that the intersection exists.

Mr. Manzolini asked Ms. Heming if she could anticipate a reasonable end date – when all the necessary improvements would be completed. Mr. Pilson noted that signage had been put in place almost overnight, including a 30-mile an hour recommendation. Mr. Pilson said he would like to hear suggestions from the audience and had a few himself that he would like to propose. Ms. Heming said that short-term the DOT has a plan and it must be given time to work, though they are open to suggestions.

Mr. Manzolini asked that the State Police offer their recommendations. Trooper Somerville introduced himself and noted that he works the 3:00 – 11:00 shift. He also introduced Sergeant Randy Thomas, also present, who is a day-shift Supervisor at the Lee Barracks and invited the public to contact either of them with any questions or concerns. He noted that the State Police has always done speed-enforcement at the location of the accidents. He said that the rate of speed they usually encounter is above the posted limit, but not excessive. Speed may or may not be a factor in some of the collisions occurring at the intersection – that remains to be determined. He did not have any recommendations other than working in partnership with Mass Highway, who have been extremely helpful.

There was a discussion of the placing of a mirror to enable large trucks entering the intersection from Dublin Road to see oncoming traffic without having to pull out into the highway. Mass DOT does not permit mirrors to be placed along highways and it was taken down. A member of

the audience said that what investigation of previous accidents has found is that most of the crashes at that intersection are due to stop-sign violations. He said that he believed that when people approach the intersection, they stop, look left, then right and do not see any oncoming cars. At that point most people do one of two things – they speed through the intersection and hope for the best or they creep through the intersection. The problem is the motorists' indecision. The mirror just adds another thing to have to consider. The way the mirror was set up it did not actually extend the driver's line of sight. A representative of the DOT responded to Mr. Manzolini's question that mirrors are not a recognized traffic control device and are illegal on all roads.

Several people from the audience spoke to the issue, suggesting a variety of solutions; among them rumble strips, placing the warning signs further down the road from the intersection to give drivers more advance notice. One person asked for clarification of the difference between a yellow and a white speed limit sign. It was explained that the white signs are the only ones that are enforceable and that the yellow signs are advisory in nature and not enforceable. These kinds of signs do make a difference, but it takes time.

Mr. Pilson suggested some things that the Town has done on its own roads that have proven effective: at Lenox Branch Road and Lenox Road there is a flashing intersection sign just before you go over the hill. That seems to have been effective. At Lenox Road and Swamp Road the Town installed the flashing signs that show the driver how fast he is going. These had been borrowed from in front of the school on Rte. 41 and have now been replaced there and it has been evident that they are effective. Perhaps Mass. DOT might consider greater use of those signs. Mr. Pilson will send a letter requesting flashing speed signs where the yellow 30-mile PH signs are as it seems to be the most effective way to reduce speeding. Speed plus sightlines are the two major issues at the intersection.

Ms. Wendy Laurin addressed the Board to advise that she believes that one of the things that has happened over the years she has lived on Dublin Road is that Google Maps now show Dublin Road as a path from Rte. 20 to Rte. 41. In the last several years she has noticed that traffic on Dublin Road has doubled, which she believes is a contributing factor to the increased rate of accidents, along with the tendency for drivers to speed along Dublin Road.

Discussion continued on the subject of the speeding on Dublin Road. Mr. Manzolini asked that Mr. Peter Beckwith, Richmond's Highway Superintendent and the DOT work together to determine the placement and number of signs needed. The Town will have to hire an engineer to do a safety test on Dublin Road in order to arrive at the optimum speed limit that should be posted there. Mr. Beckwith's belief was that, despite the appearance of speeding when cars are doing 35 or 40 miles per hour on a small road, they are either within or under the posted limit.

Mr. Pilson offered a summary of the situation: Coming up Dublin Road north or south, it is the sightlines that are critical to safety. The mistake being made at the intersection is looking right,

looking left but not looking right again before proceeding across the intersection and a car approaching from Rte. 41 to the intersection cannot be seen until it is almost upon you.

Ms. Sharon Harris lives two driveways north of the intersection and she would urge that, in addition to improving the sightlines, doing what can be done to slow down the traffic because speed at the intersection causes issues further north. A car flipped over in the driveway of the house next to hers and several times a year the guardrail north of her house gets hit by cars coming around too fast.

Mr. Manzolini thanked the people who made the short-term corrections to the situation happen quickly, naming several individuals and the DOT whose responsiveness to the situation Mr. Manzolini was grateful for.

Mr. Pilson asked whether there was any further comment from the audience. Rep. Smitty Pignatelli commended the DOT for their rapid response and thanked Ms. Danielle Fillio for reaching out to the State. He described similar situations in other towns that had been remedied with various signage. He recommended that the Town reach out to Regional Planning to do a quick study. He suggested the possibility of making Dublin Road one way as a possible remedy.

There being no further comment from the audience, Mr. Manzolini moved on to other agenda items.

Update – New Boat Shed: Mr. Steve Traver, Richmond Fire Chief, advised the Board that the boat has been in the shed for about two weeks. There is extra gas and a trailer hitch for anybody to hook to and Mr. Traver requested that Ms. Fillio put the boat shed under the Town's insurance policy. The gate is up and a "no parking" sign is in front of the gate – the ramp is in and there are no issues remaining. Mr. Hanson asked Chief Traver if he would recommend periodic practice with getting the boat out, hooked up and back in the shed. It was decided that an annual practice drill would be sufficient.

Discussion of Weather Sirens – Chief Traver said the sirens work and he would recommend testing them only once or twice a year as they will continue to sound for fully three minutes. There was a discussion of the best way to test and the decision was to test the full three-minute alarm twice a year and once a month just test at the Fire Station that the siren is working. Mr. Manzolini suggested that the once-a-month test be held on a Saturday at Noon, except on the two Saturdays that the full three-minute alarm is tested.

Town Hall Renovation Study: Mr. Pilson asked Ms. Fillio to provide some insight as to whether she feels one or the other vendor is the most appropriate one to partner with the Town. Mr. Hanson had a question about the placement of a septic field. This property has no room for a septic field, and he would assume that the site for the tank is going to stay that way. Ms. Fillio noted that both vendors said that the redesign of the septic system would not be included unless the study shows that the building is salvageable. The design for a septic system would be

an add-on at the end. It will cost over \$35,000 to find out how much it will cost to renovate the building. Mr. Pilson suggested that the Board and Ms. Fillio meet with both vendors as their proposals are very similar. Ms. Fillio did mention that if she were to pick one, she would go with EDM as she has had personal experience with that company that was very satisfactory. EDM does everything themselves. The other company will hire sub-contractors, which could slow the timeline. Mr. Pilson moved that Ms. Fillio set up a meeting with EDM, herself and a member of the Board to discuss their proposal, their cost estimates, time frame, what's included, what is not included, etc. After that meeting the decision can be made to sign with them or not. Mr. Manzolini seconded the motion, which was carried by unanimous consent. Ms. Fillio will ask EDM to propose a meeting date and time.

Mail/Sign Warrants: Mail was distributed, and warrants were signed as needed.

Selectmen's Matters: Mr. Pilson asked Ms. Fillio whether a copy of the Inter-Municipal Agreement has been sent to West Stockbridge. She said she has been in contact with Ms. Marie Ryan, West Stockbridge Town Administrator, before drafting the letter, which she will send out by the end of the week.

Mr. Manzolini noted that Ms. Fillio will be attending two of the Chief Procurement classes being offered this year in Pittsfield. She will be gone Wednesday, Thursday and Friday – September 11, 12, and 13 and November 18, 19 and 20th.

Unanticipated Topics: Mr. Pilson reported that Mr. Ken Kelly had asked the Board to consider a pedestrian crossing study at the Route 41 and Dublin Road intersection. Ms. Fillio explained that Mr. Kelly is asking that such a crossing be considered as part of the safety improvement study. There was some discussion as to the advisability of such a crosswalk at an intersection shown to be extremely dangerous. The Board will raise that issue with the DOT for their input. Mr. Manzolini suggested that discussion of this issue be deferred to the next meeting, on August 28th.

There being no further business before the Board, Mr. Pilson moved that the meeting be adjourned. The motion was seconded by Mr. Hanson and adopted by unanimous vote.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:33 PM.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Roger Manzolini", is written over a horizontal line.

Mr. Roger Manzolini, Chair