

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

TO: Honorable Town Council Members

FROM: Karl F. Kilduff, Town Manager

DATE: May 20, 2020

Please find my report concerning various items of interest to the Town Council and community.

1. Council Business:

- a) Fish Ladder at Old Morgan Site: During the last Council meeting, I highlighted as request from DEEP for the Town to be a sponsor for a grant to fund the design for a fish ladder that would be installed on the Old Morgan School site which would provide the means for migratory fish to access above the Upper Millpond dam. At the time, DEEP staff did not describe an expense from the Town other than staff time to work with a grant consultant. Subsequently, DEEP staff and the grant consultant flagged the need for the Town to provide the upfront funding for the grant consultant. The sum is \$1,500. The Town's outlay would be reimbursed by the grant. In terms of cash flow, the application needs to be submitted in this fiscal year and awards would come in the new fiscal year. A transfer would be needed to fund the commitment.
- b) Town Attorney RFP: Proposals from interested firms were received on April 6, 2020. The Town received 10 responses from firms. The proposals are under review now to develop a short list for the Town Council to consider. Prior to holding "virtual" interviews with short-listed firms, we need to have a discussion on proposals and firms recommended for interviews.

2. Connecticut Conference of Municipalities:

- a) As Executive Orders continue to be issued CCM continues to host video conferences to discuss new orders that town operations and offer advice on possible responses.

3. River COG:

- a) The River COG met virtually on May 15, 2020 in a Special Meeting. Items of interest from the Agenda were as follows:
 - Discussion of enforcement of Executive Orders and Roles/Responsibilities. A spirited discussion took place regarding enforcement of Executive Orders. A limited amount of discretion has been given as a violation of an Executive Order is a felony. Most efforts in the region have focused on seeking voluntary compliance and de-escalation. The responsibility is falling on health departments which are not staffed to do Executive Order enforcement on top of their new public health role. Police departments are also expressing concerns in trying to get compliance from the public and now with those businesses that have been allowed to open on May 20. The Governor has made comments suggesting that enforcement guidance will be issued.
 - The possibility of an additional Federal stimulus was briefly reviewed.

- Long-Term Recovery Committees. There was a lengthy discussion on establishing long-term recovery committees. At the COG level, the region is spread over 3 DEMHS regions, so the level of coordination is challenging. Some of the State-level direction is pushing to go in a direction that not every town is in a position to address. COG staff are trying to get clarity from the State.
- Zoning and Permitting. The re-opening guidelines for May 20 changed the zoning and permitting process (by Executive Order) which facilitates outside dining. All towns are working to allow those businesses to operate under the Governor's rules and look at fining tuning later.
- PPE Purchasing. Purchasing personal protective equipment (PPE) for first responders and other employees is a FEMA eligible expense but only for as long as the Emergency Declaration remains in effect. Since this will likely be a long-term new expense, there was a discussion of putting together a collaborative bid for the region or working with the Capital Region Purchasing Cooperative.

4. Miscellaneous:

- a) State Budget: In one of the recent weekly COVID update calls for municipal officials, the OPM Secretary gave a lengthy and interesting report. It was here position that the State would use its CARES Act funding to reimburse municipalities 100% for COVID-related expenses rather than relying on a FEMA reimbursement for only 75% of the expense.

She also reported on the condition of the State's budget and its relationship to providing State grants-in-aid. The State has suffered a significant loss in revenue this far which will impact FY20-21. Most state aid has already been released for the current fiscal year. As a result, there should be no short fall in State funding commitments for FY19-20. However, State funding commitments for FY20-21 are in doubt and it was suggested that there the Governor would have to use his recission authority to reduce the State budget and there would be reductions in State grants in aid. No timing, amount or program to be impacted was discussed.

- b) Transfer Station: The Council should give some thought to establishing a Transfer Station Study Committee. The Town will be facing an increase in capital expenses to maintain the transfer station under its current level of operation. These costs are aside from the projected increase in tip fees from MIRA or a desire to increase recycling to reduce the solid waste flow. The Town budget does include short-term capital costs to repair the transfer station building. Additional funds will be needed in the near-term. The Town is now facing the need to replace the truck which transports waste to the MIRA collection facility. We are working through our options with the truck. The Town is approaching an operation cross roads and having a committee closely study the issue with a cross section of the public could be beneficial in the decision-making process.
- c) Town Hall Status: As new rules for business operations are being issued, it is not anticipated that a specific set of rules will be issued for municipal buildings. The closest guidance we have to work with is the rules for office buildings. The rules for office buildings as not any different than how we have been operating for a while now. Preparing for some sense of normal public

service, we are preparing by having shields created at public service points, ordering signage and preparing for a drop box to support the ability to make payments, etc... from a distance. As we finalize plans at Town Hall, I will advise the Council when the building will re-open.

- d) Looking Forward: As we approach the “next normal” all municipal operations need to be re-assessed and the prior operating business model may need to change. Providing services from a distance is a challenge all businesses will have to navigate and municipal operations are no different. There may need to be an investment in IT to facilitate a change in how services are delivered. Over the coming months, rethinking the business model will be part of the department head’s charge and it will become a discussion point in the FY21-22 budget.
- e) Contract negotiations with the employee unions continue moving into the “new normal” of social distancing. We are trying to make forward progress even though in-person meetings are a challenge right now.

