

Approved

Town of New Boston Road Committee Meeting October 28, 2020

<u>PRESENT:</u>	Karen Scott	Selectman
	Mark Suennen	Road Committee
	Mark Siemeze	Road Committee
	Rodney Towne	Road Committee
	George St. John	Road Committee
	Denis Pinard	Road Committee

Guests In Attendance: Mark Debowski

A. CALL TO ORDER: A regular meeting of the Road Committee was called to order by Rodney Towne at 6:00PM.

Item 1: Approval of Minutes of March 11, 2020: The Committee deferred review of the minutes of March 11, 2020 to the next meeting.

Item 2: Develop Maintenance Lists: The Committee continued review of the potential maintenance schedule, priorities and tasks as follows:

- Former Road Agent Dick Perusse distributed a partial plan for 2020 at the February Road Committee meeting. Rodney noted that since Dick has been gone these projects have not occurred and maintenance has been lacking.
- Denis noted he called the Highway Department earlier this year about a large hole on Byam Road and appreciated that it was repaired the next day. Another hole then appeared in the area. There is another issue of yield signs on Riverdale and Parker Road that are covered by overgrown brush and cannot be seen making the road dangerous.
- Rodney noted this year the Highway Department spent time improving Middle Branch Road and South Hill Road and it was disappointing that there are no priorities to first do regular maintenance on ditches and culverts and then work on these larger projects that are also necessary. Rodney noted this Committee began a year ago with members Willard Dodge and Tom Miller who have resigned, but at that time they mentioned issues that have not been addressed.
- Bridge repair is handled through the CIP Schedule. The CIP Committee is meeting this month and the Planning Board will review the Schedule November 10. The state inspects bridges and aid is available for failed bridges. The Committee discussed the schedule and priorities as follows:
 1. The Selectmen have been discussing road priorities in detail at their meetings and determined a culvert on Bedford Road at Foxberry Road would be repaired first to prevent collapse. The current culvert in the area was originally planned as a temporary repair caused by the mother's day flood. It was improperly installed as some pieces were never placed.

2. The Lyndeborough Road bridge is next on the priority list to be done with the ARM grant awarded to the town.
3. The Dougherty Lane bridge is planned third. A bridge was improperly installed in the area causing a need to close the road and remove the box culvert. Permits have been obtained. The town plans to remove what is there and put the project out to bid.
4. Tucker Mill Road is expected to be next.
5. Lang Station is scheduled twenty to thirty years out. George noted a temporary repair has been done.

The Committee reviewed its past discussions of priorities to keep roads intact (these are typed in the March 11 minutes) as follows:

- Develop Maintenance List, Plans and Schedule: Line striping, cold patch and road sweeping
- Regular Yearly Maintenance and Priorities:
 - Spring: Catch basins, sweeping, line striping (to be done earlier in the summer than the past as always done in the fall)
 - Late summer/August: surface maintenance, patching, crack fill (outsourced)
 - Spring and fall: grading of dirt roads and as needed throughout the year as some roads have more traffic than others, calcium for dust control, rolling after grading (currently taking place)
 - Trimming trees: The Highway Department has marked hazard trees to be cut down by a contractor.
- Denis noted there is no set plan for any road in town, maintenance is determined by the budget which includes lines for paving, and other maintenance. The process is the Road Agent reviews roads to determine which should receive maintenance within the yearly budget. There is no plan to pave dirt roads. He noted this Committee was formed to help prioritize needs and give recommendations to the Selectmen of tasks the Highway Department should move forth with. Rodney noted there was a paving schedule in the past but it was inefficient, causing roads to be paved that didn't need to be paved and leaving roads that needed to be paved unpaved. This process was changed to do paving and replacements as needed. It was left up to the budget, Selectmen and Road Agent as the Road Committee became very inactive.
- Mark Siemeze noted in previous years the budget has been impacted by incidents that could not be planned for, such as the mother's day flood and the unusual 2019 mud season. The budget that was planned for other things was spent for these necessary repairs and there was no money left for items that had been planned for those years.
- Denis noted the Selectmen should decide if the Highway Department should be doing either or both road maintenance and/or road building. If the Department is meant to do both it should be qualified and have the time to do both. The Department should not take months to concentrate on one road while neglecting maintenance needed at other town roads. Rodney noted this occurred during a Bedford Road project but has not occurred since. He agrees the Department can concentrate on one road in short sections but if a project will prevent the Department from maintaining other town roads, it should be put out for bid. The Committee agreed Road Agents should have certain knowledge, credentials and qualifications. Civil engineering firms should be brought in for large projects. The Committee agreed maintenance is the first priority for the Highway

Department. George noted projects are limited by the budget, the Selectmen and Road Agent consider the budget when determining if a project should be put out to bid or done by the Highway Department. If projects are put out to bid funds would have to be added to the budget.

- The Committee also discussed the issue of improperly built roads and culverts in town that now need to be repaired. Past Road Agents did not have the credentials that former Road Agent Dick Perusse had. The Selectmen did not have road knowledge and the town was trying to keep taxes low. There was also less traffic when these roads and culverts were built, preventing road damage.
- George explained past maintenance of gravel roads saying there was a budget line for gravel in the past to add gravel periodically to roads according to a schedule. This procedure stopped but the Highway Department continued grading the roads causing the gravel and other material used to build gravel roads (such as leaves and branches) to be ground up. This is an issue during mud seasons. An unusually bad mud season occurred in 2019 but the Highway Department was able to improve these areas. Denis noted this is appreciated and hopes this Committee can bring recommendations to the Selectmen that will bring New Boston roads to the next level.
- This Committee plans to begin a new meeting format to get recommendations ready to bring to the Selectmen now that the maintenance plan was more formalized at the March 11 meeting. The Committee considered preparing recommendations for the following:
 - A ten year road plan for paved and dirt roads
 - A way for the Impact Fee program approved by voters in March 2019 to be used toward roads.
 - Speed limits to prevent road damage
- Repair of Meetinghouse Hill Road should be a priority as this is a heavily used road. This could be a major project due to drainage and road bed issues. A shim repair is being considered for now. A Warrant Article may be needed to repair this road in the future.

Other:

- Road Agent Position: Rodney reported this position is posted with a temporary Interim Road Agent in place. Denis asked if there is a plan to grade roads this year prior to the first snow. Rodney noted there is a plan that might not be finalized. Grading is currently taking place. The Interim Road Agent is available to address citizen road concerns.
- Mark Debowski introduced himself as he is interested in helping the Committee. He is from Ohio and has lived in New Boston with his family on a paved road since 2013. He previously served on the Conservation Commission for three years and enjoyed it. He is a civil/roadway engineer at Greenman-Pedersen, Inc. with a consulting office in Bedford working with towns and NH DOT. He has been working in the industry for fifteen years and looking for a way to serve the town. He appreciates transportation and has a lot of experience working with roads and could be an asset to the committee.
- The Committee was unable to meet monthly this year. In the spring, this was caused by issues related to the pandemic lockdown. In the summer meetings did not take place as a quorum of the Committee was unable to attend scheduled meetings.
- The Committee scheduled a meeting in July that was unable to be held as a quorum did not arrive. Rodney reviewed informal discussions that took place that day between members that did arrive as follows:

- He brought pictures of areas that needed maintenance at that time. He recently rechecked these areas and found they are still basically the same. Some have received some dirt to improve them.
- A complaint of an inaccurate property line issue from a South Hill Road resident was discussed. Rodney recommended surveying and is unsure if that is included in an engineering plan that was subsequently developed and discussed in detail at recent Selectmen's meetings. Karen reviewed the plan to improve drainage in this area involving several properties. All parties have compromised to achieve the improvement goals while allowing residents to continue using their properties appropriately.
- The Selectmen have also been discussing an issue at an area of Riverdale Road and Lull Road owned by a private resident that was used as a bus turnaround in the past. This arrangement is no longer feasible and closed by the property owner. Rodney noted surveying may be needed in this area as well. The Committee discussed the area has begun to change as stone walls are being built and there are town signs saying the former road is now closed. George noted he learned preliminary boundary research has been done and the area that had been used as a road and plowed by the town belongs to the property owner. The property owner closed the road area due to liability concerns. Rodney noted it could be a prescriptive road owned by the property owner and could be determined to be a town right of way if it has been in place since at least 1948. He knows it has been used since at least the 1950's and recommended Bo Strong could be the only resource for answers to these questions. If it is a prescriptive road the town has a right to maintain it. Denis will contact Bo. Rodney noted if it is determined to be a prescriptive road, another option is the town could return the land to the property owner through a Warrant Article.
- Rodney explained prescriptive roads, noting most town roads are prescriptive roads but the town has a right of way. He recommended the Selectmen keep in their office a copy of the book "A Hard Road To Travel" as it is very helpful guide for information about the basics of NH road law.
- Each Committee member will prepare a list of five roads that need the most work. The Committee can also be consider areas to ask SNHPC to add or change locations of the annual spring traffic counting they do for New Boston.
- Paving is currently taking place in town at Bog Brook Road and other areas. This task usually ends around Thanksgiving each year.
- The Committee discussed companies that could come in and do a full assessment of town roads and their needs. Mark offered to help as this is what he does in his job as a civil/roadway engineer at Greenman-Pedersen, Inc. He offered to assess up to ten miles of roads per week for free, volunteering his time to inventory road conditions, signs, guardrails, etc., their status and condition and traffic in the area. He would use the information to create a database for a prioritization system. He suggested the Committee be not only concerned with roads in the worst condition, it could also consider roads that could be improved with maintenance of a lesser cost to preserve them over time, costing less for the life cycle of the road. He noted it would be ideal if New Boston has GIS roadway mapping. This was presented to the town in a 2020 Warrant Article that failed. He will contact Zack from SNHPC who does GIS mapping. The former Road Committee was working with Road Agent Dick Perusse to use a road management

software program called RSMS to keep track of town roads. Mark Suennen noted NH DOT used this program in the past and he offered Mark Debowski the traffic count data since 2004 from SNHPC.

- Winter plowing: Mark Siemeze asked if residents complain about winter maintenance of roads as this occurs in one-third of the months each year. There are other maintenance tasks the Highway Department can continue to do in the winter as well. George noted he has plowed for twenty-one years and explained how the process has changed and improved over the years. The Highway Department receives complaint calls from residents all year long. Rodney noted plowing is a major task, residents have unrealistic expectations and several years ago Brandy Mitroff wrote an article about her ride along with a plow driver to tell residents what it is like. Plow drivers have routes to follow where they return to plow the same area every two hours. In a heavy snowstorm a lot of snow can accumulate in two hours. The Committee agreed the plows do a good job. George noted many residents are driving cars with all season tires, when studded tires or chains could help. He also discussed snow days, saying it might be better to hold school with buses traveling twice a day instead of increased traffic during storms caused families using that time to travel on snowy roads to recreational activities.
- Highway Department staffing was discussed. It is a small crew of approximately six people working on New Boston's approximately 100 miles of roads, 50 paved and 50 dirt.
- The Finance Committee is beginning to meet for budget season. The Road Committee may be interested in attending the meeting when the Highway Department budget will be discussed, November 19 at 6:30 PM. The meetings are held via Zoom and livestreamed. The livestream can be accessed from the town website. The budget worksheets will be posted on the website in advance at <https://www.newbostonnh.gov/finance-committee/events/47791>.

ADJOURNMENT: Rodney Towne moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:15 PM. Mark Suennen seconded the motion. All were in favor. The motion carried.

Prepared by Maralyn Segien

**Next Scheduled Meeting: Town Hall Conference Room on November 18, 2020 (6:00 PM)
7 Meetinghouse Hill Road- New Boston, NH 03070
Phone: (603) 487-5504-www.newbostonnh.gov**