

Town of Groton
Select Board Work Session Minutes
August 20, 2019

In attendance: John Rescigno, Tony Albert, Ron Madan and Sara Smith (Administrative Assistant - AA)

John called the meeting to order at 5:05pm.

Meeting with HSEM on Grant, October money, etc. (Jennifer Harper, Dave Vaillancourt, Paul Hatch, Alexx Monastiero, Vanessa Urango, Fallon Reed, Senator Guida, Robert Ellis, Bill Oakley)

Terms and Conditions to be signed- Grant

Alexx explained that the Terms and Conditions need to be signed before grant is awarded. John asked when the Town will see the money. Alexx said as soon as we get this to them it will be processed. Once the grant agreement is signed it will be sent to governor and council. She is thinking it will be October and said that they could process an advancement of money. There were no other questions on the terms and conditions. **John motioned to sign the terms and conditions, Tony 2nd, so voted.**

Sub recipient Management Cost Application to be signed- Grant

Alexx explained Groton is the first one to do this so we are the guinea pig. This will be granted post award. Sara explained she is doing everything she can to get this information together but since she didn't know about this ahead of time, she didn't have a spreadsheet ahead of time like she has for the storm projects. **John motioned to sign the sub recipient management cost application, Ron 2nd, so voted.**

October 2017 storm money, request for cash advance, reimbursement request, etc.

Jennifer Harper explained that she will have several people talk about this since there are several people involved in the process. They provided a hand out so everyone is on the same page. She is new to the PA and is learning this, as she has only been the director for a few months. There are five projects total in which three have been paid and two have not, which are 44000 and 79680.

Jennifer wanted to talk about the request for cash advance that the Town sent over in April for \$185,000.00. She explained that they had an in-house issue and she admitted that they dropped the ball on this on their end.

The Reimbursement request for \$20,129.46 was delayed due to a scope of work change for Sculptured Rocks Road and Atwell Orange Brook bridge. They would like to move forward with an improved project. This will allow us to use the FEMA estimate to bring it to a pre disaster state. The Town has to make a decision if capping the project at Sculptured Rocks Road at the FEMA estimate will work and if so, they can move forward with the improved project. Sara mentioned the original scope of work letter did state that we can do the change to the scope of work, which they are now calling the improved project, within the original costs from FEMA. Vanessa did talk to FEMA region 1 and they are okay with this. The Select Board explained that after talking to Sara and Bubba they can answer today that they are okay to move forward with the improved project. Vanessa stated that Sara will need to send her an email that states per our discussion during the meeting on August 20, 2019, the Town of Groton agrees with the improved project for project 44000 and that we confirm that we can do the improved project within the amount of money that FEMA obligated for this project. Sara will send this email tomorrow.

John asked why all of this took so long. We feel that this has been dragging and that we are not getting answers. Jennifer mentioned that this is a painful process and she understands that. Jennifer said that she talked to the Governor as well. John said that the Governor gave him his personal cell and he has called many

times and they haven't called us back. John asked why is it such a painful process. He said the taxpayers are the ones suffering. The storm happened in October of 2017 and we still don't have the money or any answers of when we will see the money. Sara explained that we have been given many different answers. First, we were told that it has been delayed because this is a new process but we asked what part is new and couldn't get an answer. Next we were told it was because of continuing resolution which has put a hold on the state budget and spending but this is FEMA funds that were obligated to the Town of Groton. Jennifer explained the continuing resolution does not hold this up but it has to go before the fiscal committee to accept and expend in order to pass the money though. That process did take some time due to fiscal year ending in June. There are many steps that have to take place. Fallon mentioned that this is a normal time period and since there are so many different towns effected. John stressed again that FEMA obligated the funds to the Town of Groton so this shouldn't be delaying it. Senator Guida wanted an answer to when FEMA did obligate the money to the state because he feels it was mismanaged. Vanessa looked into FEMA obligated the funds on February 8, 2019 so it has been over six months. Senator Guida said this is unacceptable and since this was done in February, they cannot use the excuse of the fiscal year ending in June.

Sara explained that it is frustrating because if we had the money from the October 2017 and were able to do the work to not only repair the road and culverts but also to do some of the mitigation, the July damage may not have happened or may not have been as severe. Sara said that each time it is getting worse and we are afraid that someone could get seriously hurt or worse. Yes, the storms are getting declared so we are getting FEMA funds but each time it is still costing the town money with having to come up with our 25% share. Fallon mentioned that with it being a large project, anything over \$125,500.0. it comes down to the penny. There may be other options which she will look into.

Homeland Security (HSEM) explained that it will go before Governor and Council and then the Town should have their money. This should happen in September. Senator Guida wants a diagram of how it happens and when it happens. HSEM will get him this information.

Sara explained that another frustration is more with FEMA. Our contact for FEMA kept getting changed and each time they did not fill each other in or use the portal to look things up so we were having to answer the same questions again, do the same work over again, etc. which took up a lot of time on top of doing our regular job. Jennifer said that she has met with other towns who have the same concerns and she has since met with the FEMA administration in DC and has brought these concerns forward. They are not taking this lightly and want to work with everyone and not change the people but they cannot guarantee this. They have also talked to FEMA that the communication needs to flow through Paul Hatch and Vanessa and they will go to Fallon and Dave if needed. Jennifer said we are not the only town or the first town to bring these concerns forward and they have told FEMA this is not okay.

John asked why the government recognizes a problem but doesn't fix it. This is a big issue and this is how we feel. The Senator said there is no accountability but he said he can guarantee he will work on getting this fixed. He asked when can he meet with HSEM tomorrow and he expects a diagram of the process and expects it tomorrow. They will get this to him and Jennifer agreed to meet with him at 10:00am at her office.

July 11, 2019 flooding

As far as the July 11, 2019 storm, FEMA is working on the applicant briefings now. The Town will need to submit an RPA (request for public assistance) and this can be done thru the portal. There are some changes to the process so there will be applicant briefings that everyone will still need to attend even if they enter the RPA in the portal. The applicant briefings will go over the changes and discuss the scope meetings. The Town can also start filling out the damage inventory on the portal as well. The RPA is due 30 days from storm so it will be due September 13, 2019. Sara will submit this via the portal tomorrow.

Other questions or concerns

At the March 2019 Town Meeting the Town voted for our share of the HSEM Grant money so we have this set aside and would like to use this in 2019. Can we start the project now or, when can we? They believe that we have to wait until the grant agreement is signed and has to go thru governor and council. They will look into that to see what else they can do and see if there are immediate needs funding or other options, they can look into but it is all a lengthy process that will take time.

Sara explained this is frustrating as well as the tax payers voted for this to be used in 2019 and with our winter starting in October even if the grant is awarded in September the process takes time and we will not be able to do the work before year end and will have to look to see if we can encumber the funds. We applied for another grant this year through Northern Border Regional Commission and this will depend on the Town voting for our share at the March 2020 meeting but without having anything to show from the Grant that was voted on in 2019 they may not vote for this which will hurt the Town and the opportunity to get Sculptured Rocks Road in even better condition.

Recap

- Sara send the email on the improved project
- Sara will submit the RPA on the portal
- Someone from HSEM will send Sara the information needed for the summary of needing to take money/immediate funds when they find out if this is an option
- We should have the Grant and FEMA funds by October

Kudos

Jennifer wanted to let the Select Board know that she has heard nothing but good things from her staff about Sara and Bubba and how hard they work and how easy they are to work with. She also wanted to state again that after her conversation with FEMA she is confident we will move forward and see progress for the Town.

John motioned to go into non-public session pursuant to RSA 91-A:3 II (b) at 6:15pm, Ron 2nd, so voted.

John motioned to return to public session at 6:21pm, Ron 2nd, so voted.

John motioned to seal the non-public minutes, Ron 2nd, so voted.

Sara's Time off Memo

Sara requested the following time off for doctors and dentist appointments:

- Monday, September 16, 2019 leave at 3:00pm
- Thursday, September 19, 2019- off
- Wednesday, December 18, 2019 leave at 1:30pm
- Tuesday, January 14, 2020- leave at 1:45pm

John motioned to approve Sara's time off, Ron 2nd, so voted.

Floodplain training

Sara mentioned that there is a free floodplain training on Thursday, August 29, 2019 in Warren from 6:00pm-8:00pm. With the issues the Select Board has been faced with lately they agreed that it would be best for the entire Select Board and Sara to attend. Sara will email an RSVP. It was agreed that everyone would meet at the Town House at 5:30pm and ride together

Town Garage

John mentioned that he thinks that we should open one wall and see what's in there as there could be a concern about mold with all of the storm damage. Primex has been doing it different each storm with how much of the sheetrock to replace. This time it was two feet and the previous storm it was four feet. We do not have to do it right away but it is something for the Select Board to think about.

Dry Hydrant

Sara explained that she has been working on the wetlands permit by notification and the maps and supporting documents it needs. We still need photographs and a plan. Tony and Bubba will meet to take the pictures and come up with the plan. The cost to file the permit once it is completed is \$200.00. The Select Board is okay with Sara cutting this check once the permit is submitted. It was agreed that we should let the cemetery trustees know, by email, since this is going to be on the same property as the cemetery on North Groton Road.

Meeting with Bubba

The Select Board met with Bubba to discuss the following:

- M.E. Latulippe will be doing the culvert on Sculptured Rocks Road next week. The following week he will be working on getting Sculptured Rocks Road to paving condition. Edgar Albert Road will be after that.
- Bubba talked to Bryant Paving because we originally had a contract for \$104,000.00 to pave Sculptured Rocks Road. This was revised to \$82,000.00 to change from 2" to 1 ½" to save money because of the July storm. They said we won't see a difference over the winter but will definitely need the next 1 ½" next year. Bubba still has to talk to them about that number because he thought it was lower but wanted the Select Board to know there will be a contract that will need to be signed. **John motioned to sign the contract with Bryant Paving once it is ready, Ron 2nd so voted.**
- Bubba talked to Dave Leone about the work on Bailey Hill. He will be willing to do it and then bill in January.
- Bubba asked the Select Board if he can we move forward with Mike Ethier doing some clearing on the new lot across from the Transfer Station so he can put material there this winter. The Select Board gave him the okay to move forward.

Having no other business to conduct, Ron motioned to adjourn at 6:50pm, John 2nd, so voted.

Respectfully submitted,

Sara Smith
Administrative Assistant