



MADBURY PUBLIC WORKS EXPLORATORY COMMITTEE

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Approved

OFFICIAL BUSINESS

Minutes of: September 13, 2023

Meeting Convened: 6:00 pm

Members in Attendance:

- Mark Avery - Chair
- John Bickford - Vice Chair
- Deb Ahlstrom
- Jay Moriarty
- Eric Fiegenbaum
- John Steele
- Susan Ossoff, Alternate
- Richard Lipari- Secretary

Public in Attendance

- Janet Wall (local state representative)

Guests:

- Brookline Staff- Ed Arnold (Brookline)
- Mike Wenrich (Brookline)
- Steve Bulle(Town resident and Lee's director)

Call to order:

- Chair Avery called the meeting to order at 6:11 pm

Seating of Alternate

- Alternate Ossoff was seated

Approval of 9 August 2023 Minutes

- Motion by Chair Avery to accept the minutes as presented 9 August 2023. Seconded by Vice Chair Bickford. Motion passed unanimously.

Meeting Notes

- Call to order and motion to seat alternate Susan Ossoff for meeting.
- Brookline employees mentioned the headstart Madbury has relating to budgeting and planning compared to Brookline at the time when they began this process.
- John Steele asked about how Brookline approached start of their DPW assessment.
 - Discussed about in scope relating to road maintenance, building facility and grounds maintenance.

- o Discussion on cross responsibilities of work, specific to Cemetery Trustees. Brookline discussed responsibilities and legal responsibilities to maintain between cemetery and graveyard designations.
- Brookline explained how job descriptions have evolved over time through expanded adhoc work through the years. Current job descriptions doesn't reflect a lot of work DPW staff are doing outside of Road work and grounds maintenance.
 - o Started with only two employees initially. Has been 5 years since Mike, first DPW employee started for Brookline, which has expanded to three DPW employees including a new facility, 4 trucks, and other maintenance vehicles. Including salt shed.
 - o They estimate there is still another 10 years of backlog work even through plan is ahead of their initial DPW timeline. This was stated largely to adhoc improvements that history weren't considered prior to a DPW.
 - o Initial was a hybrid approach that was a combination of dedicated DPW employees and contracted work, but every year they have brought more inhouse each of year of the first 5 years of execution. Started in 2017.
 - 65 miles of road, basing work just on road work 3-4 staff multiple days a week would take 5 years to complete all work. These are listed as back log work.
 - o John B. asked how they partner with companies to address town emergency work
 - Mike responded it was critical for company partnerships, used Eversource as an example for tree removals. Was also added how Fire department assisted in emergency situations.
 - o John S. inquired in staffing resources for contractor sourcing and review. Mike from Brookline explained his experience in the private sector allowed him to manage this himself.
 - o HR questions around pay and benefits.
 - Mentioned health insurance and participate in NH Retirement programs.
 - Brookline had some town administration staff prior to DPW staffing and management of payroll through paychex.
 - Average hourly pay started was \$25/hourly plus benefits
 - o Facility surprises
 - 3 phase power limitations and required fire sprinklers not initially scoped and budgeted for. Recommended Primex for town insurance coverages, Madbury already had insurance coverage through vendor. Increases to premiums due to build out of DPW facility
 - Costs overruns were mitigated with cutting construction costs where possible..
 - Discussion on variance of price per sq ft for construction. Unknown required specifications surprises.
 - Eric inquired about salting requirements mixture and future impacts.
 - Brookline recommended to build bigger to control future growth and future build requirement and expenses.. Expanded on benefits of propane and radiant flooring controlling utility costs.
 - o John S. asked about Project Management (PM) support to manage the execution of the DPW services/facilities
 - PM was engaged to support Mike once a plan was approved. Brookline stated the benefits of having a dedicated PM resource that they contracted with.
 - Mark inquired on vehicle levels and how many are run concurrently. Of the 6 only 4 are used during winter, with one being a spare. Most vehicles are

used/older and are very productive when most are only used certain parts of the years.

- Brookline mentioned they managed the towns trash hauling. Fuel costs are through state contracted fueling stations in Durham. They use Wex corporate cards for fuel management.
- Mark asked about engagement with Select board and/or town meeting from a road agent to a DPW approach.
- John S. inquired about estimated OpEx to previous sub-contracted work. Mike from Brookline stated OpEx just on the numbers it has been more expensive with a dedicated DPW, however there have been many qualitative improvements to infrastructure and more work in supporting the town now happens that sub-contractors never did. More work is being done, level of service for town has improved significantly.
- Brookline talked through a lot of regulatory and legal guidelines that were important to the various DPW requirements. Examples of tree removals and town and property owner land lines.
- Steve B., director of Lee, mentioned operating budget relating to Madbury was ~\$200k less. This is not specific to Capital expenses, but OpEx, which includes 4 employees. This was specific to road and grounds maintenance costs. Madbury ~\$900k to Lee's ~\$650k. Deb inquired if costs were a true apples to apples comparison.
- Brookline mentioned specific use of state of NH highway block reserve fund. Was a great approach for tracking and offsetting capital reserve funds for the town. These funds were placed into a town revolving fund to be used as needed. This allowed more agility and quicker response to town needs.
- John S. asked about maintenance costs forecasting.
 - Mike from Brookline explained initial road paving work was estimated to be 2.5 miles a year, but reality was better upfront on better work than sticking to quick work. Critical to this was long term planning which included sometimes full reconstruction. Funds for these expenses were budgeted for according to forecasts.
- Most maintenance expenses were for roads than the actual road equipment. Critical to minimizing road issues is proper water draining.
- Rich L. asked question if Brookline is better off 5 years after compared to sub-contracting and road agent. Mike emphatically said a dedicated DPW was the right decision. Knowledge transfer, support of town needs, consistency, documentation, and better control and forecasting of costs were the biggest positive impacts with a DPW.
- John S. asked about operating efficiencies by partnering with a nearby town. Brookline stated this approach would be a mistake due to enforcing town policies and resource priorities. Admin costs for town is currently managed by a single Admin assistance and contracts out with a payroll service provider. Brookline stated if Madbury wanted to go a Co-op approach it would be better to hire a dedicated DPW director that managed sub-contractors, but again stated benefits of a fully staffed DPW.
- Brookline explained having the right director with the right skillset and experience was critical to the direction of the DPW. Mike, Director, was a main reason for the success for Brookline. Director is hands on and DPW has had a lot of qualitative improvements and longer term DPW Capital expenses due to better work compared to sub-contractors.
- Jay asked about costs around staffing on drivers for winter road maintenance. Both Brookline and Lee mentioned they have more road to maintain than Madbury.

- o Rich L. asked question around regulatory/auditing requirements and support needs. Mike and team explained this is minimal and most requirements from state and DPW is knowledgeable on any regulatory needs.
- Eric asked about retention of documented road work specs/maintenance are in physical or electronic in nature. Mike stated Brookline manages these as physical records.
- John B. inquired about additional sub-contracted work Brookline still has, specific to roadside mowing needs.
- Brookline asked about Madbury's paved sidewalk, of which Madbury does not have.
 - o Brookline stated they highly recommended against sidewalks due to high capital expenses, annual maintenance expenses, and special equipment required to support. In addition to town residents land impacts.
 - Brookline only has about 2 miles of paved sidewalk due to a grant funding, but town has had to maintain leading to increase road maintenance costs. Possible increases to taxes to account for sidewalks would need to be assessed for proper town funding.

Second part of Meeting (After Brookline and Lee reps left)

- John S. discussion on revisions to Report to Board Selectmen draft. Clarified responsibility of draft to focus on high level overview of three proposed options.
- Discussion on draft formatting, and extended discussion on limit info on draft of Co-op approach. Jay expressed times have changes and Co-op and sub-contracting drivers is no longer feasible
- John S. continued to frame committee is chartered to present all options and pros and cons of each for transparency. Back and forth discussion on extent of depth of Co-op option due to many negative and complicated issues to mitigate.
- Deb identified earlier comment from Steve (town of Lee) on road maintenance expenses was not an apples to apple comparison. Recommendation to verify the nuances to get a better DPW to Madbury current state OpEx.
- John S. and John B. discussed accounting for actual annual costs to spinning up costs. Jay brought up concerns around staffing costs and potential large increase to expenses in beginning. Idea brought up on who would replace AJ for currently offered contracting services. John S.
- Mark respnded timeline issues and town does not have option to wait and see what happens in 3 years.
- Susan shared concern around using estimated CapEx and OpEx numbers as they are dubious at best. Extensive discussion John
- Rich L. asked if draft report needs to change based on discussion. Jay and Susan expressed committee is commissioned to present options, and this would not be a final report. Susan expressed urgency of committee agreeing on approach now as part of written report.
- Deb and Jay supported long term plan is a DPW, but timeline could change based on current contractor.
- Jay, Eric, Deb, and Mark added comments to include that current contractor has facilities in town as other contractors do not have facilities in town (leading to issues finding replacement contractors). Board agreed committee was writing report and aligned to recommendation of a DPW long term.
- Mark recommended report to include definitions of current service levels compared to a DPW for apples to apples.
- Discussion came up about dual role responsibility for firefighter and DPW roles, but finalized not really an additional option, but worth long term town essential services discussions.

Adjournment

- Motion to adjourn by Mark Avery. Seconded by Vice Chair John Bickford. Motion passed unanimously.