Minute of the Public Works Committee on January 31, 2022

**Present Also Present**

E. Beatty, Chair C. Saley, PW Director

M. Arciuolo S. Johnson, Assistant Director of PW

T. Giannattasio L. Streit, Recording Secretary

R. Vitale

W. Willis

**Minutes**

A motion was made by Giannattasio, seconded by Willis to approve the minutes of the previous meeting as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

**New Business**

Budget – Beatty stated that this is the middle of budget season and last year it was discussed that Public Works has had growing responsibilities and it was difficult. She wrote a memo regarding this; low manpower, tree replacement underfunded and this was met with controversy. The Public Works Director has met with the Mayor this year and a flat budget is proposed again in light of the increase in the Police budget.

Patricia Nugent, 141 Morningside Drive, stated that Morningside is being completely neglected, the seawall has had no repair since 1972. There is an overgrowth of invasive species. This is underfunded; she has been following the flood and erosion boards and there are significant needs and no funding. She was advised to speak to her Alderman in her district.

**Director’s Report**

* The snowstorm this past weekend was a big issue. It was very challenging; notification of parking bans needs to be worked on. The crew did a really good job; they started at 11:00 pm on Friday night and went until Sunday at 4:00 pm. This storm was extremely expensive with overtime and very challenging; there was a lot of wind that blew the snow around making it difficult to keep up with. A second plow truck was received on Thursday before the storm. However, it is still a struggle to get contractors. The storm produced 11” of snow; fortunately, the wind pushed the water out which helped regarding flooding.
* A Christmas tree on the green was lost in the storm. Johnson stated that this tree was transplanted and donated years back, a dozen years ago and had the roots compromised. Steve has been working with Jeremy Grant and submitted a grant to the DEP for forestry downtown. An email confirmation has been received that $22,000.00 has been approved. The City will be contracting with a Landscape Architect to do a tree inventory and assessment and provide recommendations for future replacements. A lot of inkind/volunteer services are attached to this grant. A 2’ circumference tree will be removed. There are about 600 trees to do. Steve will keep the board posted. Arciuolo asked if the tree on the green would be a substantial tree or a sapling. Steve stated that they would be 6 – 8’ tall, 2-3” caliber ones; they tend to be the healthiest and most likely to become established. Younger trees are much more adaptable to pruning. They will be working with an Arborist and the Milford Tree Commission. Last year the Mayor’s 500 tree give away was a huge success. COVID limited the selection.

Milford has an aging urban forestry canopy that is susceptible to decay and rot. The need for trimming and removal will be assessed and prioritized. Tree crews are the same people that do stump grinding as well. Beatty noted that for 6 years there has been no budget increase and there has been a problem with stump removal and manpower. It is a problem that stump removal is not a line item in the budget. Steve stated that the budget is always a challenge, and they try to do what can be done. Chris stated that the other challenge has been COVID-19 for 2 years. It has been a struggle to hire seasonal people.

Willis thanked Ms. Nugent for speaking. He then questioned if the replacement tree would be native species. Steve stated that there would be as many native trees as possible but they are hard to select for urban use. It will likely be a blend of native and non native and want to ensure that they are non invasive as well.

* Beatty thanked Chris and Steve for their work especially during the storm and asked about drainage at the Dog Park. Chris stated that there are some drainage issues, the park has a lot of use and feels it should be closed for a bit in order to do some work on it as it is a chronic problem. Beatty stated that this is another area that needs maintenance and is therefore an increase in demand for Public Works.
* Chris stated that he met with the UI Company today and rolling black outs were discussed which is a real concern. Gas pipelines cannot meet the demand at peak times. Steve stated that the UI provides the wire and poles and ISO New England provides the power. It is a proactive measure by the UI Company to involve municipalities to the meetings. Arciuolo questioned the length of black outs. Chris stated that power would be shut down for 4 hours at a time with notice. Steve stated that this is not just Milford, but other towns as well. There would be a plan with notification. Beatty stated that gas line replacements around Milford were notified and then it didn’t happen. Steve stated that this was impacted by COVID and they just received an update on roads from SCG to consider this work with paving.
* Public Works worked very well with SCG and paving in the Woodmont and Bayview areas under the CDBG projects. Steve reported that there are two active projects; Morningside – met last week and trying to secure additional funding for the seawall. Milford Point Road project went out to bid and contractor questions and clarifications are being reviewed.
* Genesis Company is to develop the old Howard Johnson’s site.
* Chris stated that he is working with the Contractor on the flapper issue at Point Beach.
* Beatty stated that she received a letter from the Director of the Library. There are concerns with air quality, water leaks and security. They feel the demand on Public Works is high and they are willing to apply for grant funding and seek alternate funding. Beatty met with the Director, Chris Angeli. Chris Saley stated that Public Works has done a lot of work in the Children’s area and in the next year there will be some major construction with the roadway. Public Works also did the roof, LED lights and a new boiler. A lot has been done to the Senior Center as well. Willis stated that the work done at the Senior Center is amazing and the members appreciate it.
* Vitale stated that it needs to be recognized that Public Works needs more funding. Beatty stated that the Board of Aldermen have standing committees and does not have to be on the agenda to be discussed. Willis stated that he would like more information. Chris stated that they have done a lot more with a lot less.

The next regular meeting will be on February 28, 2022.

A motion was made by Giannattasio, seconded by Arciuolo to adjourn at 8:20 p.m. The motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Streit