



TOWN OF SOUTHBRIDGE

A JOINT MEETING OF THE D.P.W. SUBCOMMITTEE and TOWN COUNCIL WEDNESDAY March 8, 2023 at 6 PM VETERANS ROOM Minutes (draft)

1. Call to Order 6:00 PM
2. Roll Call: Councilor/DPW Chair Michael Marketti - Councilors Joseph Daou, Gus Steeves. Citizen Members Steve Lazo and Kevin Splaine.
Also in attendance: Richard Benoit, DPW Director, Phil Harding, DPW Operations Manager.
3. Consider and approve Joint DPW/Town Council Meeting Minutes of February 8, 2023. Approved
4. Citizens Forum: Mr. Pioppi made some comments and suggestions about the structure of the DPW Department.
5. Review/discuss the Town Manager's recommendation to appoint Thomas Boudreau as DPW Construction Inspector effective immediately, pending successful completion of medical screening, background check, and State Ethics. Entertain a motion to recommend to Town Council for confirmation. Manager asked to withdraw agenda. Motion to passover agenda. Vote 5-0
6. Review/discuss the Amendment and Restatement of the Inter-municipal Sewer Agreement and entertain a motion to Town Council for acceptance and to authorize the Town Manager to sign all related documents. Motion made by Steve Lazo, second by Councilor Steeves. Vote 4-1 (Marketki opposed).

Discussion: Sewer Department Manager James Merchant said he reviewed the contract. Mr. Splaine asked if this is an extension to the original contract from '98? He also said the Interim Town Manager was involved in the original negotiations and wanted to know if this is a conflict? Merchant wasn't aware the town manager was involved; the contract was first signed in 1998 and is almost identical to this one. Councilor Steeves asked how they have changed? Merchant said the only change is wording about the connection fee. Sturbridge residents have never paid a connection fee to Southbridge, as the connecting lines are in Sturbridge only. Steeves asked if the Town of Sturbridge is paying the extra connection fees to Southbridge. The answer was no. Steeves also asked about a subdivision on RT 131 and impact on our sewer line? Merchant said Sturbridge is allowed 300,000 gallons per day, right now they only pump 30,000. There was further discussion about the length of the contract and future plans for sewer infrastructure in Sturbridge. Sturbridge is planning to build a pumping station.

Councilor Lazo said there is no connection fee in Sturbridge because the lines are owned by Sturbridge.

7. Discussion re-evaluation of the traffic signals at Main/Elm/Central Streets and possibly vote to take any action necessary to make the intersection safer for pedestrians.

Discussion: Chair Marketti explained the issues with the traffic lights at the downtown intersection. He asked for the left turn signals to be added back to Main Street. Chief Woodson said he was here to discuss the crossing signals. He has received numerous calls from residents about the crosswalks. He said these are ‘concurrent crosswalks’ and are set to speed up traffic and avoid gridlock. He spoke of cities around the country who use these types of crosswalks, and feels residents need to pay attention and look before crossing. He doesn’t recommend changing.

Mr. Splaine spoke about the turning lanes and the problems turning left off Main St., with only one car being able to turn before the light turns red. Chief Woodson said he has no problem putting the left turn signals back. He said he thinks DPW should get involved with it. The DPW Director agreed with the signal issues. Said he would look at it. Splaine also asked about the light at Main St. and Marcy St. He said the light turns when the wind blows. Phil Harding said a truck keeps hitting it.

Maureen Doyle spoke about drivers not looking and almost running people over in the crosswalks. George Chenier said changing the lights would give a false sense of security in other communities. He also asked if the timing could be reset? Councilor Steeves also agreed the green should be extended.

Ms. Clemence spoke about the Main St. intersection. She said she agrees with the Chief. Pedestrians need to watch, take responsibility and maybe some education. Councilor Daou suggested providing the crossing timers for both pedestrians and drivers.

Francine Farland also spoke about the issues with the intersection and possibly extending the lights to allow cars to turn left. Mr. Pioppi asked if the barrels for the crosswalks could be added back? There was further discussion about the increased traffic downtown. Councilor Lazo suggested we take the lights out and put the traffic cop back.

8. Discussion changes to trenching regulations.

Discussion: Chair Marketti asked the Director if he’s had a chance to look at our trenching regulations? The DPW Director Benoit said all he has seen is a couple of drawings of trenchers. Councilor Steeves said he would send the regulations to him. Splaine asked that the Director review the regulations, as there is no repercussions to contractors who do not back-fill trenches properly. The Director said he feels we need better oversight and putting the law down. He also said he has upcoming meetings to discuss South St. and West St. Steve Lazo spoke about the problem with an out-of-town contractor who did not back-fill the contract properly, and almost caused a serious accident.

Councilor Lazo said he doesn’t feel we need more regulations, just better oversight. We need to enforce what we have, pull the bond, fix the street, pull the license. There was further discussion about not signing off on work until it is complete and DPW working with the Building Inspector.

Splaine talked about getting Newco to do better work on trenches around town. Steeves spoke about the trench work by Newco and what should have been required. He also read from the trenching regulations. The Director spoke about typical trenching regulations that require full patching. Ms. Clemence spoke about the requirements for repaving the roads and partial paving on Everett Street. There was further discussion about rules and regulations.

9. Discuss status of Ellis Road project.

Discussion: The Chair asked if we are moving ahead with the project? The Director said he did not know and said the Manager is looking at the history of the road, and seeking a legal opinion. Councilor Daou said 9 councilors voted to fix the road. He feels it's time to move forward with fixing the road. Mr. Julian said some parts of the project were not known when the job was put out to bid. Mr. Pioppi talked about unit pricing and was not aware of the work that was needed when the town engineer put the bid out, and questioned the spec.

The Director said he did not know at this time how to move forward. He suggests we do some test holes on the road first. He also said there are some drainage issues and culvert pipes under the road, and if we do the work without fixing those problems first, then the work won't last. He said if we want to throw money at shit, then go ahead.

Councilor Lazo spoke about the history of the road. The town used to put gravel base down. Then we put drainage there, culverts and paved. After years the road let go. He feels the town agreed to pave the road and said if there is incompetency in the spec, then we need to take a look at it, but the bottom line is the road needs to be fixed.

Steeves asked what it would take to fix the road and cost? The Director asked Mr. Pioppi what needs to be done? Pioppi said reclamation, fixing the drainage and the culverts. The Director said based on cost concerns and the drainage problems, he feels we need to look at ways to keep costs down and fix the water issues. There was further discussion about the history of the road, the work and costs.

10. Discussion of condition on Dresser Hill Road and Guelphwood Road.

Discussion: Steve Lazo said he asked that Dresser Hill Road be put on the agenda. He spoke about the poor condition of the road. He asked if there was a problem with drainage? Mr. Pioppi spoke about the solar park and that the road was reclaimed and paved. There is sub-drain needs to be replaced. He also said we need some test holes. Lazo asked if we could look at it and put it back on the agenda? The Director said he will take another look at it.

There was also discussion about Guelphwood Road. George Chenier spoke about the original cost of \$1million to fix Guelphwood Road, but Council decided to redirect the funds to fix more roads.

11. Adjourn: Motion by Steeves, second by Lazo. Vote 5-0. 7:25 PM.

Respectfully submitted by Chair Marketti