

TOWN OF SCOTLAND



Town Hall 9 Devotion Road, P.O. Box 122 Scotland, CT 06264
Town Clerk: (860) 423-9634

SPECIAL TOWN MEETING MINUTES

September 27, 2023

Meeting Audio Link:

[09.27.23 Special Emergency Town Meeting.mp3](#)

1. Call to Order

A special Town Meeting was called to order by First Selectman, Gary Greenberg at 7:03 pm. Present were Gary Greenberg, First Selectman, Wendy Sears and Chris Demorit, Selectmen, Wendy O'Connor, Administrative Assistant, Sharon George, Town Clerk, and an audience of citizens.

2. Election of a Moderator. First Selectman, Gary Greenberg, called for nominations.

Motion to nominate Clark Stearns

John Aldrich, 2nd by Jenna Aldrich

No other nominations. The chair cast a single vote in favor of the Motion.

Moderator, Clark Stearns, read the call for the meeting and informed the audience that voice votes would be utilized unless the outcome cannot be determined, in which case vote will be show of hands.

At Stearn's direction, Greenberg briefed the meeting on the storm damage from September 13, 2023. This storm damaged 3 bridges in town: two bridges on Brook Road and one bridge on Bass Road. The Brook Road bridges were both total losses, stranding the six homes that housed 18 residents between those bridges.

Greenberg gave a timeline of the events that followed over the next four days to create a means of access to the six homes. This included the construction by volunteers of a road through private land owned by Tom McAvoy, which allowed limited access to Pinch Street. The Emergency Management Team (John Beck) and the local Fire Department created an Emergency Action Plan for responding to fire and medical calls while a temporary bridge was sought from the Connecticut National Guard.

On Sunday, September 17, the National Guard requested \$450,000 to deploy its' dry support bridge, and informed Greenberg that it would allow its use only for emergency vehicles, Greenberg declined the offer and arranged for an emergency bridge to be located at the north side of Brook Road, with a cost of \$20,000 for mobilization and \$3,000 per day. That bridge arrived Monday, September 18, and will remain in place while a longer-term temporary bridge is constructed at the southern (school) site.

These appropriations amount to approximately 85% of CNR and 25% of Undesignated Funds, which may result in the postponement of large-scale projects, including the renovation of the Town Hall. Greenberg is seeking funds from the state through the Governor's office as well as State Senator Mae Flexer and Cathy Osten, but there is no guarantee the spending will be reimbursed.

Greenberg explained that the permanent solution will be to rebuild all three bridges, and that the State DOT has placed them at the front of the line for design and construction. They will be funded through the State/Federal/Local programs, but the normal town contribution of 20 or 50 percent will be covered by funds provided by the Inflation Reduction Act. Design and construction are estimated to be complete in 3 to 4 years.

A Power Point presentation showed images of the damage to the two bridges on Brook Road, along with a breakdown of the costs associated with the replacement of the bridges. (See attachment) Greenberg acknowledged and thanked Mr. McAvoy, the Scotland Volunteer Fire Department, Emergency Management Director, John Beck, and Dan Savino of Twin Hill farm for their help in the emergency. The temporary bridge is open from 6am – 6pm.

The moderator opened the discussion to the audience at this point.

Q: Charlene Perry – What is being done about the Bass Road bridge?

A: Gary Greenberg – The Bass Road bridge just had its foundation reinforced and although it looks a mess, the bridge didn't move. We are working with engineers now to have the bridge evaluated for safety. We may not need to do anything.

Q: Charles Lasch – What is the timetable for a permanent bridge?

A: Gary Greenberg – Three to four years. It takes the state about 2 years to design the bridge and then something like 6 months to complete the contract. So, it could be a bit sooner. The state will pay for the bridge, and they will pay 3.5 million dollars, if the town decides to do something on its own it will cost more than zero dollars. Zero is what we will have to pay for the bridge.

Q: Bart Laws – Can you fill the blank between now and when this temporary bridge will go away, and something else will go in?

A: Gary Greenberg – Indicated that this would be addressed after a motion to make the appropriation.

3. To appropriate \$600,000 from the town Capital Recurring Funds to the Declared emergency Fund

Motion to appropriate \$600,000 from the town Capital Non-Recurring Funds to the Declared Emergency Fund.

Jennifer Nelson, 2nd Charlene Perry

Discussion: Greenberg informed the audience that we are under some pressure with the bridge costing \$3500/day. Decisions were made with that in mind. The state engineers offered to design the abutments for a long-term temporary bridge for the Brook Road location near the school, like the one already in place on Bass Road. Because detailed soil testing requires boring and analysis that could not be done in a short time, test pits were dug, and the state was able to determine that a safe length for a temporary bridge was no less than 80' (currently 30'). The tradeoff was that we got an immediate design, and we didn't have to pay for it. An image was shown to the audience of the single-lane bridge that is being purchased. The cost is \$271,500, including the fee for shipping it up here and in the end, we will own it.

The town received 2 bids today in the amounts of \$319,900 and \$182,800 to install the bridge. There has not been enough time to verify that these bids are equivalent yet. The low bidder for Bass Road was the high bidder on this bridge and vice versa. Both companies are working off the same information and they both believe that they can get this job done in 3-4 weeks. They would work 10-hour days and Saturdays, and this would overall save approximately \$20,000 (from the cost of the current bridge). Assuming everything goes according to plan, we will be able to order the bridge.

We are waiting for the construction company to put the abutments in. Half of the time (3-4 weeks) will be utilized in placing the abutments, the rest of the time is for building the bridge and rolling it into place.

Greenberg gave a description of how the bridge would be put into place and showed a slide to the audience with expected other expenses. The rental of the bridge was listed as \$115,000 but he corrected this to indicate that the actual cost was \$105,000. The following have already been paid for: bridge mobilization, the temporary road through the McAvoy property, gravel, and other materials. With a 20% contingency, the total estimated expenses amount to \$750,000.

Greenberg reported that there is currently \$713,397 in Capital Non-Recurring Funds and \$617,708 in Undesignated Funds. Greenberg recommended appropriating \$600,000 from the CNR Funds and \$150,000 from Undesignated Funds. In addition, we have available \$191,000 as follows: \$75,000 from the 2023-24 budget for Capital Improvement of Roads, approximately \$100,000 in TAR Funds provided by the state, and \$16,000 in the Declared Emergency Fund. So, if the appropriations are approved, we will have a total of \$941,600 available for the work. We are asking for \$750,000 because that gives us room to breathe. The money doesn't go anywhere if we don't use it.

Greenberg also reported that if we put the money into the Declared Emergency Funds, we will deplete the Capitol Non-Recurring funds to the amount of \$113,797 and reduce the Undesignated Funds to \$468,000. The reason we are taking more from CNR is because the Undesignated Funds are used to measure a municipality's fiscal health. So, the funds should stay there so that if it becomes necessary to borrow money, it will help us get a better interest rate. We can put \$750,000 into the Declared Emergency fund, so the work that needs to be done can be done and whatever is left over will be returned to the accounts that they came from.

First Selectman, Gary Greenberg, encouraged the audience members to reach out to our state officials to help. Senator Mae Flexer, State Senator Cathy Osten, State Representative Doug Dubitsky, the Governor, the governor's Chief of Staff and assistants. The next Bonding Commission meeting is on October 8th. Cathy Osten is trying to get us on the agenda. Our options after that are that we just must live with it, or we could sell or lease it. We will have to replenish those funds over time. We won't be able to go forward with some of the projects we were planning such as new equipment for the Fire Department. We could pivot the \$1.5 million that's been granted for us to fix up the Town Hall. Unfortunately, the funds for the architect will no longer be available as they were coming from the CNR Fund. We will have to wait and see how this project turns out. Greenberg promised to stay on the help his predecessor as much as possible.

Moderator, Clark Stearns, asks for any questions.

Q: Jenn Nelson – Can we publicize the addresses for the state officials that the town can reach out to whether on the town's website or the Facebook page?

A: Wendy Sears – Every email should go to every member of the Bonding Commission. Kim Martin volunteered to add this information to the Scotland Residents Facebook page.

Q: Kim Martin – What did the Governor say?

A: Gary Greenberg – The Governor did come out in terrible weather and was genuinely moved by the situation. He said that as a sociologist he doesn't know much about building bridges, but hopefully he's better at appropriating money. The National Guard did express that their thoughts and prayers were with us, but what we really needed was a bridge.

Q: Rob Keator – Is the state telling us that if we do our part that you have presented to us this evening, is it a definite in three years?

A: Gary Greenberg – Let me be specific, this is usually an 80/20 or 50/50 split with the state. What happened with the Inflation Reduction Act is that the state got a large block of money to spend on infrastructure and they decided to dedicate some of it to the town's contributions. The Gager Hill bridge is already in that program. I can never say absolutely 100% for sure. But if the Inflation Reduction Act isn't repealed and there's nothing that stops them from designing the bridge, the bridge will come, and it will be at 100% of the cost. It takes the state 18-24 months to design the bridge and just as long to get the contracts out and then to build it, that's where the three years come from and that's expedited.

Q: Kim Martin – Is it possible to build a temporary bridge ourselves cheaper than renting it?

A: Gary Greenberg – Many ideas were discussed but this bridge suits our needs, and we don't want anyone to get hurt. We were very lucky.

Q: (online) Holly & Jeff McAvoy – I have a two-part question. I am currently on maternity leave and live between the bridges on Brook Road. Is there a chance that I'll have no safe way out when this temporary bridge runs out of time?

A: Gary Greenberg – You're not going to get isolated again, that 30 days was just an estimate of time, we're going to leave that bridge there.

Q: Holly McAvoy – Where can I legally park my car if we do get separated?

A: Gary Greenberg – The superintendent has been very understanding and you can park at the school.

Moderator, Clark Stearns, asks if there are any more questions on the \$600,000 appropriation. There were no other questions. He asked for a voice vote and determined that the motion carried. 1 member opposed.

4. To appropriate \$150,000 for the Undesignated Funds to the Declared Emergency Fund.

Motion to appropriate \$150,000 for the Undesignated Funds to the Declared Emergency Fund

Bart Laws, 2nd Charlene Perry

After the voice vote, the moderator determined that the motion carried. 1 member opposed.

5. Motion to approve a resolution:
 - Resolved, that should these expenditures be reimbursed in whole or in part by non-local agencies or should the Town undertake loans or bonds intended to finance these expenditures, the funds so generated will be returned to Capital Non-Recurring and Undesignated Funds in proportion to the amount taken from each fund.

Motion to approve a resolution:

- *Resolved, that should these expenditures be reimbursed in whole or in part by non-local agencies or should the Town undertake loans or bonds intended to finance these expenditures, the funds so generated will be returned to Capital Non-Recurring and Undesignated Funds in proportion to the amount taken from each fund.*

Kim Martin, 2nd Charlene Perry

Clarification from First Selectman, Gary Greenberg, should there be a surplus in this fund at the end of the fiscal year or at any other time between now and then that money goes back into the General Fund and will get appropriated to CNR and the Undesignated Funds by selectman or Town Meeting. There's no automatic return of the money which is why I made this resolution-to guide people in the future.

After a voice vote, the moderator determined that the motion carried. 1 member opposed.

6. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn.

Robert Brautigam, 2nd Jenn Nelson

Motion carries

Meeting adjourned at 7:49pm

Respectfully submitted by:

Sharon George, Town Clerk