

TOWN HALL MONTHLY: September

At last the Town has received the first FEMA reimbursement for repairs to roads damaged by flooding in 2021. Relatively speaking, it is a small amount, just under \$25,000 for small repairs made to several roads. However, our Concord FEMA people have also finally completed and submitted reimbursement requests for the Charlestown Road at approximately \$560,000 and for Crane Brook Road at approximately \$1,100,000 and their next goal is to submit a reimbursement request for Derry Hill Road at approximately \$300,000. Together those reimbursements will come close to repaying the Town's 2021 loan.

Work on repairs from the 2023 flood are moving forward despite there being no emergency declaration yet from the Governor's office. For the time being our Highway Department, with additional contracted trucking, is working to establish at least one passable lane on all roads using money already voted into the 2023 budget. That will leave only the Forest Road Bridge closed.

Selectmen and Town Emergency Managers are reviewing the State bridge program as a means to replace the Forest Road Bridge which was destroyed last month. State DOT bridge officials have said they will accelerate our application. Nevertheless, it would take two years, one for engineering and one for construction, to build a new bridge. Alstead is currently involved in a State bridge program and reports it as "first rate" so far. Under the program the Town will have to front the cost and then be reimbursed 80% by the State. Voters would need to approve a loan at the 2024 March Town Meeting to cover the costs until reimbursement is received. That is why it is so important that the Town is able to pay off the 2021 loan before next March. In other words, the 2023 repairs will depend on the 2021 reimbursement.

In other business during August, Selectmen signed the Town's 2022 Department of Revenue Financial Report prepared by Treasurer Melinda Loiselle. The report shows the Town's fund balance at \$508,000 which is important because it is high enough to satisfy DRA's required minimum balance and also provide some extra funds if needed to make roads with flood damage plowable this winter.

While working on a Master Plan questionnaire, the Planning Board is also beginning work on the annual update of the Town's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). CIP planning includes projected costs for capital expenditures such as equipment purchases and major road projects several years into the future. At this time the Town's flood repair costs will need to be taken into account when making those projections.

This is the time of year when budget planning begins and this year that process will be challenging. Selectmen and Planning Board meetings are open to the public and the meeting schedule is posted on Town bulletin boards and the website.

See you soon, Kathi