

Public Works Consolidation Review Committee
Draft Committee Minutes
July 5, 2017

Committee Members Present: Elaine Sopchak, Chair, Michael Plageman, Vice Chair, Andrew Brown and Justin Rabidoux, South Burlington Public Works Director

Absent: Sue Cook

Others Present: Dennis Lutz, Town Public Works Director, Ricky Jones, Village Public Works Superintendent and Catherine Hammond, minute taker

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m.

Agenda Item 1: Public to be heard

No public present.

Agenda Item 2: Approve Minutes of June 21, 2017

Andrew Brown MOVED and Justin Rabidoux SECONDED that the minutes be approved. The MOTION passed 4-0.

Agenda Item 3: Discussion with Public Works Director and Village Public Works Superintendent

Ms. Sopchak wanted to talk with Mr. Lutz and Mr. Jones about two particular questions and about the binder that Mr. Lutz provided. Mr. Lutz wanted to clear up some misperceptions that the public may have. Currently there is no clear authority across community borders over people. There is no Town Public Works authority over the Village budget or spending in the Village; there is only peer review with no financial accountability. They do not coordinate on capital projects; these are separate items in the Village and Town. As part of the Integration Plan the Boards never made a formal commitment on needed resources to move forward. No action was taken by the Boards under item 2, page 4 of the Integration Plan. Ms. Sopchak asked if part of the purpose of this committee is to recommend that the Public Works management plan be moved forward. Mr. Lutz said no this committee will decide how to move forward. There were distractions that prevented moving forward. Ms. Sopchak asked if the distractions could be addressed, could they move forward. Mr. Lutz felt that they could, but might be difficult. For example, one purchasing policy will be needed for both the Village and Town; common policies are needed to work effectively. Mr. Rabidoux asked about separate auditors. Ms. Sopchak said that this would be the first year that they would have a joint audit.

Ms. Sopchak asked about the memo dated April 18, 2017 from Mr. Lutz under Tab 1, page 2: the framework of questions on the evaluation. She stated that there is a need to define the criteria -- has the consolidation been successful, partially successful, or unsuccessful? Ms. Sopchak asked Mr. Lutz and Mr. Jones what they would consider successful, partially successful, and unsuccessful, and would that vary based on the job or project. Mr. Lutz gave some examples of what he thought were successful. Ms. Sopchak felt the committee might need more examples; however, the list of documents in the first tab shows what Mr. Lutz feels are successful

accomplishments. Mr. Rabidoux stated that if there was full consolidation, the department would have more resources to better get projects done. Mr. Brown asked bringing operations into one building is a consideration. Mr. Rabidoux felt that there were three options, if the committee is to deliver only one work product: go back to the past, stay the same, or further advance the consolidation.

Mr. Rabidoux asked about stormwater projects. Mr. Lutz said that there are four projects planned and three will get them to a full flow restoration plan. Of all that they are doing the one fully integrated project from the very beginning has been the stormwater consolidation. Ms. Sopchak asked about paving. Mr. Lutz and Mr. Jones felt the process has been a success. The addition of a new staff member has allowed for more quality control.

Ms. Sopchak moved the conversation to infrastructure and stated that they need to clearly define infrastructure. Mr. Jones said that infrastructure is “pipes in the ground” and includes curbs, sidewalks, roads, etc. Ms. Sopchak asked whether the Town and Village had the same method to inventory pipes. Mr. Lutz explained that records are kept differently for both the Town and the Village. They are working on merging the two systems to make it more efficient for the person in the field. Mr. Rabidoux asked if continuing consolidation would require continued reliance on outside consultants, including Hamlin Engineers. Mr. Lutz said that they will still need design services; however, a long-term transition plan should be considered if this changes. Mr. Brown emphasized the history and expertise provided to the Village by Hamlin Engineers.

Agenda Item 4: Discuss survey of Public Works Staff

This agenda item was moved to the end of the agenda.

Agenda Item 5: Discussion of additional data and resource needs

Ms. Sopchak stated that she would like the next meeting to be about budgeting, the Integration Study, and cost reduction--items 1, 2, and 3 in the framework. She asked for the committee members to be given copies of the Town and Village Public Works budgets for FY 16, 17, and 18. Mr. Lutz provided the Integration Study, under tab 2; however, the most recent update is February 2016. Ms. Sopchak asked for an update to the Study, including what has been completed, what has been started, and what needs to be initiated. Mr. Lutz will review the report and provide any changes. Mr. Lutz felt that looking at budgets was not the best way to look at cost savings, and suggested it is better to look at reductions in the level of increase of costs.

The committee discussed some questions for Mr. Lutz and Mr. Jones that Mr. Rabidoux had emailed to Ms. Sopchak regarding what their employees do, who they report to, how many there are of each job classification. Mr. Lutz pointed out a flow chart in the binder that would answer that question. In the Village all Public Works employees are cross-trained; Town employees are not cross-trained but are more specific to the jobs they are doing. Mr. Rabidoux asked about asset management and what software they use for this purpose. Mr. Lutz indicated that the Town uses software for this but the Village does not. Mr. Rabidoux asked about work orders and how are they tracked. Ms. Sopchak asked for a brief memo from both Mr. Lutz and Mr. Jones on how work orders are tracked. Mr. Rabidoux asked about labor contracts. Ms. Sopchak asked him to send her his specific questions to share with the municipal manager. Mr. Plageman suggested

that looking at labor contracts is not germane now, but may be necessary down the road. Mr. Rabidoux felt reviewing contracts is necessary because the Boards might decide to align them. Mr. Lutz suggested Mr. Scheidel would be a good person to ask, since he was involved in the negotiations.

The committee then discussed the survey to be sent out to the Public Works staff. Each committee member received the survey questions and answers that were sent to the department heads on the evaluation of the unified manager. There were five questions; Ms. Sopchak felt that only the first four should be sent to the staff. Mr. Brown asked if the staff would have the time to do it and whether the format was appropriate. Ms. Sopchak said that she would rework the questions to a yes, no, N/A and comment format or even a scale and will send a revised version around to the committee. She will consider adding a question as to what staff would do to improve consolidation or if they felt that their job might be threatened by further consolidation.

Agenda Item 6: Next steps

The next meeting is scheduled for July 19 and will focus on items 1, 2, and 3 in Mr. Lutz's framework. Ms. Sopchak said she will ask Lauren Morrisseau, Mr. Lutz, or Mr. Jones for information regarding any specific costs. Mr. Brown will not be at the meeting. After that meeting it will be determined if Mr. Lutz and Mr. Jones will need to attend any future meetings.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:23 p.m.