

Town of Fairfield Selectboard Minutes

March 12, 2025- Special Meeting

In Attendance: Tom Howrigan, Gavin Ryan, Ron Bocash, Brian Dubie, David Persons

Roads: Maurice Jettie

Town Clerk: Absent

Town Administrator: Cathy Ainsworth

Secretary: Melissa Manson

Visitors: Tyler Billingsley, John Wilkins, Steve Stanley

1. John Wilkins and Steve Stanley, AOT District 8 came to meet with SB and Tyler Billingsley, of East Engineering
2. What support does District 8 offer? Paving grants, emergency support less than 36" culverts, Class 2 roads grants, and Structures grants. They administer grants, offer advice and help submitting hydrological studies.
3. Discussion re: Chester Arthur Bridge as our primary concern.
4. North Road culvert engineering to take place this year (similar culvert to the previous North Rd. Culvert replaced in 2023). Fairfield received a district 8 grant to engineer the location this year, anticipated construction in 2026, pending a VTRANS structures grant. Cathy shares concern whether there will be grant money for the construction phase by 2026. John and Steve say it puts us in a better position if the engineering is complete and the project is shovel-ready, but applicants who have not received grants recently tend to be prioritized. These grants max at \$200K
5. Tyler recommends timing the structures grant and Better Roads grant be received for the same year/ on the same project to maximize available funds. We are waiting to hear back about our Better Roads application for McKenzie Road. Brian asks why we are engineering the North Road culvert now- what is the process? Maurice identified the culvert, Cathy took pics and applied for the grant. The culvert is on the culvert inventory.
6. Brian says the state is replacing the Paradee Bridge, but it has very low utilization compared to Chester Arthur. Tyler says he thinks that the State's Town Bridges program won't be making bridge selections this year- these Selections are highly competitive and are made from the NRPC Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC)'s list of priorities. Steve says many large bridge projects are on hold and suggests the Town plan out further. Towns are also applying for bonds for bridge replacements. There is a VTRANS guide to Roads Grants called "Show Me the Money, that is sent to municipalities. Cathy has a copy and uses it as reference. Tyler suggests that Chester Arthur bridge is probably a 90-100 foot span but would be wider than the current bridge. It may cost \$4 million.
7. Gavin asks what would happen if a truck went through the bridge? No answers. Steve will try to get us contact info. Tyler will call Federal Highway to see if there are federal monies available. Unlikely in the current political situation. Steve explained how they interact with NRPC. Cathy explains that the Roads Erosion Inventory, that NRPC helps with (and will be updated this summer), validates the Town's compliance with Fairfield's Municipal Highway

These minutes exist in draft form until approved by the Selectboard.

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Permit- this compliance is a prerequisite for all roads grant applications. District 8 is responsible for this district's State roads maintenance and offer advice and support to towns. They don't fix anything. They don't do engineering. They do administer grants.

8. Discussion followed regarding how the state budgets for roads, the formulas they use to prioritize projects, and disadvantages of the process of using grant competitions, for relatively small amounts of appropriated money, to fund road construction projects. David says we need to maximize grant utilization. Tyler suggests not attempting to repair the bridge, instead of replacing it, because the wait would start over. Tyler suggests that worst situations should be considered for structures grants. We can use paving grants to do culverts smaller than 36" but that would limit the amount of money used for paving.