

**Farmington River Regional School District
Otis/Sandisfield
555 Main Road, Otis MA 01253
School Committee Meeting #404
Monday, August 16, 2021, 7:00PM
via ZOOM**

Members Present:

Community Participation: Lisa LaGrant was present to discuss the mask policy. Jennifer Heath-Thomas also was present to discuss the mask policy. Dana Pustinger is present in favor of wearing masks at school. Ned Wilson was present to support mask wearing at school. Chris Bouchard was present to discuss the paving project. He wanted to know if an engineer was hired to design the project and to oversee the project, or if someone with experience was overseeing the project. He feels it is a lot of money to spend to fix the drainage issue after the basecoat has been put down. Carol told all of them that their questions will be answered during the meeting, since their questions pertain to agenda items.

1. Vote to approve the unexpected addition to the paving project to include the installation of underdrainage needed to complete the project properly.

Eric Jesner touched back on the issue of the July meeting on the drainage problem during paving. The rest of the paving project has been completed. So, the School Committee must decide if they want the underdrain to be installed. The issue was discovered during the reclamation portion of the project when they were working on the reclamation on the back parking lot. So much water was seeping to the surface that they thought they hit a water main. The water did taper off after 36 hours or so. Jeff Gray, Head of Maintenance, said there is always an ice patch every winter in the same spot where the water was seeping out. He routinely throws salt/sand down there for safety for the past 11 years. It's always been there since he has been hired. The parking lot was originally installed when the school was built and there is a drainage ditch back behind the parking lot, but its just a ditch hoping to catch water. The

quote for the underdrain is for \$24,750. Eric has spoken with the point contractor at Ondrick Paving and he said it would not be a problem to fix with the paving already being down. Eric said there are three ways to pay for this project.

- Amend the FY22 budget. Cut the same amount of money from somewhere else in the budget to move into Capital Expenses.
- Move forward knowing we will have to balance later in the year and possibly use E&D for that.
- Use School Choice dollars. The unfortunate part with this avenue, is it may be questionable if it is a qualifying expense. Eric then quoted the language about using School Choice funds. "Allowable expenditures include any expenditures for staff materials, equipment, or services that directly enhance the quality of a district's educational programs and benefits students currently attend the district's schools.

Arlene Tolopko wanted to address Chris Bouchard's question from the Community participation about having a contractor or some engineer check this project out before we started without know about the underdrain. Eric stated that we did not check with an engineer about the underdrainage because we did not know what was causing the ice on the lot. Jess Drenga replied by saying we didn't know that the problem existed. Eric agreed with Jess about we found out during the reclamation. Arlene asked if we vote for the drainage project, which means the project gets done. If we vote against

it

how does it impact our future paving situation? Eric explained that he cannot answer that question. We can look at what was there for the past 20 years. The staff lot was one of the larger issues we had. He cannot say it was caused by ground water. The contractor feels like it would be a good idea because it would make sure that ground water would not get under the new pavement.

Carl Nett wanted to confirm this is the ditch project that we discussed a few meetings back. The answer was yes. At the meeting Eric took a couple of action items. One was to talk to the Town Highway Department to get

their opinions on the cost and how the project would work. Also, Carl mentioned Eric was supposed to check into the warranty and understand what the warranty on the project and how doing or not doing the project might affect the warranty. Eric replied that he reached out to the Otis Highway Supervisor, Derrick, and he has not had any experience with a project like this. Eric did not hear back from the Highway Department from Sandisfield. Eric did talk with Larry Gould, the Otis Building Inspector, who researched quite a bit for projects like this and the cost. The cost is in line with a project like this.

There is no warranty on the project. Eric researched warranties on municipal paving projects. So, Eric does not know if this is normal or not. The work needs to be done correctly by the time they are done with the project, but there is no ongoing warranty. Carl visited the site at the school and surveyed the land. The idea is that the right side of the school we are going to put a pipe in the ditch that will catch the water will catch the water and stopping the water from going under the paving. The problem with that idea, the grassy lane the land drops down about 15 feet. The water will pool 15 feet below this grass lane, so the water may be already under the ditch. This will not hurt anything, but Carl has serious concerns that this will break the water circuits that are leading the water coming up in the parking lot. To see if really is going to work you would need to do an engineering study. You would have to understand how much ledge you have. The water can be coming from anywhere. Carl thinks this is iffy whether this thing will have the desired effect. A bigger concern that we don't have a warranty. If we had a one-year warranty, which would get us through the first freeze frost cycle. We would know within one year if the ditch is working. Carl is encouraged to hear in the past the school has not had heaving. With all this said, Carl does not believe it is a good idea to spend this money without a warranty to backup the job.

Jennifer Hibbins would like to reduce the safety hazard in the parking lot. Jen feels we should try to properly complete this project. Try to avoid any Damage. Jen's concern is how we are going to pay for this. She doesn't feel we should pay for the paving from the School Choice funding. The payment should come out of Capital Improvements.

Jess Drenga asked if there is such a thing as a warranty on the drainage? Eric mentioned through his research he has not found any warranty information on municipal paving warranties. He has seen them for private paving driveway. Jess then asked if they wanted to put a French drain in? The answer is yes. The drainage system will be connected into the sewer system so the water has a way out. Jess asked Carl if this would be enough to drain the water out. Carl replied that the company will put a perforated pipe surrounded by stuff that stops dirt from getting in it. The idea is to catch the water and plumb that into the drainage system. The issue is if that pipe is not at the level or below the level that the water will be coming in at. The land drops way down when you get into the woods. Carl agrees with Jen as far as the safety of the ice buildup. That needs to be addressed. Was the ice forming because of an unlevel spot? This would mean the water was not draining that could lead to ice. The paving company did a great job with leveling the blacktop. Carl asked Eric if there could have been a low spot, therefore the ice would buildup. Eric did not think so, because during rainstorms puddles do not form there. When plowed, the ice is always there. Carl then addressed Jess about why he mentioned the warranty. The only reason he mentioned the warranty, during the last meeting the paving company stated that they would not warrant the work if they did not do the drainage. Carl assumed there was a warrant because of what was said by the paving company.

Carl stated to Eric that we should get into practice when we approve a project, we need to simultaneously need to decide where the funds will come from. One of the things that Carl has learned from talking to DESE, and DOR, if you approve a project without clearly specifying a line item and a budget that we are going to pay it with, that could constitute deficit spending those kicks in all kinds of rules and regulations that we don't want to deal with. Carl just thinks it is good practice when we approve a project, we need to simultaneously need to decide where we are going to pay for it. Eric understands Carl, but stated that the 3 sources of funds that Eric presented were discussed with he DESE as well.

Roger's concern about the project is roughly \$25,000 is a lot of money in

hopes that the drainage will work.

Carol asked Eric if he had or can he approach the paving company to ask if we can have a warranty for a year. Tell them the situation we are in and see what they say. Eric wanted to know if this is something Carol wants to know prior to voting. Eric only asked because will the vote be pushed down the road. He wanted everyone to understand that the paving company is already booking into the fall months.

Arlene wanted to know if Larry Gould had come to the school to check out the situation. Eric has been in many conversations with Larry over this but Larry did not visit while Eric was at the school.

Jess asked Chris Bouchard for his opinion. Chris stated that the company has been around for 40 years, with a blacktop plant for at least 10 years. Chris commented on where the undrain is going to flow into. Does it meet the storm water plan for when the building was built. Does it go into the Mass Highway Department's drainage system. You need permission to do this. Chris mentioned that he used to be the Otis Highway Department Superintendent for 10 years. He is now a director of Public Works. He puts out bids all the time. It is standard for a 1-year guarantee on work quality and materials. When setting up budgets, he always adds 10% for overages and underages needed throughout the year. He feels if a contractor recommends the drainage system and say they will not guarantee their work, that is not good municipal practice. Therefore an engineer should oversee a project like this. Carl wanted to clarify with Chris that this is not a drainage system that is not going under the blacktop. The grass area is set a little bit higher than the blacktop. The perforated pipe and drainage ditch into that grass walkway, it is not underneath the blacktop. Their idea is they are going to catch the water in this drainage ditch before it makes its way under the blacktop. The problem is there is a 15-foot below where they are putting the drainage system in. The water is already deeper than the ditch. Chris stated where the water is going is the major question. There are permits that are needed for projects like this. You are relying on the contractor to be honest with all the work.

Jennifer Hibbins would like more information on a warranty and thinks we

should wait and see what happens throughout the first winter. Carl stated if the blacktop heaves in the first year, then the blacktop needs to be repaired as well. Jess thinks we need more information about the company possibly having an engineer. Carol thought we may not want to use their company engineer. We should look elsewhere. Carl stated that we can bid out the drainage system later to other contractors and ask them to bid with a warranty for the work or present engineering results to make sure it works. Jess and Arlene agree with Carl. Jess motioned to put the drainage system aside until more information and possibly bidding out the work. Arlene seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous in favor of waiting for more information and a possible new bid for the drainage system.

2. **Revisit the mask policy.** Tom asked the School Committee to rescind the modified mask policy back to the original mask policy. This would mean all vaccinated staff or visitors need to wear a mask. Tom also wants to restrict who comes into the building again. If vendors come in, they need to be masked. Tom feels we should not have events or assemblies in the building until further notice. The cleaning process will be the same as last year. The custodial staff will disinfect the school at night. The morning health care check-ins that are required for the parents/guardians to fill out before school. Tom has enrolled the school into a program called Binext Now. This is a rapid 15-minute Covid test, if positive the student goes home, and the rest of the class and staff must get tested as well. It is considered a test and stay program. Last year we shut down the classroom if someone contracted COVID, this year through this program we test every student and staff member who is in the classroom with a positive tested student. The testing is for 5 consecutive days to ensure no one has picked up the virus. This requires parents to sign a permission slip. This test is different than pool testing. This is much more focused to individual classrooms. Lunch and recess are the only times students will intermingle. The students will have limited tables in the café according to classes. Jennifer Hibbins asked about the testing. She wanted to know if it is the nasal swab. Tom answered yes. Carl wanted to know if there is an exemption from the mask policy if the child has a doctor's note. Tom answered yes. Roger stated since the last meeting, the CDC has now recommended universal masking. Tom stated that the state told the

Superintendents there will not be remote learning. So, Tom will do what he must do to keep the school open. Arlene suggested for all students and staff wear a KN95 mask. This was just a suggestion. Arlene motioned to rescind the modified mask policy to the original mask policy. Deb Fogel seconded the motion. The vote was unanimously approved.

- 3. Adjournment.** Carl motioned to adjourn. Deb Fogel seconded the motion. The vote was unanimously approved to adjourn the meeting at 7:50p.m.

Respectively submitted:

Teresa DellaGiustina

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