

Starksboro ARPA Committee Meeting

Wednesday, December 14, 2022

Present: Jeff Keeney, Anne Sasso, Katie Kuzio, Pete Antos-Ketcham, Mike Shepard, Carrie Austgen, Laura Nugent, Rob Leotard (remote).

Discussion of Proposals

Regarding the minutes from the November meeting, the committee decided to hold off approval until all had the opportunity to read them.

Discussion regarding charge from Select Board, Rubric and other items.

Question whether a land survey between and septic for Meeting House exits. No one knew.

Meeting House Board Proposal - Starksboro Preschool/Church building – interior/bathroom/steeple restructure:

Discussion regarding the history of the Meeting house and how it's used by the town. The Cooperative preschool (5 Star Rated) is an important part of this proposal, as they are a longtime tenant. Town folks have completed repairs in the past to make the structure weather-tight. The deed lists it as a public building for all time.

Repairs and upgrades have been completed as funds came available over the years. These include: painting to encapsulate lead paint, new HVAC system in basement and window restoration. Questions on whether the National Historical Registry may have stipulations regarding windows. The building still needs significant amount of work. Engineering Adventures completed a structural assessment due to some structural concerns.

The proposal submitted and the estimate from Silver Maple Construction are from before Covid (we should estimate 30% increase since pandemic). The goal of the preschool is to grow and improve but the building is a limiting factor. This proposal would help to make it more functional for the preschool. As the preschool is a year round program, renovation logistics may be complicated by working around its activities. This group has applied for other grants as well. Preservation of the steeple is also deemed important.

Starksboro Community Pavilion:

The group has raised \$12,000 to date. There is an additional \$20,000 request for water and other improvements. The design includes consistency with existing surrounding structures and offers weather protection for users. This group continues to actively fundraise. Labor was not included in the proposal as it will be provided by volunteers where possible. Depending on funding, the group hopes to begin construction in the spring. The structure as designed is sufficient to support solar panels to offset power costs for local buildings. Additional costs would be associated with the addition of solar panels. Someone suggested adding extra funds to the budget to reimburse community members that donated

time to replace blades. Also, the idea to add standing seam roof to improve the later installation of solar panels was discussed.

Town Pavilion Solar:

The town municipal buildings currently generate 80-85% of their electricity needs from a town-owned solar panel array. This proposal from the Energy Committee seeks to install additional panels on the roof of the town pavilion (when completed). Panels on one half of the roof would be sufficient to produce the remaining 15-20% of the town's needs. Adding panels on the second side of the pavilion roof could provide electricity for the proposed heat pumps for the Library (see separate ARPA proposal). The EC solicited bids from five companies and received three. The Fire Marshal approval panel alignment and permits. Also, discussion of trenching approaches. ARPA committee asked EC to amend proposal to \$25,000 for half the roof and \$35,000 for the whole roof. Logistics for PUC process is still in research mode. This project will pay the town back over time.

Water Project:

The water coop is a nonprofit (501c3) that services a total of 55 households in the center of town, along with the municipal buildings and Robinson School. The area served runs from Hidden Acres in the south to Folk Rocker at the north edge of town. The coop charges a flat rate per hook-up.

This system is gravity fed and needs improvement. It is not in compliance with the state. And the state uncovers deficiencies on a yearly basis. The coop does not generate sufficient proceeds to cover the work required by the state.

While the water system has never gone dry, the state now wants the coop to quantify the water flow. They do not have the funds to complete the necessary studies. The study would require six months of monitoring work (three in summer and three in winter). Unless the coop receives funds for summer 2023 monitoring, the work would have to take place in 2024. The state also wants an inventory of every pipe, valve and address that is served.

A photo of the curb stops that were excavated demonstrated leaks in the system and significant erosion. As an example of the scale of repair costs, two curb stops were replaced recently at a cost of \$12,000. Since 80% of the water lines are along Rte 116, repair costs are elevated because they require state permits.

The coop received a grant for leak detection and used it to identify leaks and now needs funds to repair them. The coop is requesting funds to install monitoring equipment to detect future/additional leaks. Finding and repairing leaks would also reduce water that is lost to the surrounding soil, which would help to further address the reserve request by the state. The presenter does not know if additional customers can be added, certainly not without meeting state compliance. Currently no new houses can join, even if they are within the current coverage area. Chlorination is not required. The system is currently disinfected once a month. Testing is done regularly and systemically annually.

End meeting and seconded.