

Annual Budget Meeting Town of Washington, CT

May 19, 2011 at 7:30 p.m.

Moderator: Hank Martin

Clerk: Sheila Silvernail

First Selectman Mark Lyon opened the meeting with thank you to Bryan Memorial Town Hall Trustees for funding the installation of the new sound system and lighting. He requested nominations for Moderator. Hank Martin was duly nominated and seconded as Moderator with no other nominations.

Moderator:

Thank you very much. I'd like to just echo my thanks and appreciation for the great new sound system we have. Can you all hear me all right? I remember the last time we did this I had to talk a lot louder than I have to tonight so this is great and it's really appreciated. Sheila would you please come up and read the warning?

Warning:

Town of Washington, CT Annual Town Budget Meeting

The voters and electors of the Town of Washington are hereby warned that the Annual Town Budget Meeting will be held on Thursday, May 19, 2011 at 7:30 p.m. at Bryan Memorial Town Hall, Washington Depot, Connecticut to consider and act upon the following:

1. To consider and act upon the proposed General Fund Expenses and Transfers for the 2011-2012 fiscal year.
2. To consider and act upon the proposed Nonrecurring Capital Expenses for the 2011-2012 fiscal year.
3. To consider and act upon the transfer of funds to cover the overage in the Winter Maintenance budget line of the 2010-2011 Budget.
4. To nominate and elect two representatives to the Shepaug Regional School District Board of Education.
5. Discussion of STEAP Grant funds for an alternative pedestrian bridge in Hidden Valley.

Mark E. Lyon, James L. Brinton, Nicholas N. Solley - Board of Selectmen

Moderator:

Thank you Sheila. Ok, we have five items on the agenda tonight. Four of them are very typical to the ones we have all seen and been involved with in the past. It will involve a resolution or a motion, a second to the motion, discussion and then a vote.

The last item, Item #5, is different though. There's no vote, no decision. It's just general information discussion on the subject. There'll be no decision tonight, no vote, official vote on this matter tonight. And is always the case, please raise your hand when you get to the discussion stage and I will recognize you, get your questions answered and hear your comments. Please direct your questions to me and please state your name and street even if we know you so that Sheila will be able to keep accurate minutes for the transcript she's creating without having to look up each time. Any questions so far? All right, let's start with Item #1: To consider and act upon the proposed General Fund Expenses and Transfers for the 2011-2012 fiscal year. Michael are you going to be explaining or kick it off? Mark? Which? We usually like to explain the motions as we get into the discussion of them.

Michael Jackson:

It's your budget, do you want to do it?

Mark Lyon:

Gee, thanks. Item 1 Resolved:

To approve an amount not to exceed \$4,095,873 for expenditures from the 201-2012 General Fund Budget, which includes \$,040,873 for General Operating Expense and transfers of \$25,000 to the Open Space Fund, \$10,000 to the Housing Fund, and \$20,000 to the Legal Litigation Fund.

Moderator:

Ok, you read the resolution. Can I have a second to that.

Barbara Johnson:

Second.

Moderator:

Who said that? Oh, thank you.

Mark Lyon:

Barbara Johnson.

Moderator:

That's Barbara in the back. Ok, then. Questions? Comments? Anybody have anything? Yes, Peter?

Peter Tagley:

Can I do that from here?

Moderator:

You have two choices. We have the moving microphone and we also have the standing microphone up front. You might just want to come up to it.

Peter Tagley:

Am I to assume ... property taxes ... no property tax increase ...? Am I to assume that there'll be no property tax mill rating increase in the ... this year?

Moderator:

I think that usually the case is that the Board of Finance meets after this town meeting and determines the mill rate and therein will lie the answer to your question.

Peter Tagley:

Ok, but ...

Moderator:

If you want, if you want anymore than that, I'll ask Michael to come up.

Peter Tagley:

Well, the only ... based on what the proposal is before us, we can assume that the possibility exists that the mill rate will be held at the current rate it is.

Moderator:

Michael do you want to say a little more?

Peter Tagley:

Maybe you could explain how you do this.

Michael Jackson:

It's always a pleasure.

Audience: Laughter.

Michael Jackson:

The answer's essentially the same it has been for the last ten or fifteen years ... The budget as you know, the operating budget, is down ... versus last year. The Capital budget is down by couple hundred thousand dollars. the Region 12 budget is up in total overall 2.5%. Our share's a little less than that. So we'll consider those things and we'll come to some conclusion with regard to the mill rate and it probably won't be excessive. Does that help you?

Peter Tagley:
I'll go no further.

Michael Jackson:
Ok thank you.

Moderator:
So you got a little more out of him than ... up here. Valerie?

Valerie Friedman:
Valerie Friedman, West Morris Road. I have a question about how the \$20,000 to the Legal Litigation Fund was arrived at. Does that mean the entire Litigation Fund is only \$20,000 and is that presumed to handle the number of outstanding lawsuits?

Mark Lyon:
That is a number that has held up fairly well the last two budget years. It was exclusively for law suits filed against the town and it is a best guess as to our given fees in the next ...

Moderator:
I'm looking for hands. Yes? Valerie Anderson.

Valerie Anderson:
Valerie Anderson, Blackville Road. My question is kind of general. I noticed ... Morris is going way down passing it's budget because of state funds.

Audience: Talk into the mic.

Valerie Anderson:
Sorry, because it might be ... The Town of Morris is waiting to pass. they postponed their budget meeting because they're not sure how the state is going to contribute and the state funds about \$700,000 to the Town of Morris. They're different I know. I don't believe we get anywhere near that kind of funding, but how do look in terms of state funding and should we be waiting before we pass our budget? What are our built-in contingencies to offset any decrease in the state?

Moderator:
Everybody hear the question?

Mark Lyon:
We receive approximately \$500,000 a year in state funding in various different levels and grants. I've been in touch as recently as this afternoon with representatives of the

CT Conference of Municipalities and the CT Association of Small Towns. There is a signed a budget. The governor has signed a budget and in that current budget our state grants ... drops about roughly \$500 dollars. We felt it best not to budget an excessive amount of this budget against those grants. The only one, our education grant is a little over \$40,000 and we use that to directly offset our bill from the Region. That has remained flat in the current signed budget and we have included that. Our other big ticket items are \$160,000 plus a year in Town Aid Road Funds and a little over \$53,000 a year in local capital improvement project. We have not budgeted anything in this current budget against those. The ones, the funds that are mentioned that draw from that are from the current budget year which we had those funds guaranteed at this time. The Town Aid Road Fund, we have that money in the bank so to speak. The ... grant is held in our name in Hartford. So we haven't budgeted anything against those items in the current budget year or in the current ... We have a ... grant which is about \$35 ... which is about \$35,000 and that's left. The balance of that is left to the Board of Finance to consider when they're setting the mill rating and they're offsetting expenses and ... income.

Valerie Anderson:

Question, if I could follow-up? So how much is our exposure if for some reason the state cannot get concessions from the unions? Is there a back door? Can we ... from reserves? I just want to know what our contingency exposure is.

Mark Lyon:

Our biggest exposure ... current budget is the \$240,000 in this ... grant. We have a fund balance. We typically carry a fund balance of about a million and a half to two million dollars as well as we, I can't, nothing is guaranteed, but of the feedback we're getting ... is that municipal aid will one of the last things that will be attacked if they do have to go back into the budget.

Moderator:

Ok, I'm looking for hands. I don't see any. Are we ready to vote on Item #1? All right, let me read the motion again.

Resolved: To approve an amount not to exceed \$4,095,873 for expenditures from the 2011-2012 General fund Budget, which includes \$,040,873 for General Operating Expense and transfers of \$25,000 to the Open Space Fund, \$10,000 to the Housing Fund, and \$20,000 to the Legal Litigation Fund.

We have a motion that's been seconded. I see no more discussion so all in favor of this motion, Item #1, tonight, please say aye.

Audience: Aye, aye.

Moderator:

Any opposed? Any abstains? Ok, the motion carries. On to #2. Mark do you want to make the motion?

Mark Lyon:

Resolved: To approve an amount not to exceed \$1,141,000 for expenditures from the 2011-2012 Nonrecurring Capital Fund Budget, which will be offset by anticipated grants in the amount of 4203,500, resulting in a net expense of \$937,500.

Moderator:

All right a second ...?

Jack Boyer:
Second.

Mark Lyon:
Jack Boyer.

Moderator:

Do you want to make any introductory comments on that? He doesn't want to make any. Any questions on Item #2, the Nonrecurring Capital Fund Budget? Are we ready to vote on it?

Resolved:

To approve an amount not to exceed \$1,141,000 for expenditures from the 2011-2012 Nonrecurring Capital fund Budget, which will be offset by anticipated grants in the amount of \$203,500, resulting in a net expense of \$937,500.

We have a motion. It's been seconded and the discussion has been exhausted so all in favor of this motion please say aye.

Audience: Aye, aye.

Moderator:

Any opposed? Any abstentions? Motion carries.

Moderator:

Item #3 the Winter Maintenance Overage. Mark?

Mark Lyon:

Resolved: To appropriate funds not to exceed \$66,164 to cover additional 2010- 2011

Winter Maintenance Budget expenditures, \$15,000 to be expended from the Town Aid Road Fund and \$51,164 to be expended from the General Fund Balance.

Moderator:

Could I have a second on this one?

Valerie Anderson:

Second.

Mark Lyon:

Valerie Anderson.

Moderator:

Thank you. Anything you want to say? Any questions? I think we all know ... Are we ready to vote? Ok, the motion to be voted on is:

Resolved: To appropriate funds not to exceed \$66,164 to cover additional 2010-2011 Winter Maintenance Budget expenditures, \$15,000 to be expended from the Town Aid Road Fund and \$51,164 to be expended from the General Fund Balance.

We have a motion. It's been seconded and the discussion has been exhausted. All in favor please say aye.

Audience: Aye, aye.

Moderator:

Any opposed? Any abstentions? Motion carries.

Moderator:

Item #4. Our job tonight is to elect two representatives from Washington to the Shepaug Regional School District #12 Board of Ed. So, I would like to call open the time to make nominations. Any nominations? Jack.

Jack Boyer:

I'm sorry to report that Tony Bedini called and said that he's suffering from ... lung problems and can't be here tonight, but it is my distinct honor to nominate Tony to another term on the school board. Tony brings an exceptional expertise and dedication to the job of holding the physical condition of the district ... up to the standard ... by law. He's been tireless in identifying deferred or neglected ... conditions that affect the safety and health of both student and staff. The ... of properties will never have a better ... and I nominate him for a ... additional term.

Moderator:

Thank you Jack. Do I have a second for Tony Bedini? Lots of seconds. Let's ... John Millington.

John Millington:

Second.

Moderator:

Are there other nominations for this position? Yes, Jim.

Jim Kelly:

Good evening ... my name's Jim Kelly and it is my honor to nominate Michelle Gorra for reelection to the Board of Education. Michelle has served on the Board for seven years now and I think only three members on that board have more experience than her. In those seven years, she's been quite busy. She spent a year as the Treasurer; three years as the Communications Chair overseeing nine district newsletters which have been very helpful forms of communication, quite useful; six years as the Chair of Policy Committee; four years on the Facilities Committee; seven years as the liaison to the Primary School PTO. Michelle ... town and her husband Michael grew up here in town. She has two children that are in the system and ... Michelle also comes to us with a background in education. She is a Colby graduate and she has a Masters from St. Cortland in education, secondary education. She has three years of teaching experience before she came to Washington. She has served honorably and quite beautifully actually and I'm quite happy to be the one to nominate her for another term.

Moderator:

Thank you very much.

Valerie Anderson:

Second.

Moderator:

Valerie Anderson has seconded that nomination. Are there any other nominations? I see no hands raised so I declare the nominations to be closed. Valerie?

Valerie Anderson:

... vote by acclimation.

Audience: Second.

Moderator:

All in favor of voting by acclimation for both candidates all at the same time. Everybody ok with that? All right, sort of common sense, that's fine. All in favor of voting for Tony Bedini and Michelle Gorra for the two Board of Ed positions in Region 12 representing the Town of Washington please say aye.

Audience: Aye, aye.

Moderator:

Any opposed? It's by acclimation. Congratulations!

Moderator:

Tony's not here, but Michelle is. Michelle would you like to say anything to the group? We congratulate you ... chance if you'd like. You can come up here if you want.

Michelle Gorra:

I can stay here. Thank you very much for your vote of confidence.

Moderator:

Speak up a little more into the microphone.

Michelle Gorra:

I can do that. I don't have much to say. I just wanted everyone to know that as people saw that it was time to run again, you know people said, "Oh thank you, it's such a thankless job that you do." And I really don't see it that way. It's such a pleasure for me. It's very close and dear to me. I have a vested interest because my children are there, but it's also something that I think is one of the most important things that we do, educating our youth. So I would see that as time very well spent and don't see it as thankless because I get to see the products that we produce from Shepaug Region 12 Schools ... do a wonderful job and I glad to be there for another four years representing ... so thanks.

Moderator:

Michelle, we appreciate all your hard work and thank you for the future hard work you're about to put in. Any ... is appreciated. All right we're on #5 now which is the discussion regarding the alternative pedestrian bridge. Mark, did you want to make some introductory comments and then I know that Steep Rock would like to make a presentation as well.

Mark Lyon:

Two years ago after the first public hearing by the DOT to review their reconstruction

of the Rt. 47 bridge, it was requested by myself and those in attendance that a pedestrian crossing be included in the project. There was none in it at the time. So the DOT added that aspect to the bridge reconstruction project. Their final proposal was reviewed and it was asked of the DOT if there was a possibility of shifting funds to a more aesthetically pleasing structure which would compliment the scenic river valley.

After a meeting with the DOT personnel ... it was deemed that that was not possible to use direct transfer of DOT funds. Through the efforts of some of our local citizens, Governor Jody Rell did grant us a STEAP grant of \$150,000 to be used towards the application of an alternate foot bridge.

When preliminary planning had begun it was, it became apparent that that was not going to cover the expense of the alternate proposal so the Gould, so Steep Rock secured a grant from the Gould Foundation that would fund the balance of the project at no expense to Steep Rock or the town. So that brings us to where we are today so far as, because of, because the STEAP grant was awarded to the town it must be voted by the town to be transferred to the use of this project by Steep Rock. So that's, this discussion is review of that and that's where we're going to start at today. I'd like to ask Ed White, the president of Steep Rock, to make a few comments and then we'll have a presentation.

Ed White:

You may not remember me. I was the person that used to harass everyone as the Chairman of the Zoning Board of Appeals so I'm back. We saw this. We worked together and the state gave us the opportunity on the one hand to have a bridge that was attached to the highway bridge. We saw it as once we were approached as Steep Rock as some of the major users with the two parking lots on Rt. 47 with a potential, a grant that could fund an alternate bridge. We went on study to see and use this as an opportunity to see, "Ok, if there's an alternate bridge, what could we do with it? How could it be designed? How does it make sense? And so we went through some designs and ... that design which you see there was brought back to us by Alan Organschi ? of ? and Grey and ? and ?. So through our process we've literally looked at it and said, "We've got two bridges that the town has an opportunity to take advantage of." One on this side. One on the other side. What are the pros and cons of each? We thought that today as a result of those conversations there was enough information and enough positives to bring this forward to the town to take a look at it as an opportunity. And eventually as we go through this, we want Alan Organschi to go through both the state bridge, the alternate bridge. Ultimately it's the town's choice because we together, we use Steep Rock together. It's our town. This is just an ... so what we want to do tonight is present those two opportunities. Opportunity on the state bridge cost the town nothing, Steep Rock nothing, because it's state funded. The only thing on that bridge is maintenance and that would be covered by the town. The alternate bridge,

there's no cost to Steep Rock. There's no cost to the town. The maintenance would be on Steep Rock and that's the difference. Alan Organschi will go through both alternatives and we'll all ... talk about it and then vote eventually on it.

Alan Organschi:

I'm not sure exactly where to stand so if I'm in the way. We have some slides just to explain the Department of Transportation bridge and also the alternate bridge that has been developed with Steep Rock.

Audience: Could you move back?

Alan Organschi:

Yes, thank you.

Audience: Just use the podium.

Alan Organschi:

You all know the bridge that we're talking about. It's the Rt. 47 crossing of the Shepaug River just at it's confluence with Bee Brook. And this is the existing bridge which is a steel girder truss bridge. And the existing bridge is got two lanes with two very narrow shoulders as you know. There's a northbound lane which is twelve feet wide, a southbound lane which is eleven wide and a two-foot to the down ... sorry three-foot to the downstream side and a two-foot shoulder to the upstream side. And all these drawings are to scale so you can get a sense of height and ...

The proposed DOT bridge prior to the addition of the pedestrian bridge as requested by the town is a concrete bridge which has two twelve-foot travel lanes for vehicles, but adds a full four-foot wide shoulder to either side. And without the pedestrian bridge the guardrails are pretty typical ... to highway ... so here it is just an illustration of width with a car and you can also see that there are sort of steel extruded ... wrap around the entry to the current Steep Rock parking lot and which extend up to the north quite a ways. You can see illustrated the outline in red so you can see pretty clearly the standard guardrails which is pretty typical and you're familiar with it on most highways.

The addition of the pedestrian bridge is a two-foot deep hollow-core six-foot wide plank which has to be free of the adjacent bridge. And it's guardrails were originally chain link or hurricane fence that was five-feet tall on top of a nine-inch curb which would have meant two layers of almost six-foot tall railing. And at the request of Steep Rock and of the town, we looked at different alternatives and suggested to DOT that they investigate a less utilitarian, industrial appearance. So we asked them to remove the chain link and to change to a picket rail, steel picket rail. According to

DOT requirements that ... still had to be quite high. Go on to the next one. So obviously there were some visual concerns that were raised when Steep Rock saw that because I think that it was felt that the sort of view north of the river was one of the sort of signature elements of the trailhead. And not only was it a gateway to the town, it was also a gateway to Steep Rock's trail system.

I want to call your attention also to an added requirement by the DOT given their specifications. That in addition to the almost six-foot tall picket fence, double-layer picket fence, there's also a four-foot high chain link fence that wraps the former bridge abutments and travels about thirty-feet onto the, toward the parking lot on either direction protecting the people from falls into Steep Rock. I'm sorry, into the brook and also into that ... channel ... Shepaug.

Actually if you could go back ... currently in the Steep Rock, I'm sorry the DOT proposal there is no ... defined walkway from the northern parking lot to the bridge nor from the southern parking lot to the bridge. This is just sort of ... the maintenance ... responsibility of the town. And any improvements to make this actually a truly accessible bridge for someone that might not be able to walk, might be in a wheelchair. So with a combination of the concerns that the connection was between the north and south parking lot, but that the bridge didn't provide an access to the hidden valley trails and as well as sort of ... to the bridge itself from the side of the road, we investigated some, several alternatives.

This is just a quick illustration which is true to scale of what the bridge would look like without the pedestrian, the highway bridge would look like without the pedestrian bridge next to it. And then, if you add the pedestrian bridge in, you start to see the scale of these things. This is a view from a car and then view from standing and you can see the impact that it has. If you look right up here, you can see the top of the historic bridge where ... quite an open view to the site. So with that in mind, Steep Rock asked us to explore some versions of bridges and some feasibilities with respect to three defined ... issues. One, the most economically feasible way to cross the Shepaug River from the southern parking lot and north on the Hidden Valley trails. Secondly, to adhere very closely to the Department of Environmental Protection floodplain requirements which I'll go into in a minute. And lastly to have no impact, zero impacts on the inlands/wetlands that exist both in the stream channel, the river channel, but also adjacent to it so I'll run through that very quickly.

In order to do that we had to produce a survey. So we had ... the wetlands in preparation of the presentation to the Inlands/Wetlands Commission to the town and we also had a surveyor study the topography. So both ... That's the bridge. So, it may be a little hard for you to see, but this is the extent of the survey. This is the old DOT survey that was made and we produced a larger survey, certified topographic survey,

and wetlands survey of this area above the parking lot along the beginning of the trailheads, both trailheads. So this is the Bee Brook and the Shepaug River, heading upstream.

The first constraint that we really wanted to take care of was the DOT right-of-way. Any construction within that area that would be, have to go into ... negotiation with the DOT. The second was the 100-year floodplain elevation ... as you can see actually the existing highway bridge and the new highway bridge and all the abutments are actually in the 100-year floodplain. And so the DOT by right of an existing structure is allowed to build this new bridge within that floodplain which actually creates a bit of a constriction in a 100-year flood. So what we sought to do was have, for the alternate bridge, was to avoid the 100-year floodplain and ... any constriction at all.

And then the final concern was the wetlands. You can see that the wetlands soils exist along the riparian wetland of Bee Brook and along of course the stream channel. And this represents a measured survey of where ... exist. Additionally, many of you know as you head on the Hidden Valley trails to the north that long flat trail, there's sort of marshy section to the north of that with a little intermittent stream that we all hop over to get on those trails. So that created another kind of constraint of ... possibly land within, outside the floodplain not impinging on wetlands. So we find that after studying the stands that crossed here and the requirements for lifting a bridge abutment out of the floodplains which increased the length dramatically, we decided to take advantage of the very steep hillside here, the gently rising access along the lower trail to the south side of the stream. And to basically create a bridge that comes off at ... opportune moment within visual range of the parking lot along the trailhead, leaves that higher elevation, comes across staying clear of the stream channel and landing at an accessible slope of 1-12 on the other side ... along the trail.

Very quickly the design of the bridge – we've done several timber bridges and we have quite a bit of background in ... construction methods or for ecologically sensitive sites which I think we all consider Steep Rock ... sensitive in particularly adjacent to the wetlands. So I run quickly through it. This is the trail rising. At this point it gets pretty flat, but we're two feet above the flood elevation. The bridge rises there gently up and arches over the ... river and lands on the far side. Outside the wetland ... an abutment. There's a cable suspension tower that spans ... back stays ... other side of the trail, but outside the inland/wetland and are also tied into systems that accessed and constructed from the upper roadway.

This is an example of another bridge that we've done which is at the ... along a major conservancy in Madison, CT - a very steep bank. The bridge uses a sort of oblique angle to come off the roadways and to in this case create an accessible ramp down to the trail, but also to make the abutments smaller if you angle into it. You can also see

it's a very light stainless steel mesh railing which is fully compliant with building code, but it's much visually lighter so it doesn't create as much impact.

This is just a diagram of the section of the bridge. This is the timber decking which I'll talk about it's durability in one minute. Timber decking is very thin, very shallow, the profile stays well outside the 100-year floodplain. And the cable system is a simple suspension bridge which uses this 30-foot high tower currently steel. It might become timber, the tower itself. We're in the process of engineering that. And so the bridge basically ... up and over gently crosses onto, between both trails.

I'm just going to show you a couple of pictures as we go. So this is a view from the bridge taken from the lower railing, the highway bridge, you can see it along the way. This is essentially what you would see from above. These cables just give you sense of scale, their inch and three-quarter cables and the vertical cables above the deck are half-inch cables. This is sort of stone pier on which the bridge lands and provides a sort of shortcut and stair access off. This is the code-compliant railing which runs along the bridge edge. A birds-eye view. You can see the topography and you can just see the slenderness of that and the fact that the ... passage is unimpeded. This is a bridge from the approach just as you rise up from the parking lot so you can see the visual access. In all cases we removed some of the hemlocks for the sake of the drawing, but the bridge is woven and we have ... site survey and the bridge is woven between them and far enough away so that there's no impact or danger of falling trees. This is from the north side ... trees moved. The trail runs right along these inch-and-three-quarter stays that run down and then the marsh is to the left of this slide. This is just picture right as you enter onto the bridge.

So just a quick thing about the durability. One of the points that Ed White raised is that the town has responsibility for the pedestrian bridge maintenance in the D.O.T. scenario. And Steep Rock will be required to maintain this bridge if this is to be built. So one of the very foremost issues was durability, long-term durability and lower non-toxicity material was used. ... timber bridges are now the sort of state of the art bridges used by the National Park Service. There's been extensive durability studies and actually the issues that we have to pay closest attention to are the durability of steel. The timber is actually highly durable because it's pressure-treated with a nontoxic pressure treatment system and has a really great track record. So the maintenance issues for Steep Rock would be making sure that tree branches are cleared to keep things clear, regular checks of condition ... survey technique for all of their existing bridges and structures on the preserve, but it would be a routine visual inspection. The bridge is actually constructed so if there's any wear of any of the components that it's really demountable and these little pieces are easily replaced.

With that I think I should stop. I've gone on longer than I should have and I want to open it to questions. I may not be able to answer all your question, but there's several members of the Steep Rock board that are here. Thank you.

Moderator:

Thank you. I'm going to open this for questions in a minute, but let me just tell you here where we're headed here. I mentioned before there are no decisions to be made tonight, but if, I would like to get some informal, unofficial sense of the meeting – you are all free to change your minds later about what your reaction is to this alternative bridge opportunity – to give the Board of Selectmen some guidance on whether a town meeting, special town meeting should be scheduled in the next ten days or two weeks that would be a decision making meeting and where we would all have the opportunity to get involved with this in-depth and answer all kinds of detailed questions and whatnot. So the purpose of tonight is to sort of ... This has been presented to us as an opportunity. What do we think about it? And with that context let me turn it over for questions. John did you have your hand up?

John Millington:

Yes. Hi everybody I'm John Millington. My old man said to me about ninety years ago never look a gift horse in the mouth. And it seems to me this is a no brainer. We don't have to pay anything ... both the town and to Steep Rock. It's a gift. And it's certainly a better looking gift than what the state is proposing ... I know Governor Rell is interested in this because I talked to her about it. So we have ... very concerned. And ... representing the Gould Foundation and he's been diligent of this. I've known him for a lot of years. He's a man ... he was the one in great part who saved the Shepaug River and he's a friend .

Moderator:

Thank you. Did I see a hand over here? Yes, Peter? Hold onto a mic comes to you.

Peter Talbot:

Peter Talbot of Bell Hill Road. I'd like to thank as the ... of the Town of Washington, I'd like to thank Steep Rock, the Gould Foundation. I think they've put together a remarkable proposal here and something that will be a very special addition to the community and also to Steep Rock. Also ... in dealing with the Dept of Transportation you've come up with a much better looking rail, vertical rail ... than the original one that was proposed. I think it's giving access in a way that functions much better from one, even though you don't have a direct connection from one parking lot to the other by walking across the highway, you still do, but through the park introducing into the park. So I would that everyone supports it and votes for it.

Moderator:

Thank you. Other comments or responses? Valerie?

Valerie Anderson:

Thank you. Valerie Anderson. This is absolutely lovely. I support it completely. I only have one question about the new bridge for the cars. So if we do this, we won't see that monstrosity walkway at all?

Mark Lyon:

Correct.

Moderator:

Right, it would go. It would be gone.

Valerie Anderson:

Can you still though if you were stupid enough to do so, walk across that bridge as a pedestrian or must you always go on that?

Alan Organschi:

I think the D.O.T. was originally expecting that you would just walk across the bridge and that you'd use the shoulder although they ... and I think that one of the questions that came up is should you actually ... access to their pedestrian bridge is pretty ... so I think that a lot of people would just end of walking across along the four-foot shoulder of the highway bridge. So I think that's, if people are not interested in entering the park, my sense is that they will just walk along the road in an extra two-feet of clearance that they have now.

Moderator:

Other questions? Comments? Observations? Yes, hold on, sorry.

Female:

How do you use it?

Moderator:

It doesn't do any good if you made that comment and no one can hear you.

Female:

Oh yes it does.

Female:

I'm just wondering, you've got handicap access ... on this bridge?

Alan Organschi:

Yes, the bridge is accessible in the sense that it is below or at the 1-12 slope required by the ADA for a ramp. And it also has a five-foot circle radius that allows for a wheelchair to spin around unimpeded within the width of the bridge and extra. There's a stipulation within the American Disabilities Act that every twenty-four feet of run there's a landing and that is not included in the bridge in the current design, but none of the rest of the Steep Rock Preserves have that and it's a requirement for the structure. ... At this point, and this is obviously open for discussion, the thought was that since there are other rises and access to the bridge and other parts of the property that are wheelchair useable, but not meeting the stringent requirements of an interior piece of architecture or building that we forego the landing, but of course that would be something that could be included in the design ...

Moderator:

Thank you. Other hands? Jim?

Jim Kelly:

I too thank Steep Rock. I think it's an absolutely beautiful design and it's a tremendous amount of work. I think it would be lovely for the town. I do have some questions just trying to understand this. Obviously we're moving from a bridge that would be immediately adjacent to the highway on state land, but the town would have the responsibility for maintaining that pedestrian bridge after it's built. Is that ... understand?

Moderator:

The D.O.T. bridge you're talking about?

Jim Kelly: Yes,

Moderator:

Yes ... stipulation that the ... pedestrian bridge the town would have responsibility for maintenance.

Jim Kelly:

And the STEAP grant ...

Moderator: .. the D.O.T. bridge.

Jim Kelly:

Ok, and the STEAP grant that would be used to fund this bridge. Is it conditional on this bridge or does that grant become available to the town for other uses if this is not approved?

Moderator:

I believe it is conditional on this bridge and this bridge only. Am I correct?

Mark Lyon:

Correct.

Jim Kelly:

Another question. Out of curiosity, the height above the river of this bridge versus the D.O.T. bridge, are they about the same? You're talking 100-year floodline and it sounded as if you thought this would be safer?

Alan Organschi:

The DEP requirement for any work in the floodplain, crossing it, is that for new construction, bridge be above that 520 foot elevation which is the floodplain height at that point. The current D.O.T. bridge, that's under ..., the current DOT bridge and the new DOT bridge will actually be quite a bit below that. ... be grandfathered in, but it's a concern obviously, ecologically cause it does. The river could back up in ... 100-year flood.

Jim Kelly:

But this bridge is above that?

Alan Organschi:

It's well above that.

Jim Kelly:

In it's entirety?

Alan Organschi:

Yes, it's called a free board clearance to prevent from any damage from water or debris. So we're actually at the peak of the main channel and the main river flow, we're actually a couple feet above that ... so we're above.

Jim Kelly:

Ok, and ... contract ...

Moderator:

Jim, before you go on, Mark has additional information on required ...

Mark Lyon:

DOT required a special exemption from DEP to construct their highway bridge and

the pedestrian bridge within the 100 year floodplain elevation. That's one of the reasons the project wasn't done last year was because they were waiting on DEP ...

Jim Kelly:

Just two quick questions if I can. The only thing that occurred to me and ... not the heaviest thing, but the ... lose with that pedestrian bridge next to the highway is the access for joggers, bikers, walkers who are actually using the highway, but as I look at the, some of the photos that you showed, you had this double rail system in place and I wondered if it was true that the interior rails that exist there now had to stay with this plan. In other words, the ones that are there now would seem to sort of completely eliminate the only benefit I would see getting out of that. Can those interior rails, would they be removed in this new design so that access for bikers is better?

Alan Organschi:

The drawing that's shown right now is out, has been bid and contracted so the answer to questions you would have to go in a change order to change the access.

Jim Kelly:

The rails that I'm talking about are the ones that exist now. So that's not part of the construction, it's a question whether they could be moved ...

Mark Lyon:

This is the new guardrail system.

Jim Kelly:

Oh, it is? Ok.

Mark Lyon:

The guardrails are regulated by DOT standards and they have to wrap around like that. The fence along the embankment was required by state regulations or DOT regulations that whenever there's a walkway within so many feet of a ten-foot drop off, there has to be a fence.

Jim Kelly:

I'm really concerned ...

Mark Lyon:

That's the guardrail system required by DOT regulations.

Alan Organschi:

It's an important point that you raise because if this pedestrian bridge goes away, so does the four-foot high chain.

Jim Kelly:

Right, no, I understood that. And then thank you for patience, my only other question. I understand the town would be on the line to contribute the STEAP grant to this project, but who would sign the contract if there's an overage? Would that be the responsibility of Steep Rock?

Alan Organschi:

I think maybe Steep Rock should answer that. I believe it is the responsibility of Steep Rock?

Ed White:

And it's the responsibility of Steep Rock, but Steep Rock has an assurance from the Gould Foundation that any overage would be covered. So again, it's, we're looking at two options with no cost to Steep Rock and no cost to the town. On two other points, one on the handicap access, that was part of where we thought this alternative had opportunities there, but the first time it would be handicap access onto the north side. People could actually get to the north side. And the second byproduct that we looked at that we thought was very attractive was trying to get more people to park down in the south parking lot away from that north parking lot which cars come in at 50 mph. People are backing out there. Kids are all over the place. This is more controlled and it's site lines are very good from that south parking lot. So you suddenly have a more, a better transition to get in and out.

Moderator:

Other questions, comments, observations? Yes, in the far right side, my far left.

Mark Showalter:

Is there a ... Mark Showalter, Wheaton Road. Is there a weight rating on this bridge? What's the width? Is there a spec on that too?

Alan Organschi:

Your asking ... alternative bridge?

Mark Showalter:

Yes.

Alan Organschi:

There's a weight rating for, it meets all requirements for bicycle and pedestrian access and it's been modeled structurally to deal with vibration ... to the bridge. The actual ... I could get to you, but it's been heavily engineered. In fact, I should say that one of the reasons we're presenting this to you now is because Steep Rock felt it was extremely important to test all issues of feasibility, structural, ecological. We have

preliminary ... DEP just to make sure that ... so that in order to present it to the town commissions all those "I"s have been dotted and "T"s have been crossed.

Mark Showalter:

I can just see it holding a lot of people and you know, people being people, especially with kids.

Alan Organschi:

Every structural engineer that works on our projects knows that there are professional ... so the job of the architect, the engineer, and the civil engineers make sure that it will withstand the worst case scenario of an army marching across a bridge that ...

Moderator:

Any other comments or observations? Yes, over here.

Barbara Carey:

My name is Barbara Carey. I live in Washington. I know it's handicap accessible, but what do you do after you get off the bridge? Are they, what about all the other trails?

Alan Organschi:

There are pretty extensive lengths trails that you can have access to, at least I think the original idea was to try to open Steep Rock even if limited within the reason of ... yeah, the capabilities of people in a wheelchair. That would give the opportunity for people who are disabled to see the northern bank and that area. And there's an extent of run along there and so I think as a design professional, I think it's really that we provide accessibility to all disabled citizens ...

Barbara Carey:

But ...

Alan Organschi:

It does provide access another trail.

Barbara Carey:

Is the new bridge going to be a lot wider than the old bridge anyway without the pedestrian walkway?

Mark Lyon:

The new highway bridge?

Barbara Carey:

Yes. That seems to be more in connection with runners and bikers that really do long rides and don't want to deviate away from the main route.

Mark Lyon:

The new highway bridge has wider travel lanes and wider shoulders. It's overall ... considerably more than what exists. And the DOT pedestrian bridge was designed as a pedestrian crossing. It did not take into account a bicycle approach or runners either. I mean runners are pedestrians.

Barbara Carey:

Yes.

Mark Lyon:

Typically a runner that is up Bee Brook Road on the shoulder is not going to deviate around the guardrail nor walk up the north side of the river, across the river and back. Typically they will be staying on the shoulder of the road which is wider. When it was first presented to the town, my concern was the fact that there is a large amount of pedestrian traffic crossing the river. It would be much safer to have a pedestrian crossing even with a wider shoulder.

Moderator:

Any other comments? Linda in the back?

Linda McGarr:

Linda McGarr, Dark Entry Road. I was wondering about the material, the wood that is not toxic that is pressure treated ... ?

Alan Organschi:

What kind of wood. That's a great question. For years and years we used chromium and arsenic. We pumped them into our wood and built decks with them. Our kids played on them. Fortunately that is now a thing of the past. Pressure treating is done with a trace, low, super low toxicity, nontoxic preserving quality. ... but it's actually much safer than the CCA preservatives. The other issue which has been raised since we're on the topic of material ... is that, you know, we're shifting away from materials that have really big material impacts and toxicity. Concrete unfortunately is not a very ... to have because it slowly seeps into water systems. So actually the Preserved Bridge Act which ... National Park Services is a much safer as well as very, very durable and it's also renewable.

Linda McGarr:

What's the life expectancy of the wood and material?

Alan Organschi:

Tests have gone to 45 years. The expectation is 60. Each bridge component is completely visible so you can see all aspects of it and unlike concrete where reinforcing might be ... can't see it ... Each panel is removable and replaceable.

Moderator:

Ok, any other questions or comments tonight knowing that we would have a second bite of the apple when this gets to ... scheduled for a special town meeting. Ok, what I'd like to get a sense of is who likes what they see and would like to encourage the Board of Selectmen to pursue the opportunity that Steep Rock is offering to the town and the Gould Foundation is offering to the town, further, with the idea that could be ... a special town meeting where a final decision would be made on this one way or the other. Who would like? Who likes what they see who would like to encourage further pursuit of this?

Audience: [Hands shown.]

Moderator:

Ok, the reverse. Who doesn't like what they see and would just as soon have the matter dropped tonight.

Audience: [Hands shown.]

Moderator:

Ok, I see one hand raised on the second point of view. Thank you. Steep Rock and the Board of Selectmen have you gotten the feedback you were looking for?

Ed White:

Yes, thank you.

Moderator:

Ok, thank you very much for your

Audience: [Clapping.]

Moderator:

... for your cooperation which ... taken tonight. Thank you to Steep Rock and to the Gould Foundation for presenting this opportunity to the town. This meeting is adjourned.

.....

I, Sheila R. Silvernail, do hereby certify that the foregoing pages are true and accurate to the best of my ability of the Annual Budget Meeting of the Town of Washington held on May 19, 2011.

_____ Dated at Washington, CT this 25th day of May 2011

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