

BOARD OF SELECTMEN/SEWER COMMISSIONERS MEETING

Wednesday February 19, 2020 – 6:30 PM – Richmond Town Hall, 1529 State Road

PRESENT: Roger Manzolini, Chair; Alan Hanson, Selectman; Neal Pilson, Selectman; Danielle Fillio, Town Administrator

ABSENT:

GUEST: Peter Beckwith, Highway Superintendent; Terry Gardino, Dufour Bus Co.; Bridget Naventi, Resident; Bill Martin; Wendy Konowitch

Mr. Manzolini opened the meeting at 6:30 PM.

Bus Routes and Gravel Road Traffic: Danielle reported on her conversation with Peter Beckwith, Terry and Peter Dillon on the school bus routes and the possibility of creating specific bus stops along the routes already being served to avoid having the bus travel on gravel roads. Peter Dillon sent Danielle an email indicating his agreement, from a planning and policy perspective. However, the School Committee will have to vote on that proposal.

This meeting is meant to provide the Board the opportunity to have that discussion as well. Normally, the Town would not deal directly with the bus company; the school and the bus company make the arrangements for busing students. However, in response to a complaint from Bridget Naventi about a school bus being stuck, the Board wanted to make sure that communication remains appropriate between the school, the highway department and the bus company to ensure the safety of the students.

Terry Gardino, Dufour Bus. Co. advised that in mud season, West Road and Rossiter Road are shut down for the school busses. The bus stop for those roads then becomes Route 41 and West Street by the railroad overpass and Route 41 and Rossiter Road. This was done this January and has been done every year when mud season comes around. Dublin Road and the Lenox Road to Dublin section is another that gets shut down. Roger asked how the affected families are notified of that closing and Terry responded that the school makes that notification once it is advised by Dufour. Terry Gardino acknowledged that the school Principal has been advising her about road closings and re-openings. However, communication seems to have broken down on the day the bus got stuck when Peter Dillon failed to communicate information on a road closing to the bus company.

Peter Dillon advised that, given the situation that arose from his misunderstanding of the message he received, the bus company could create bus stops instead of house-to-house pickups and drop-offs. Terry Gardino felt that it should not be her job to notify the families of changes in the bus route.

Bridgit Naventi explained her position about having the roads plowed before the school bus arrives. Danielle explained that the system of plowing that Peter Beckwith uses is in the best interest of keeping those gravel roads in the best shape possible. Roger Manzolini explained that plowing cannot be done on gravel roads that have not yet frozen without inflicting extreme damage to the equipment and the roads. Given the weather changes that have occurred in the last few years that seem to indicate winters will be milder than normal, perhaps the solution is more frequent road closures and the creation of specific bus stops. Peter said that was the plan in place at this time.

Danielle clarified that the reason for the incident in question was a miscommunication which led to the lack of notification to the bus company that the roads would not be plowed until after the rain stopped. Had that communication take place, the incident would have been avoided.

Terry Gardino suggested that the families that live on gravel roads come out to Rte. 41 for pick-up and drop-off by the school bus. Bridgit Naventi refused that suggestion, given the dangerous traffic conditions on Rte. 41. Neal asked what other option exists if the gravel road is closed due to weather conditions other than driving the children individually. The final word was that the situation that arose was a result of poor communication and should not happen again. Peter was asked to move the plowing for the gravel roads that have bus routes on them to the top of his schedule.

Roger moved that the meeting be moved to Executive Session to discuss a strategy with respect to litigation re Hilltop Orchard and not to return to Open Session. The Board invited Bill Martin, DVA member and Danielle Fillio, Richmond Town Administrator to attend. Neal seconded the motion, which was passed by unanimous vote: Hanson, aye, Pilson, aye, Manzolini, aye.

Signed:

Roger Manzolini

Chair