

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

TO: Honorable Town Council Members

FROM: Karl F. Kilduff, Town Manager

DATE: April 5, 2023

Please find my report concerning various items of interest to the Town Council and community.

1. Council Business:

- Congressionally Directed Spending – As approved by the Town Council, a Congressionally Directed Spending request was submitted jointly to our two Senators for funding to purchase the hand-held radio equipment used by the Clinton Police Department. With the deadline past, submitted projects are being reviewed before submission to appropriation committees. As noted previously, the terms of each program determines the extent of eligibility, requirements and local match requirements. The intent is for projects to be “shovel ready” if funding is approved as part of the federal budget process.
- WPCC Hydraulic Load Testing – The WPCC is moving forward with hydraulic testing of the soils behind the Chips Plaza and Shore Appliance. These test pits area meant to support the design of a community sewer system that would eventually address parts of the downtown. Funding for the work was previously approved with first round of ARPA funding. All work will take place on private property by a contractor. Access agreements were previously approved by the Town Attorney. The available funding will also restore the disturbance to the parking lot pavement.

2. River COG:

The Council of Governments held a special meeting on March 29, 2023. Highlights of the meeting of relevance to Clinton included:

- Early Voting Report – The Regional Election Monitor reported on discussions around early voting. Small towns have raised a lot of concerns over how early voting will be implemented and the labor needed as poll workers are in short supply. It is also expected that the State will pay for the implementation costs associated with early voting.
- Sidewalk Funding – Approved was given for additional State funds to pay for a planned sidewalk on East Main Street. This project was previously approved but costs have grown over time due to inflation, right-of-way acquisition and DOT design requirements.
- Regional Waste Program Grant – All of the COG town endorsed a COG grant application to the DEEP for funding to support the steps needed to evaluate and structure a regional waste authority as a replacement to MIRA and respond to the current resources in the area (Essex Transfer Station). The structure could be a new entity or partnership with an existing entity. The grant would fund a study to evaluate those options and a possible path forward.

3. River Valley Transit

The transit district is officially launching its new brand in April. The service area will be expanded to cover 17 towns and member towns will grow from 9 to 12. A new website will be launched reflecting the new branding. Over time buses will be wrapped to reflect the new brand instead of “9 Town Transit” or “Middletown Area Transit”. Combined fares for the service area will also be launched in April as fare will be charged again.

A special legislative meeting was held on March 29 to brief area legislators and local town leaders to discuss district initiative and areas of legislative concern that could have a negative impact on transit services.

4. Miscellaneous:

- Union Contract Negotiation – The Town is now fully engaged in negotiations with most unions as we trade proposals. There will be more to come as we move forward to the end of the fiscal year. Ultimately, tentative agreements will have to come to the Council for approval.
- Manufacturers Meeting – The Clinton Manufactures Coalition held its most recent meeting at Town Hall to discuss their issues and interface better with the Town. We discussed a wide range of issues. Again, it was stated that assistance to manufacturers would be helpful to buy down the cost of offering internships to local high school or returning college students to get work experience.

As was noted during prior ARPA workshops, this need could be filled with already approved ARPA funding that was dedicated for small business assistance. I prepared application materials and grant agreements to support this funding request. The first application came in very quickly to line up intern assignments with returning local students. This is a good opportunity to support the workforce needs of local manufacturers and to introduce local student with careers in modern manufacturing which can keep them employed in the area.

- Regional Waste Authority – The CEOs from the region participated in a discussion about the viability of a regional waste authority to help manage municipal solid waste given the anticipated end of MIRA and the need for a solution given the lack of State policy. A number of issues need to be addressed to resolve operational issues and the structure of any such authority. Potential DEEP funding was also discussed as a way to study the issues to be resolved. The path forward is further complicated by pending legislation that would re-shape MIRA and give DEEP the responsibility for contracting and coordination in the State.
- GoNetspeed Fiber Internet Provider – Clinton is due to welcome a third provider for high speed internet. The Town already has Frontier and cable. Frontier installed their fiber network last year. GoNetspeed is another provider who will install fiber to parts of Clinton this year. Coverage will not be 100% in their initial build but could expand as demand grows. The installation will not include any pole attachments as was the case with Frontier. Additionally, they will not be excavating to underground any of their fiber network with this installation.

- Town Engineer – In prior reports, I noted that the Town had issued a Request for Proposals for consulting engineers that would serve as the Town Engineer. For many years, this service was provided by DTC. Following a review process, interviews and contract negotiations, we have come to terms with Clough Harbour & Associates (CHA). CHA will assume Town Engineer duties for new work effective April 1, 2023. DTC will continue to wrap up certain projects and others will transition to CHA.