

# MEETING NOTICE

There will be a meeting at the Randolph Town Hall on Tuesday, August 3<sup>rd</sup> at 7 PM to receive Public Input regarding the Reconstruction of Randolph Hill Road.

Reconstruction is to be done on the section of the road that is currently State highway. This is the paved section extending from US Route 2 to the intersection of High Acres Road. Approximately 1.7 miles.

The meeting will be conducted by the Engineering Team from HE Bergeron Engineers, Inc. who will be doing the design for the reconstruction.

## Possible solutions to the Randolph Hill Road Dilemma

By Ken Lee, Selectman

As the inhabitants of the approximately 110 residential properties served by Randolph Hill Road know, the road's condition leaves much to be desired. Our Life Squad has expressed concern regarding transporting patients over it in ambulances. The condition worsens each year with freezing weather bringing frost heaves, dips and speed bumps at culverts, springs flowing from cracks in the pavement, and poor drainage causing glaciers to form where water runs across the surface and freezes – untouchable by road salt in the low temperatures that sometimes persist indefinitely.

What may not be commonly known is that the first 1.7 miles of Randolph Hill Road [the paved section] is a State of New Hampshire Road, actually it is considered a “summer” road. It is probably the only road, so classified, that does not lead to a state or federal recreation area or State Park. The summer road status means that the town is responsible for plowing the road in the winter, but the maintenance of the road surface, brushing, and drainage are the responsibility of the State Department of Transportation. Unfortunately, there are many roads like this in New Hampshire. We have been told there are 409 miles of them with little money allocated for their maintenance.

Members of the Randolph Board of Selectmen attended two hearings on the 2011-2020 Ten Year Transportation Improvement Plan and stated their concern about the condition of Randolph Hill Road. Our local Governor's Councilor, Raymond Burton, chaired the sessions and offered advice on how to bring Randolph Hill Road to the attention of our newly appointed District Engineer who, Ray pointed out, might have some additional funding available starting in the next fiscal year if the plan was passed as written. The board solicited positive votes on the plan from our State Senator and State Representatives and was joined by the Life Squad, Police Department, Fire Department, School Bus Driver, and Road Agent in making the condition of Randolph Hill Road known to our new District Engineer. It worked.

On November 9<sup>th</sup>, the Selectmen were joined at their regularly scheduled meeting by Dave Rodrigue, the District One Engineer, and Jim Marshall, from the DOT Bureau of Planning and Community Assistance. Three alternatives were proposed.

The first possibility is to do nothing. The road would continue to receive minimal maintenance, possibly slightly more than it has been receiving. But with 407 miles of similar road competing for funds we would probably end up in much the same situation as we are currently in – a bad road with very limited state funds available to fix it.

The second possibility is to have the DOT do some work to improve the road entirely at their expense over a period of years, a total of 200 -300 thousand dollars worth, but with the caveat that when the work is done, the road be reclassified as a town road. This would seem to be a good path, but leaves us with a road that will still have significant problems as it would cost more than that to just pave the road and the town will have the full future maintenance responsibility

The third possibility is to participate in the State Aid Highway Program. Under this program the cost of rehabilitation would be shared with the state, the town paying 1/3 of the engineering and construction costs. The town would hire engineers to provide possible plans for the road rehabilitation with associated cost estimates. The engineering evaluation and the final level of rehabilitation selected would determine the actual cost, but one guideline we have is \$700,000 per mile, or 1.2 million for the entire road. The earliest construction funding would likely be available is for summer of 2013. This approach offers the possibility of doing a true reconstruction to correct drainage problems, frost heaves, and insufficient gravel base and under pavement drainage. Engineering costs must be initially borne entirely by the town, but are reimbursed at 2/3 of total when the project is started. The only drawback is that if the town doesn't appropriate the funds to do the construction [or should the State not fund this program] there would be no reimbursement for the design cost and no improvement to the road. Caveats for the town to assume ownership and future maintenance of the road apply to this option also. Borrowing would be required to pursue this approach. Borrowing \$350,000 for 20 years would raise the tax rate by \$0.52 per thousand the first year, declining to \$0.27 in the last year, based on current interest rates and valuation of the town. Although expensive, this approach allows creating a road that would need only routine maintenance for 40 - 50 or more years and gets the most contribution from the State toward the long term costs.

*Continued next page .....*

Continued from previous page ....

The Selectmen strongly support the third option. It is clear that the State wants to pass this road off to the Town. At this point we have the option of having it returned to good condition using 67% State funds. This opportunity would not exist if we procrastinate and have them summarily turn the road over to the Town. It is the only way to assure we end up with a road that will serve us long into the future.

The Selectmen expect to place a warrant article on the March Town Meeting Warrant asking the voters to approve bonding of this project. This would only approve obtaining a bond or loan. The actual loan would not be obtained until construction was scheduled.

Opinions supporting, or not supporting, the Selectmen's course of action would be appreciated so selectmen are able to make the proper proposals at Town Meeting, on March 9<sup>th</sup>. There is no sense spending town money on engineering if there is not a commitment to approve a bond issue to fund the work. E-mail to [RHR@randolph.nh.gov](mailto:RHR@randolph.nh.gov) or postal mail to 130 Durand Road, are preferred as they are easier to tally, but telephone calls to any of the Selectmen or to the Town office will be gladly accepted.

### Randolph Hill Road Traffic Evaluation

Residential Properties \*

	<u>Total</u>	<u>Seasonal</u>	<u>Year Round</u>
Randolph Hill Road	69	38	31
High Acres Road	10	6	4
Glover Spring Road	3	2	1
Pasture Path	7	6	1
Boothman Lane	8	3	5
Puggy Huddle Road	2	1	1
Woodspring Road	6	1	5
Nekal Lane	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>2</u>
<b>Total Served by Randolph Hill Road **</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>50</b>

\* Some Properties have more than one Residential Structure

\*\* Planning Board Regulations assume 10 trips per day per Residence

Seasonal and Year Round Numbers are Estimates

## Sex Among the Elm Trees

Now that Randolph has a fair number of disease-resistant Liberty elms, and very few of the older non-disease-resistant traditional elms remain, what can we expect about the offspring of the new trees? Will they show the same resistance as their parents?

The answer from the chief technician at the Elm Research Institute in Keene (where we got our Liberty elms 10-15 years) ago is as follows:

Since it takes two elms to make a baby, it all depends who the parents are. If a Liberty elm is fertilized by a traditional elm, the prognosis is not good. But if both parents are Liberty elms, the chances are good that their offspring will have as much disease-resistance as their parents. Since there are so few traditional elms left, the chances of a Liberty elm being fertilized by another Liberty are high. Elm "sperm" can travel a long way, as much as a mile or more. So we have to live with uncertainty; but at least the odds are strongly in our favor...

Jim Baldwin, chair, Elm Tree Project.

## **July 2010 Update on Randolph Hill Road**

During May and June the Selectmen conducted the QBS (Qualifications Based Selection) Process dictated by the State for all projects which they fund. This process requires that prospective engineering consultants be selected purely on the merit of their qualifications to perform the anticipated work which the Selectmen presented in broad outline as:

- Maintaining the rural character of the roadway. Minimizing tree loss. Retaining existing stone walls. Minimizing the width of disturbed area.
- Recognition of snow removal challenges. (Over 5 feet of snow fell in one storm during February of 2010).
- Preliminary examination of possible alternatives to standard asphalt pavements with emphasis on life cycle cost reduction and snow removal.
- Right of way analysis and identification of areas where ROW problems exist or ROW acquisitions are likely.
- Conduct periodic meetings with townspeople to discuss possible alternatives and receive public input.
- Conduct regular meetings to discuss project decisions with Selectmen. Do not disappear and reappear with a finished design.
- Providing emergency vehicle, resident, and service vehicle access during construction.

Qualifications are to be evaluated without regard to the specific details of the project, or discussion of the fees the firms would charge.

Three firms submitted qualifications statements to the Selectmen who subsequently conducted walking tours/inspections of Randolph Hill Road with each of them. On June 15<sup>th</sup>, each of the three firms made presentations and participated in question and answer sessions with the Selectmen. Each firm was allocated one hour. At the conclusion of the presentations, the Selectmen chose HE Bergeron Engineering (HEB) of North Conway as the first firm with whom a scope of work and fee structure would be negotiated. Under the QBS process if we should fail to reach agreement with HEB we would start the scope of work and fee negotiation with the second ranked firm, Horizons Engineering of Littleton.

We do not yet have a contract with HEB, we are waiting for DOT approval of the proposed contract. The availability of State funds had to be verified before the contract could be finalized and submitted for approval..

Based on a meeting with DOT in September, 2009 and the construction estimate based on information presented at that meeting, the Selectmen presented and Town Meeting approved the following article:

3. Raise and appropriate \$1,500,000 for planning and constructing, right of way acquisition (if necessary) and other expenses associated with the rebuilding and resurfacing of Randolph Hill Road. And to authorize the issuance of **not more than \$500,000** of bonds or notes in accordance with the provisions of the Municipal Finance Act (RSA Chapter 33) as the Town's one third share of the total project cost and to authorize the Selectmen to issue and negotiate such bonds or notes and to determine the rate of interest thereon. \$1,000,000 to come from the New Hampshire State Highway Aid Program as provided for in RSA 235.

The Selectmen signed an application for State Aid Highway (SAH) funds for an anticipated \$1.5 Million total project cost that night and sent it to DOT the next morning, March 12th.

On Wednesday, July 21<sup>st</sup>, Ken Lee and Ted Wier accompanied Ed Bergeron and Jay Poulin from HE Bergeron Engineering to meet with DOT officials in Concord. We were presented with a letter confirming acceptance of our application. Since the total amount of our request was in excess of the \$1 million limit for the program, the funding will be broken down with half available in FY2012 and half in FY2013. (Note that NH State FY2012 begins in July 2011, etc)

The SAH funds are paid in two portions. Of the 2/3 project cost the State Reimburses, one half (i.e., 1/3 of the project cost) is paid when the construction contract is signed, or at the start of the FY of funding, whichever is later, with the balance paid when the project is complete, the contractor paid, final inspections made, and the Town accepts the road from the state. In order to be able to fulfill the requirement to take the road over from the state, the voters were asked to, and did, approve the following article:

6. Upon the completion of the reconstruction of Randolph Hill Road, authorize the Selectmen to accept the road from Route 2 to the intersection with High Acres Road as a class V Town road. This article to be non-lapsing..

Since the town must pay the contractor in full before receiving reimbursement, the voters were asked to, and did, approve the following article:

4. Raise and appropriate \$500,000 for the purpose of temporarily funding the portion of the cost of rebuilding and resurfacing Randolph Hill Road which will be reimbursed by the State under the New Hampshire State Highway Aid Program at the completion of the construction. [One third of the contract amount is paid when the contract for construction is awarded. The town must be able to temporarily pay for the remaining one third.] And to authorize the issuance of **not more than \$500,000** of bonds or notes in accordance with the provisions of the Municipal Finance Act (RSA Chapter 33) and to authorize the Selectmen to issue and negotiate such bonds or notes and to determine the rate of interest thereon. And to further authorize any funds received from the State in regard to this project to be used to pay the principal and/or interest of this bond or note.

No borrowing on either article 3 or 4 is expected until an approximate construction date is known. The Selectmen have been trying to advance the project as quickly as possible with the goal of starting construction in the Spring or Early Summer of 2011. Due to the delays to date, that goal is becoming less achievable, but has not been abandoned. To that end we have arranged to have Jay Poulin, Project Engineer, Ed Bergeron, President, and Doug Burnell, Chief Surveyor, of HEB meet with the residents of Randolph to listen to their concerns and ideas regarding the reconstruction of Randolph Hill Road.

Please note that all amounts are only estimates at this point. There is no way to know with any precision what the anticipated project cost is until the engineering details are developed and refined. Of course, the final verification of the cost of construction is the bidding process.