

# **FEMA ALTERNATE PROJECTS**

## **UPDATE #5**

### **June 2016 to December 2016**

This is the fifth update in a series intended to keep the Granville Selectboard, residents and taxpayers informed as to the progress being made to complete our six Alternate Projects by the due date of 12/31/16 and stay within the FEMA-approved budget of \$667,872. Updates #1-4 covering events from December 2013 to June 2016 are available at the Town Clerk's Office and on the town website.

#### **June 2016**

On June 24, Granville's Scope Change Request for the Butz Road Improvement project was delivered to FEMA by VT Emergency Management. The Scope Change is our request to reduce the amount of work from what was originally planned in order to stay within budget. The three major changes are:

1) keep Butz road, for the most part, at its current width rather than widening it along its entire length to 20 feet; 2) abandoning the wider roadway reduces the need to cut and clear trees from 6.0 acres to 2.8 acres; 3) the large culvert replacement near the Landis driveway was dropped from the project. It was our expectation at this time that FEMA's approval would be granted by mid-summer and that the project would be completed by fall 2016.

#### **July 2016**

Due to the concerns expressed by some about the number of trees to be cleared for this project, I held a Tree Warden Hearing on July 23 to examine the issue. Four Butz Road landowners were present to provide testimony, and written comments were received from three other landowners as well as the Granville Selectboard. As Tree Warden, I presented my inventory of all the large trees (12" diameter or greater) within 10 feet of the road which were slated to be cut. I found that 55% of those trees were either diseased, dying or standing dead. My opinion is they are a safety hazard. The general opinion from the hearing was to proceed with the project but save trees where it was possible to do so. My final decision reflected those sentiments. The minutes from the hearing, and my decision, can be found on the town website.

#### **August 2016**

On August 5, Butz Road landowner William Wright wrote to U.S. Senator Patrick Leahy asking him to contact FEMA and stop this project. Mr. Wright claimed the town was using FEMA funds improperly and wastefully, and he claimed the town had violated environmental laws, historic preservation laws, and the President's Executive Order on Wetlands Preservation. Mr. Wright spoke directly with FEMA's Region 1 staff in Boston, MA and provided a copy of his letter. No details or specifics supporting the claimed violations are included in the letter.

#### **September 2016**

On September 1, the Town of Granville submitted an application to the VT Agency of Natural Resources for a Wetland General Permit for the Butz Road Project. The application was quickly approved and a Wetland General Permit authorization to go ahead with the project was received September 22.

Jamie Duggan, VT Historic Preservation Office, called to inform me that, after examination by both the state and FEMA, Mr. Wright's claim that his stone wall was a historic property was found lacking in significance. He said both the state and FEMA had cleared our Scope Change request in regards to Historic Preservation.

It should be noted here that in August 2014, a team of FEMA environmental specialists visited Butz Road and cleared the original, larger, project of all environmental concerns at that time. Since the Scope Change is a smaller version of the original, our expectation was for a quick review and approval by FEMA. One new consideration has arisen since the original clearance. A recent listing of the Northern long-eared bat as a federal Threatened & Endangered species required examination. VT Fish & Wildlife cleared the Butz Project on September 6 based on their records which show no known maternal colonies or hibernacula in Granville. The project was subsequently cleared by U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service on October 3, after the required 30 day comment period expired.

#### **October 2016**

On October 11, the Granville Selectboard signed a contract with G&N Excavation for the Butz Road Improvement project. The contract term extends to September 30, 2017.

#### **November 2016**

The Town of Granville has received absolutely no word from FEMA regarding approval of the Butz Road Scope Change request which has been in their hands since June 24. Neither has FEMA contacted us for additional information needed or

with further questions to be answered. Our contractor, G&N Excavation, has waited patiently for any word which would permit them to start construction. Landowners along the road who were expecting construction to start this past summer have probably wondered what is going on. At this late date, with snow on the ground, it is safe to say we can only hope to start the project in 2017.

*We can only hope* - because the town is now in the very awkward position of waiting for approval while our due date for completion of Butz Road runs out on December 31, 2016. Not only do we need approval, we need an extension of time. On November 17, the Granville Selectboard approved and mailed a Time Extension Request to FEMA to extend the due date to September 30, 2017. In the meantime, we wait.

**Financial Summary to Date**

<u>Projects Completed</u>	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Final Cost</u>
Buffalo Farm Barriers	\$20,338	\$27,513
Fire & Rescue Vehicles	\$140,000	\$109,308
West Hill Rd. Improvements	\$21,000	\$28,350
West Hill Extension Improvements	\$99,421	\$157,973
Recreational Trails	\$12,240	\$9,573
<u>Project Underway</u>		
Butz Road Improvements	\$350,540	\$311,761 (Est.)
	=====	=====
Total All Six Alternate Projects	\$667,872*	\$644,478**

\* In the FEMA-approved budget, \$24,333 was not assigned to a particular project.

\*\* Unspent budget balance of \$23,394 may be used on education and mitigation activities.

Any questions regarding this update may be directed to me.

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