

Next steps for Oscaleta Road culvert detailed

NEAL RENTZ



The recently installed temporary culvert between lakes Oscaleta and Waccabuc. THANE GRAUEL PHOTO

By NEAL RENTZ

The town held an information session March 26 on the long-term replacement for the Oscaleta Road culvert.

Almost two weeks earlier, on March 15, the culvert had collapsed unexpectedly, closing the road to traffic and pedestrians and leaving several neighborhoods with limited access. The road was reopened 10 days later after emergency repairs.

The long-term replacement already was in the works, and the recent information session had been planned for some time. Leading the session in the town courthouse were Mark Lukasik, vice president of the engineering firm Tectonic, and Robert Ciralli, its senior engineer.

Lukasik explained the purpose of the meeting.

“It’s not often that the community gets to come out and hear firsthand about a public improvement project,” he said.

The culvert replacement will use a \$1.4 million BRIDGE NY program grant, Lukasik said. The program follows New York State Department of Transportation procedures and standards, he noted, adding public engagement and involvement is required.

“The purpose here is to give you an opportunity to see a little bit behind the curtain of how this process works, what the different elements of this project are, what we’re considering, and most importantly, to get feedback from you,” Lukasik said.

Ciralli said the Oscaleta Road culvert is the channel between Lake Oscaleta and Lake Waccabuc. The channel was constructed with a wooden bridge in 1877, and the culvert to support vehicular traffic was constructed in 1966.

The cleanup of the debris from the culvert collapse took place and was followed by stabilizing a channel with stone “to get the flow back and forth between the lakes,” Ciralli said.

The next step was a request from town Highway Superintendent John Winter to the state to install the temporary culvert, Lukasik said.

Dealing with the emergency culvert collapse was not eligible for BRIDGE NY funding, Lukasik said. The town and the state are

working to quicken the pace of the regulatory review process to replace the span, he said.

The culvert replacement project will include roadway improvements, and it will need to meet excavation requirements and site constraints while protecting the lakes, Ciralli said.

It will include roadway improvements, new pavement in the area, new guiderails, a new bridge rail, and additional side slopes for better drainage, Ciralli said.

“We’re going to have to dig about 20 feet down to really get to the bottom,” Ciralli said. “Getting slope back to grade is going to be a challenge.”

The subsurface soil condition investigation indicated it could accommodate a four-sided box culvert, Ciralli said.

“It requires weight walls to support the roadway,” he said.

A four-sided culvert reduces pressure on the soil underneath compared to the upside down U-shaped three-sided box culvert, Lukasik said. The proposed culvert would be 16 feet wide and 8 feet deep, he noted.

“It’s more like you’re laying your hand on the table, putting all your weight there, distributing it over the base of your hand. It’s more efficient from that perspective,” he said. “That’s the only feasible way of doing this.”

“It needs to perform, not only for today but it needs to perform for what statistically may occur in the future,” Lukasik said of the new culvert.

Before construction can begin, the project will need approvals from agencies including the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, the New York City Department of Environmental Protection, and the state DOT, Lukasik said,

The town is seeking preliminary design approval this summer and hopes to receive government agency permits and contract approvals by fall and winter, Lukasik said. Construction could begin in the summer 2027.