

STONE BRIDGE MEETING

14th February 2015

The first meeting of concerned citizens regarding the future of the Stone Bridge met on February 14th, 2015 at 2:00 p.m.

The meeting was organized by Bill Brunet, former Hermon resident, and was co-chaired with Mayor Cathy Race and David Blevins, also a former Hermon resident. There were 28 others who attended.

(These minutes although lengthy are being done in court room fashion for accuracy as to what was said)

Bill Brunet: My family lived on a farm on the Trout Lake Road. We came to the village. Bill and Lucille Baxter ended up buying the farm and then ended up buying the house my Dad and Mother bought in Hermon; and, my Dad and I built the last stick house built in Hermon on Washington Street, the green sided ranch house. Anyway, that's where I grew up.

I've crossed this bridge I don't know how many thousands of times going to school and back. I want to give a little bit of research and this is really just a brainstorming session; nobody has any great, bright ideas, or remedies at this moment. I think that's probably what you guys are going to have to come up with eventually because it doesn't look like the government is going to be of any help by any means. I've got some thoughts and Dave certainly will have some thoughts, and he knows what he's talking about certainly from the engineering standpoint and structure of the bridge, etc.

There are probably five or six things in this village you may not be aware of that a man by the name of Mr. McBrier did for the community in the 1800s, and probably the one you could thank the most would be F. W. Woolworth. F. W. Woolworth was born in Rodman, N.Y., just south of Watertown, probably a community not much larger than this or maybe even smaller. He was the founder of the F. W. Woolworth Company. At its peak, it had over 4,000 stores internationally, and, as I got to reading some of the materials I had wondering how Mr. McBrier fit into all this; he happened to be a first cousin of F. W. Woolworth, whose mother was a McBrier. Then I got to wondering about Knox Memorial School. As you get into the reading, there were several gentlemen in the area at that time that got in on the ground floor with F. W. Woolworth Company, and made their fortunes. It happens that Mr. McBrier was definitely on the ground floor. It's my understanding he built the bridge down here which is an arched bridge. He then attacked the cemetery, built a mausoleum in the cemetery, left a fairly large trust fund toward maintenance over the years.

Then I believe, although not sure of the order, bought the Hotel Hermon at that time. I believe he handed it over to the Chamber of Commerce as it went on down through the history, but I think he probably bought that with the idea that would be another means of keeping the cemetery and maybe

some of these other projects he did afloat and maintained. Let me see: the bridge, the hotel, there are six things...

Lenore Zaubere (Town Historian): Do you know about the lighting?

Bill Brunet: The lighting...I do not. That's another thing.

Lenore Zaubere: He was... I don't mean to interrupt you.

Bill Brunet: Oh no, I want you to. In fact, I don't want to take anybody's thunder. I'm only giving out what I know and we'll go from there.

Lenore Zaubere: He was responsible for helping to pave the streets in the village, and also since there was no lighting he came back after he retired and financed all the electric lights and the building of pretty posts, especially on the bridge. You said you remembered those lights.

Bill Brunet: I do

Lenore Zaubere: He paid for that.

Bill Brunet: He also did the gazebo, I believe, next to the bank.

Unknown speaker: And the springs.

Bill Brunet: Yes, the springs...he had those capped running down to the reservoir that I've seen in my childhood. Beyond that I don't know too much of anything else. That's about it as far as what I know about the history. If somebody else knows, go ahead.

I had some thoughts when Bob Jennings and I first talked about this like "Gee, who could repair this thing?" My first thought was maybe somebody from the Amish community because they've lived in that era and still do, and would know somebody of that talent if they had anybody. Dave and I have looked at a lot of pictures in our conversation over the last couple of weeks, and he has some thoughts on it, but I'm going to save that for him. At the same time, my feeling is if anybody here as a group wants to see any fruition come out of this...in fact, that might be for Cathy. Shut me up Cathy if I'm stepping on you...

Cathy Race: No. Please. I just take it for granted people would know.

Bill Brunet: Apparently the bridge was closed, I understand, by Andy Willard, who is a county employee. I don't know if he's an engineer or not; my understanding is he might be.

Nathan Young: He is.

Bill Brunet: I don't know what initiated the cause for the inspection.

Cathy Race: I can answer that. That would be me. We had gotten several complaints about the guardrails right across from Rose's house and no ground supporting them. So I went to the county and talked to Mr. Chambers expecting we would just be able to have them repaired so nobody got hurt or it didn't get worse because everybody was concerned that the road was going to wash out. So that was me.

Bill Brunet: So from that point forward Andy came and took a look at things, came to Cathy and said "My feeling is it should be closed. Either you close it voluntarily or we will". The "we will" never happened; there is no documentation; and, I have never heard of anything, let's say in county government or state government, not having documentation when you close something down that important. That is not Cathy's fault. She just took him for his word, and it was either going to be happening with the village or he was going to close it, but that (county intervention) never came to fruition. (Please note: Based on Andy Willard's declaration, the Village Trustees voted to close the bridge...My note: Rose warren)

I don't know really the next steps folks here want to take, but I have some suggestions, and those suggestions are that committees be formed, starting with a committee at the top coming down to three branches that would be:

- 1) Repair and Structural Committee and I have some sub-notes on that:
 - a) Method of repair
 - b) Search for a stone mason, maybe.
 - c) Repair costs: material, labor, etc.
 - d) Maybe even seek unheard of donated help.

Volunteer fire departments seem to be about the only ones with volunteers, but you are a community. I still have a place in my heart for this community as well. I think I'm beyond getting down there and shoveling gravel, cement, and so on, but there are individuals that would have that capability of doing so. I don't know if you want to explore that or not, but that's an option. Maybe talk with the Corps of Engineers. I don't know. I don't have the means to know of anybody in that area, or how to get there.

- 2) Finance Committee:
 - a) Possibly research grants. There would probably be very few out there of this nature, but again you never know unless you go out there and take a look and search up a few things.

Cathy Race: I think you had a good note on that. On one point when I was talking to you, you mentioned if we do decide to apply for grants that may only be if you replace the whole structure.

Bill Brunet: State grants and federal grants, what's going to happen with that is you'll come under their domain...they're going to rip it out. After talking with Harry Harmer in Florida a week or two ago, we went through this thing and talked about the bridge, the structure of it, the engineering of it, and how these bridges in Europe are still being used that were built by the Romans. He said "I think you can really drop a bomb on that bridge and it would still be standing because they're that strong". Dave would know if there's any way to test what weight it would take, but I mentioned to a couple of people I also remember as a kid the maneuvers going on here in town. In fact, the Army took the town over for about a month, I believe, and at that time I recall tanks going across the bridge, and you can be sure they looked at it before they let a tank go across it, and there were several tanks that did. It was kind of amusing, it was like cowboys and Indians to me at the time; kind of an adventure. I remember them shooting at a cliff over there with a Howitzer, not actually, but pretending.

I also talked to my son who is a financial consultant for Community Investment Services which is a subsidiary of Community Bank. He is the Treasurer of Fort La Presentation in Ogdensburg and has been for a number of years. They have what is called a 501C3 which is a non-profit exemption corporation that can do certain things that others can't do. They're tax free, basically is what it is, and that would be a contact for the New York State Parks Division of the State of New York to maybe apply for or get information for that particular classification.

- 3) Historical Committee: Headed by Lenore Zaubere. What could that committee do?
 - a) Continue research
 - b) Assist other committees (the three committees would really work separately, but as one).
One would acquire information for the other if needed, and you work back and forth.

Another suggestion I have is the spinoff from the F. W. Woolworth Corporation, I believe in 1959, was the last it operated as a corporation, is today called Footlocker. They have over 4,000 units today. Some are still in Woolworth property buildings, etc. You never know, if you write the Board and the CEO, they may be aware of this area. I don't know. They may never have heard of it, or care about it for that matter, but you write a sympathetic letter.

Cathy Race: I can do that.

Bill Brunet: Tell them how one of your founders did this for our community. With the way things are today with the tax structures and the way government is, there is no money for infrastructure that they're supposed to be doing; that is one of the purpose of government. So that's an idea. Why don't I let Dave go ahead and offer what we have talked about, and what he feels about it because he is an engineer.

Dave Blevins: Cousin to Rosie (Warren) and Bill, a lot younger; I don't remember the tanks. We started talking about three weeks ago. Bill called me up and Cathy was kind enough to get me the pictures. I don't know what timeframe the walkway was put in.

Cathy Race: Lenore, do you know about the walkway portion. Was there ever a breakdown?

Lenore Zaunere: I don't know. I do want to say that Edwin Merton McBrier didn't actually build the bridge because it was built in 1875. We have a couple of clips from some newspaper articles that explains the stone bridge was just completed and they were happy about that. You're welcome before you leave to come take a look at the pictures and also take one of the copies of anything here. The other thing is the descendants of Edwin Merton McBrier are few and far in between. If you are interested, you can take one of these trees. What we've done is listed a lot of descendants, and maybe one of them is still living.

Roger Zaunere: Some of them are still living and in Connecticut.

Lenore Zaunere: And that's something we might be able to do as a committee, or you access the library, or go home and get on the internet. I found a lot of information of Ancestry.com. There are a lot of places you can go and look. And, we can make some notes and contact some of these people. One never knows, maybe we'll get some help that way in trying to get private funds and relate to them their ancestor, their grandfather, their great grandfather was Edwin Merton McBrier, and he came here after he retired, and said "I need to do some things in Hermon". The bridge, having been built in 1875 needed some work. He built the stone balustrades on the side and then had the lights put on that.

Bill Brunet: I'm glad you corrected me because I was not aware. I thought he had built the bridge.

Lenore Zaunere: We do have some fantastic pictures of the workmen in 1875 standing on top of the bridge. There is a lot of historical significance here. His descendants might be interested if they are still in the Woolworth/Footlocker mode. They might be sitting on a little bit of money.

Roger Zaunere: One fellow's wife is a direct descendant from Mr. McBrier. His last name was Mockler. He was the CEO of Gillette Shaving Company.

Bill Brunet: There's another idea. These are things you don't know unless you get something together like this.

Roger Zaunere: She's still alive.

Lenore Zaunere: These are all people that are listed and another thing you might be interested in taking and it lists accomplishments of Edwin. From that point of view if we ever do have to write a grant or apply for some money somewhere at least we have some historical reference. Years ago we tried to get this made a New York State historical bridge. We never got that far.

Bill Brunet: That's a possibility. Go ahead Dave.

Inez Snow: Did you ask when the walkway was built beside it?

Dave Blevins: That was my question because that was added more recently.

Inez Snow: Before the 1940s because we walked across there to go to school.

Dave Blevins: That didn't help the bridge. The walkway actually hurt the bridge on the upstream side, and that needs to be peeled off. The biggest thing is I was over here a couple of weeks ago trying to see it and you can't get close with the snow to look at it. I've got some nice pictures Cathy sent me.

Cathy Race: Chris has been there; Chris Stransky is sitting in the back. He's the one that took the picture.

Dave Blevins: Back then they did what I call gunite; they covered the bridge with a cement type paint; that should be off there; that shouldn't be on the bridge. Stone arches are made to drain so there's no ice to raise hell with them. Luckily the stuff is only about as half inch thick and is broken back, but needs to be peeled off. My thought is when the weather gets a little better, get in and determine the seriousness of the job items we've got, but the bridge to me doesn't look bad. The abutments are the main concern I have and the abutments look good.

Unknown speaker: I remember seeing it in November. One side was cracked really bad and the other side was fine. The post office side was really bad.

Unknown speaker: We were told the arch and everything structurally was good.

Dave Blevins: We look for on an arch, when I first talked to Bill I said I know very little about arches, but I can tell you what I know. They're either standing or they're not standing.

Nathan Young: The problem is not the bridge, the problem is the banks are washing away on both sides. We basically have a moat around the bridge. The bridge is structurally fine. By the side of the post office, the bank has already caved in. It's just eroding away. The problem is not fixing the bridge. The problem is we have to structurally shore up the sides so the water can no longer take it away. That's

very expensive. There's been talk of using sheet metal down the side like they did in Heuvelton or reinforcing it with concrete; then, of course, you're working over a waterway so DEC gets involved

Bill Brunet: Also I've talked to a couple of individuals. I don't mean to interrupt, David. I talked to Harry Harmer. It wouldn't be beyond me, city powers, village powers, whatever to write Harry a nice letter requesting he might possibly shore up his property which is a retaining wall for the post office parking lot which is in pretty bad shape I understand. Again, I tried to take a look today and there was no way I could get near it so I said I'd wait til spring. My understanding from what you said, David, was with the foundation around the bottom each side, the abutments, with concrete. You get to the low water point and you can get down there where you can get some base on it and then pour cement.

Dave Blevins: The main problem is peeling off the sidewalk and fixing the embankments.

Bill Brunet: It sounds like a big project back there, but to me it doesn't sound like a big deal.

Rose Warren: Not compared to what it would be to replace it.

Dave Blevins: One of the things that's nice is there's a company that makes these concrete blocks; they're about a ton a block and they interlock. Tim Tyler did a retaining wall at Sylvia Lake a few years ago with them, fifteen feet high; it's a real nice wall. I got to look at that. That's a possibility. Sheet piling like they did in Heuvelton was because of the distance. They didn't have any slope. Here we've got good slope. The only reason on Harry's side, it looks like somebody brought the parking lot over further than they probably should have; but, we could get a little more slope; maybe just use large riprap stone. It's something to look into. I don't think it's a big job, and I don't see a major cost.

Bill Brunet: He said he's worked on several bridges over his career, and he didn't feel personally either that, apparently he has looked at it, it would be that much work to put that back into shape. I guess my big thing was if I had anything to do with the authority side of it, I would want to see a report. Say for instance, as an example, a health inspection report on a restaurant. I've had hundreds of those. They come in, do their inspection, and whatever isn't up to code or up to snuff they write up; at least you have an opportunity to correct it. Show me what's wrong with it, tell me what you feel is wrong with it, what's going to close this thing, and we'll fix it.

Cathy Race: One problem we're running into there is I got in touch with the county and they can't do the bridge inspection, and it all comes back to it being a culvert which everybody around here is pretty familiar with. It's close on size, but the state will not come in and inspect it because of that. Where do you turn from here? We did have Burley/Guminiack is going to have a report done for us by the end of March on an engineering study so we know what we're dealing with. Is that what we should be going with? I don't know.

Bill Brunet: Maybe I'd run to my village attorney next and say, okay, you tell me because this is what they're telling us. What's your thought and feeling on it, and can we get into trouble if we reopen it? The word I get from Joe Lightfoot after he called the highway superintendent in Canton is there, of course, is no record, and he said technically speaking if they want to go ahead and open it up, they can open it up. Well, I don't know if you want to do that.

Ed Carpenter: If it was never inspected, how can they close it?

Bill Brunet: That's my question.

Dave Blevins: That's a good question.

Bill Brunet: That's Ed Carpenter who just made the statement if the county closed it without an inspection and some authorization, how can you close it.

Rose Warren: You mentioned in the several conversations we've had over the phone that if we had somebody inspect it, it had to be somebody familiar with this type of construction, not just the modern type of bridge.

I Bill Brunet: And I don't know if that person exists or not.

Rose Warren: I had e-mailed Cathy about the Corps of Engineers. They worked on a bridge on the West Hermon Road out near you didn't they?

Cathy Carpenter: Ed asked the county guy if the Army Corps of Engineers would ever do a bridge for someone and they said they'll supply the labor; you have to pay for the cost of materials, and we'll come and do it.

Cathy Race: Who do you contact because I've e-mailed two different places and nobody seems to know.

Bill Brunet: That's where the *research* comes in on one of these committees.

Cathy Race: I can't figure it out.

Cathy Carpenter: Larry, did you ever find out anything about it?

Larry Denesha: As far as the Army Corps of Engineers, I do not.

Rose Warren: They must have inspectors.

Bill Brunet: I don't know if somebody from Fort Drum would have that expertise. They did obviously during the Korean Conflict. If they have an Engineer Section there certainly somebody would have somebody.

Rose Warren: I know my father was in that particular division during World War II and bridges in Europe like this are still there.

Bill Brunet: And there are some much bigger than this one...three spans. One in France is I think 200 to 300 years old that is still being used.

Lenore Zaubere: I wonder who we need to talk to and who we don't need to talk to. In other words, who really has the authority over whatever we do.

Bill Brunet: That's the sorting out and the investigation that you do.

Lenore Zaubere: We need to do that first because if we get someone who really doesn't have the authority but then starts putting some regulations on that we can't pull back from...

Bill Brunet: The one thing that I do understand is if at all possible you want to stay away from grants from the state or the federal government because they're going to dictate as to what you do. You're not going to have any say so at all.

Dave Blevins: It's not listed as a bridge in St. Lawrence County.

Rose Warren: It's a culvert. It's a foot too short.

Bill Brunet: I'll call it a bridge forever.

Dave Blevins: Where did they measure from?

Rose Warren: I'm not sure. That's what they keep saying.

Dave Blevins: I've looked. I can't find the length anywhere?

Bill Brunet: How was it measured?

Dave Blevins: Who held the other end of the tape?

Lenore Zaubere: And then, of course, we have the safety issue.⁴

Bill Brunet: There's a lot of questions here. Now that you find out the bridge doesn't have to be closed they say "the liability". Well, was there a liability before it was closed? I mean it just opened the question I guess.

Rose Warren: I know my son wanted to come and couldn't, and he's very unhappy about it. It's really made an impact on his business.

Bill Brunet: I've had my circumstances with the county and the Black Lake Road over the years where I lost a whole summer because they wanted to put in a cow culvert next to town. I asked nicely if they would put a passage way around it, but they had to re-route everybody up through Eel Weir Road and blah, blah, blah. All it was a culvert that couldn't have been over 5 foot high, but they closed the road down for the whole summer to do that particular job, and the whole lake lost, but we recovered just like everybody else does.

Dave Blevins: What's that cast iron pipe do?

Chris Stransky: It's a water line.

Dave Blevins: Is it in use anymore?

Chris Stransky: No. It's shut off on both sides.

Bill Brunet: I was wondering. How does Hermon get their water on the other side of the bridge?

Chris Stransky: It goes down Jefferson, then back up around.

Bill Brunet: Things change over the years. It's just like your spring water. I grew up on it, and it was chlorinated, but all of a sudden the state comes along and says you've got to chlorinate it whether you need to or not. There are a lot of things like that. I think in the end, and again, hopefully not, that God helps them sometimes who help themselves. And everybody waits for somebody else to do something as a rule, depending on the government as a rule. In this case I don't know as there's any remedy to that except for the people of this community maybe gearing up with possibly somebody from DeKalb who is willing, somebody from Russell who is willing to pitch in, because everybody from either community will at one time or another use that bridge. And, ask some questions like "anybody have a desire to put this back into operation again the way that we'd like to?" I guess if I were going to open it I would go ahead and do whatever necessary repairs were needed; if the road needed some blacktop, I guess I would do that somehow or other and so on. Monetarily, I don't think that's a huge challenge; certainly it takes time, but you have organizations like Community Bank as an example; and, you read in the paper all of the time they gave this to cancer or that to this, or this to that and so on. You're talking community here

and the purpose in their eyes may not be that great, but it is to the people who are in here today. Obviously you have some concern; otherwise, you wouldn't be here.

I think some of those routes can be taken, but you have to do it with the committees that I mentioned. Who wants to head up the structural committee David?

Dave Blevins: I guess that's an aye.

Nathan Young: Maybe Larry can answer this. There are several county routes that cross through Hermon. You can't get from point A to point B without going through the village.

Bill Brunet: The fact is Joe Lightfoot had pointed out something to me that was there are three bridges, two operational.

Nathan Young: And with the other two the roads can't handle the weight.

Bill Brunet: I didn't know, and have heard in conversation some people may be upset because Collers wheel through town with equipment and I know of some people moving out of the city to the country complain an awful lot about the manure smell. I didn't know if somebody complained to the right person to get the gears in motion to have it inspected or not because of that fact. I just don't know. I had heard also his equipment is very heavy and the bridge probably wouldn't take it, but I think it probably would, and more. From what I know of the history of the bridge and what it's accommodated, I don't think there is any problem with him running over that bridge with his equipment, manure trucks, wagons, whatever. I could be wrong.

Dave Blevins: It's probably the strongest bridge around.

Bill Brunet: Bar none.

Dave Blevins: Just the design of the arches.

Cathy Race: What the county had mentioned when they came in to take a look at it and where the guardrails are washing away, we figured they could just patch it. Mr. Chambers' response was he didn't want to be down in there and do any type of repair work because everything was so unstable because the water had gotten behind it and he was afraid it was all going to cave in.

Dave Blevins: Okay, he's talking about the gunite. That's all I can see that's coming off and we need to peel that off.

Nathan Young: There's a hollow spot up underneath the sidewalk; there's nothing but air. It's washing around the bridge. I've been down under there.

Dave Blevins: I've just seen the pictures.

Larry Denesha: His big concern was the wing walls; the degradation of the wing walls because it's undercut both sides of the bridge. It's not the bridge, it's the approach; it's not so much on this side as it is on the other side.

Dave Blevins: The upstream side, the sidewalk is undermined I think from when that waterline broke.

Nathan Young: We had a drainage problem.

Larry Denesha: I had a conversation with him and e-mailed a couple of weeks ago. I asked what if we wanted to open the bridge. It's a village, I call it a bridge, too. It's always been a bridge. The village owns the bridge so, therefore, the village has owned the liability. What's happened is we've opened it up to pedestrian traffic. In his professional opinion, it was not safe.

Lenore Zaunere: Even for pedestrians right now?

Larry Denesha: That's what Mr. Chambers relayed to me that in his professional opinion; I'm not an engineer and don't profess to be one. I do think that the avenue that Bill is suggesting with committees is I think one of the things we need to do. One of the things we'd end up having to do is an environmental impact study because we've got the old gas station right across the road, there was a chemical plant where the post office is. We don't know what we'd be getting into. If there was an engineering study done so we know what we're dealing with because without an environmental engineering study we're not going to have any idea what going on with the wall.

Bill Brunet: I understand Cathy's in the middle of that now, maybe with this company out of Canton, I believe. They may include some of that in their study. I don't know, I remember the C M Die Plant too like you say and the gas station.

Rose Warren: May I interrupt for just a minute? That sign-up sheet that's going around; I'm going to be typing up minutes for the meeting. If anybody's interested in getting a copy e-mailed to them, they might be rather lengthy as I'm going to do them as people speak, court room style, so that way it can kind of refresh your memory about what we talked about here.

Unknown: Another thing to think about, in Wanerkena. Last winter, Wanerkena lost their footbridge and the footbridge in Wanerkena has been there for a hundred plus years. That was a focal point of the community in Wanerkena, much the same as the bridge is here.

Bill Brunet: Why don't you let me finish up with what I was on about the committees? Dave, of course, is going to take the Repair and Structural Committee. Probably the committee heads should choose some people they might want to work with in this room or otherwise. Finance Committee, we got a banker here? Jane Doiron is about the closest we've got to a banker and finances? You're the clerk, right? You want to head up the Finance Committee temporarily? If you want to choose to step down later on that would be great. For the moment maybe, and choose some members; I just leave what I've written down here as some help or maybe not help if you want to use it as a guide.

Jane Doiron: Yes.

Bill Brunet: The Historical Committee, of course, is already a no-brainer. Norm Young who I've been in contact with over the internet gave me a great deal of information he already knew; Lenore has supplied that today and some of that they worked together on. Maybe she wants to choose some people who might want to work with her on that committee. There may be another committee that might need to be formed, but that's maybe a start.

I'm sorry Mr. Denesha, have you got more? Why don't we just from this point forward circulate around the room because I'm sure people are thinking. If you've got something you want to say, don't worry about what you say, it's either from the heart, or structural or whatever it might be. We're here for a reason. We all have memories of our community, and this is part of it. When you see trouble and people want to correct it, you do what you can to pitch in and go from there. I'm sorry Mr. Denesha; I sort of interrupted you.

Cathy Race: I can take care of some letter writing. I did send a letter to Bill Owens. He was still in when the bridge got shut down, I think, when we started having the issues. I didn't hear anything back, but if anybody can think of other places. I can contact Harry Harmer, and I may have to do a few phone calls or send e-mail. I would be willing to work on the person with the Gillette Shaving Company, Woolworth's which is now Foot Locker, and the McBrier family descendants; I would be glad to do that, and at least try.

Bill Brunet: I would take that information and hand it off to the Finance Committee. That's the search for money. You don't want it to dead-end in one committee and have all these things put together and all this time spent on something without sharing it with the other committees.

Rose Warren: Even if you write the letters maybe you could have the responses come to back to Jane.

Lenore Zaunere: I've been working with Jamie and we're going to set up a better more friendly way to have a message board and have people see what is happening, keep people up-to-date.

Jamie Matthews: I think what I'll do is take Rose's minutes, and I'll create a page or a link to a page of the minutes. It's the Board's, it's not mine, but I'm sure they'll be fine with that. If we could put the minutes down I think that covers everything, and then if anybody has any questions they can still have contact, and, if there's a committee, certainly we can build a page for the committee with the members so people have contact with those individuals that are in certain areas, whether it be finance, construction, or historical.

Lenore Zaunere: Stone Bridge or a category tab.

Bill Brunet: I don't mean to interrupt either. Because I don't know of the expertise somebody may have here, whether it be finance, structural, or otherwise, you may know of somebody that's not here today that has expertise in an area that might fit into one of these committees. It would be a good idea to maybe have those individuals contact Jane or Lenore or David, and basically take it from there.

Jamie Matthews: Our bank is run by local people. I'm sure there is somebody.

Bill Brunet: Connie Green is not here today. I used to sit on the Board of Community Bank years ago, and again, that's why I say maybe contact an institution such as Community Bank for a donation down the road, and devise a method to do that before even knocking on their door. I was hoping Connie Augsbury would be here today because her expertise I believe is in grants, and Red was supposed to be here, but they're not here.

Attendees indicated Red Grandy was here.

Bill Brunet: I'm just a little boy Red, sorry. We have a star in the room. I didn't realize you were here. Anyway, that's my thing. I don't think I have a whole lot more to offer.

Cathy Race: I have one more question. Dave, if you had to throw a number out for finances, what would you say?

Dave Blevins: I wouldn't yet. I don't think it's as big a job as you think. I wouldn't throw a number out yet. It's too early.

Unknown speaker: What's your idea on repairing the bridge? You started with a list.

Dave Blevins: First, it's to decide what the problems are. I haven't seen undermining of the bridge yet and obviously can't right now, but as soon as the weather breaks get under there and see what it is. That would have to be attacked first; then take the sidewalk off; take the concrete back that's on this side with the rails, take all that off and the gunite off, then fix the up-bank and sides. I don't think it's a lot of work.

Jane Doiron: Can a walkway be put back on?

Dave Blevins: With the information I've gotten I haven't found out if it's required, number one, but absolutely if I was going to put a walkway back on I wouldn't have it attached to the bridge. I'd have it up against the bridge but not attached. And, I would bring the supports back far enough so the water doesn't undermine it like it does now.

Jane Doiron: There are people in this village that like to walk, myself included.

Dave Blevins: That's easy to do. That might be expensive, but it's easy to do. Who wants to be on my committee?

Larry Denesha: I'd like to be on it. I'd like to say something too to the group. Obviously there was a resolution brought to the County Board of Legislatures, I think in October. The resolution came forward again the 2nd of January to rescind the resolution. I talked about this long and hard for a long time. I talked with Cathy. I want to see the bridge rebuilt. The bridge has always been there. I've lived here, not in Hermon, but I've lived four miles down the road my entire life, so I want to see the bridge rebuilt. If there's something we can do once we've determined what needs to be done, I'd be more than happy to take it back to the county, but my concern was I wouldn't buy a car if I didn't know how much it was going to cost. I wouldn't build a house unless I knew how much it was going to cost. I talked with some folks, unfortunately before I voted to rescind the resolution. I had about a ten minute dissertation, unfortunately that didn't get in the newspapers, but would be part of the tape recordings in the meeting. I just want to go on record and say that I do support fixing the bridge, and again, I know it's not a bridge. Technically, it's a culvert. Again, to me it's always been the Hermon Bridge and always will be. I think the way we're going about it now is a methodical approach in finding out what we're dealing with because although I'm not an engineer, I've spent the bulk of my career in construction.

I'm happy to sit on the committee with you and will pledge once we get to where we know what we're dealing with, I will take this back to St. Lawrence County, and ask for help.

Bill Brunet: You've got a strong committee.

Rose Warren: Can I just make some suggestions of people in the room who haven't said anything or maybe haven't had a chance. Brian, number one, as Highway Superintendent; Chris Stransky does all of the village repair work for anything he can handle; if for some reason he can't, we have to bid it out; and, also Kermit Bill in the back of the room. I don't know if they're willing, but they're people I think might be good for that committee.

Dave Blevins: The more the better; any ideas we can get means different eyes looking at it.

Bill Brunet: One more thing I thought about for Jane and the Finance Committee. I don't know if there's any way the village and town combined maybe could start somehow a reserve fund because you have other infrastructure here which you're going to get help on no doubt, when it goes kaboom, mandated by the State of New York, but this would not be mandated in my mind. Your fire department gets a whack at the taxes every year, and I don't know if it's necessarily something you want to put in the tax structure, but would come from taxes if you started a slush fund, a small percent, ½ of a percent, 1 percent, whatever it might be that you decide to do because you do have 2 parks; obviously the cemetery is well taken care of, and I don't think there's any way those funds could be approached, even though it was the same individual that provided the funds originally to establish the care for the cemetery as an example. According to my son, you can't touch it; it's state law. It was just a thought I had that maybe you might want to discuss amongst the committees; it its' a \$100 a year, \$500, or a \$1000, whatever it is, then you would have some money down the road toward these situations that you run into like you have now that you never thought would happen.

Nathan Young: We spent \$3900 on the engineering study, so we are spending money toward it.

Bill Brunet: You are now. That was forethought before this meeting ever happened. You may not like some of the things that come out of this study they're going to provide to you. It's an unknown.

Cathy Race: Well, we felt like we were taking the right step. Criticism is fine and this is helpful.

Bill Brunet: Maybe if you had had some money in a fund the village would have said we're going to go ahead and repair that because we've got the money. You don't have right now. Maybe the town and village; I don't know if the town would want to do it or not. It's just a thought, that's all it is.

Brenda Sanderson: You kind of answered my question. I was going to say if we end up being able to finance it, with extra taxes or private donations or whatever, why does the county have to be involved because it's Mr. Chambers' opinion? Does he have any data?

Bill Brunet: No.

Brenda Sanderson: So that's just an opinion.

Kermit Bill: I'm with the State DOT. Mr. Chambers has the right under Public Highway Law to defer up to the state, and he might just do that if push comes to shove, and you may have the state come in anyhow.

Rose Warren: To inspect it?

Kermit Bill: Yes.

Cathy Race: But will they inspect a culvert?

Kermit Bill: It all depends on how Mr. Chambers defines it.

Bill Brunet: That might be exactly what these folks need.

Cathy Race: We could ask them.

Bill Brunet: Like I pointed out with the health inspection, they come in, they do an inspection, they point out the problems, but right now this community has nothing to point out the problem. It's all hearsay. That's just the way I look at it is all. I'm not criticizing anybody by any means.

Kermit Bill: I'm just telling you this is an avenue that might make things happen, to stir things up, for the county to refer it up to the state.

Bill Brunet: I say that's fine then.

Kermit Bill: Yeah. I do too. Once you have something defined, and the state inspectors will do that.

Cathy Race: I do have a friend that's a bridge inspector for the state, and when we were starting to have these problems and we asked him, the county did ask the state to come in and do an inspection, but the state couldn't do it because it was a culvert.

Kermit Bill: That depends on definition. The state is inspecting culverts, big time.

Bill Brunet: As Dave says, I think if they came in and inspected this culvert, they'd probably find it's stronger than any bridge they've got in the county right now.

Dave Blevins: If you've got a problem with an arch, there's stones missing, like the one in Madrid that they did, I think in '98, had stones falling off, and they went and rebuilt that bridge, whether historic or not.

Bill Brunet: The Alcoa bridge was built 10 years ago when I had a conversation yesterday with Joe Lightfoot at the cost of I don't know how many hundreds of thousands s of dollars.

Larry Denesha: It sounds like the foundation has to be repaired.

Bill Brunet: They've got to go back in and repair that bridge...they did such a nice job on it, with all that money they spent. And here we go, we've got a simple little bridge down here built very simply with good architecture, ancient architecture, with bridges of that nature standing for hundreds of years. I don't know who to talk about it. I guess today's steel doesn't do it that well.

Dave Blevins: The pictures I'm looking at that you took last year, and you were there, the concrete abutments do not look damaged to me. I see no undermining. That's where the bridge load goes, the abutments, and then, of course, on the bedrock. But, I see no deterioration at all. You took great pictures.

Chris Stransky: The couple I showed you where the spalling was coming off the bridge...

Dave Blevins: The gunite? That actually damaged that bridge. It doesn't look like it did bad damage because the ice broke away so it's letting it drain again, but that was not the thing to do. It's just like paint; it's a thick paint is all it is; it's not structural in any way.

Bill Brunet: What did you say it would do, hold the moisture.

Rose Warren: I can remember when that bridge was repointed, and there was work done it.

Bill Brunet: Masonry work.

Dave Blevins: Stone arches aren't laid up with mortar; they're dry laid; and then the key is poured...the key looks good too.

Cathy Race: I'm glad to hear maybe it's not as major as we've been thinking.

Bill Brunet: Well, you don't find those things out until you gather and share.

Kermit Bill: You're talking bridge inspectors and they come from the standpoint of engineering. The county's going to look from the standpoint of things like safety and legality, and that's where the county can step in, regardless of what your bridge inspectors might say, and they could be forced/ordered to do the job. There's two different avenues going on here; you're talking engineering vs. legality and safety. This is just putting this out before you so you're aware of it.

Bill Brunet: I guess a question I have...you've got some good information...is something Dave brought up in our conversation somewhere was the fact that "Okay, grab an engineer from Syracuse, bring that engineer up here and sit him under the bridge, and I guess his word is God". Well, is it? Tell me what his expertise is, show me his documentation, show me his education, is he absolutely authorized to make the comments that he is going to make? Then you have something in your hand like a report maybe,

then you can correct it according to the report. You can say back to the person, individual, or entity, “Okay, now you tell us this is what’s wrong with it; if we repair it with what you said is wrong with it, can we open that bridge and feel good about it?”

Kermit Bill: Independent engineering is a good way to go.

Bill Brunet: You’ve got all kinds of engineers, but are they qualified? That’s the next thing. I don’t know. I ask the questions, the hard questions, and I usually want hard answers back. Justify what you’re telling me, and we’ll go ahead and do something. I guess that’s about the size of it.

Cathy Carpenter: Am I under the impression if we didn’t do anything to this bridge and the county came in here and said “We’re going to close it, we’re going to have the state inspect it”, we would all be better off. Is that the way you’re thinking?

Kermit Bill: I think sometimes we do that to get the attention of people who do have response.

Cathy Carpenter: I didn’t know the county didn’t say to close the bridge. I thought the county did it.

Rose Warren: We voted on it after we were told we had to close it or they would.

Cathy Carpenter: I wonder if they would have.

Bill Brunet: There is no documentation. Mr. Chambers had made the statement to Joe Lightfoot that you could open the bridge if you chose to do so. That I don’t understand, but that’s okay. If they said it, they said it.

Cathy Race: I met with him

Rose Warren: I’ve been wondering about the barriers sitting on the bridge. There are four or five of them and they weigh a lot.

Nathan Young: With the road over the bridge, there’s about two feet of it and that’s the only thing supporting the traffic in one spot. As it continues to erode that’ll get worse.

Cathy Carpenter: Is it the bridge that’s eroding?

Nathan Young: The bridge is perfectly fine. Where the water goes down there’s a grate there; the water got in underneath and washed all that away. That’s what forced that wall to fall apart on this side (the side toward the blinking light). The side by the post office is washed away and undermined from the river. It weakened and collapsed in. Basically, the wingwalls are not keeping the water contained

anymore. It's eroding the sides, so eventually what we'll end up with is a bridge that's perfectly fine structurally, but it's a moat around it.

Dave Blevins: Interestingly enough when they built that wall you're talking about, according to the pictures it was a concrete wall and they filled between the bridge and the wall with gravel which held the water, and which, again, made ice that knocked the wall out. So that needs to be cleaned off. I think you'll find once that's cleaned off...

Rose Warren: And the parking lot was extended too far you think.

David Blevins: It could be shortened a little bit to let the riprap angle repose a little bit gentler.

Brenda Sanderson: I have a question. If we opened the bridge and decided to do that, and the county was not happy, came in and inspected it, because they would have to do that before they could close it. That never happened. Why don't we try that? Cross at your own risk.

Bill Brunet: It was verbal.

Nathan Young: Then the village would be libel if something happens.

Bill Brunet: We don't know that. I think I'd want to talk to an attorney.

Nathan Young: We own the liability of it. If something goes wrong and somebody gets hurt even if we knew.

Bill Brunet: I guess your libel on your village streets.

Rose Warren: I know this is going to sound really stupid. We've got insurance on everything else. Do they insure bridges? I'm serious.

Cathy Race: Jane, you had to contact them.

Rose Warren: It would seem like to have had it insurance, we would have had to have it inspected.

Jane Doiron: At the time the bridge was closed I called the insurance carrier and wondered if it was okay. She told me that we were insured and to do things sensibly about having a walkway on it, but we were insured. We're not like the county who is self-insured, we are not self-insured. We have an insurance company.

Bill Brunet: Is that an umbrella policy, Jane that covers everything?

Jane Doiron: I don't know. I can't answer that.

Rose Warren: Can I ask you a question Dave? With those big Jersey barriers sitting on there, is that something that will cause the water to be held in between them.

Dave Blevins: Oh no. They don't hold water.

Rose Warren: I just wondered if they were going to do more damage.

Dave Blevins: I walked across it two weeks ago and didn't see any.

Lenore Zaunere: It's the banks of the river that are eroding?

Dave Blevins: Yes, I just saw the pictures and didn't see anything under the bridge at all eroding. I'd want to look when it's better weather.

Bill Brunet: The abutments would be the big concern, which are at the bottom, and they aren't.

Dave Blevins: We've got good pictures on those.

Bill Brunet: They've got to be sitting on rock. I think the first step while we're still in winter is a nice letter to Harry Harmer to see if he would, let's say shore up his side of the creek. That might give some encouragement to others.

Dave Blevins: He's pretty good.

Cathy Race: And he has the equipment. He has the trucks and backhoes, and whatever. Another thing to throw out which would come under both the Structural and Finance Committees, would the township play any part with trucks, equipment, labor if materials were to be brought in. You might already have some in your storage. Brian, can you answer that?

Brian Brunet: They always like to say the village owns that and we're not allowed to fix a pothole in the village. It's not with me. I don't mind doing the work.

Bill Brunet: Would a resolution take care of that between the town and the village?

Jamie Matthews: The town was fine about passing the resolution without any knowledge on the county agreement with the village.

Bill Brunet: You may all be one someday anyway.

Jamie Matthews: I have a hard time believing the town wouldn't come out with any type of equipment.

Cathy Carpenter: I don't live in the village, but I'd like the bridge fixed. I'd use it every day.

Cathy Race: I just think the longer it goes the worse it is for everybody.

Bill Brunet: That's another research thing for the Historical Committee to research to see if there's anything out there without attachments, federal or state, to signify that's a national historical object. There's one in Sullivan County that has that designation, given in the 1970s I think. It's in some park, and I think it's a double arch.

Lenore Zaunere: We'd have to apply.

Bill Brunet: Maybe through the Parks and Recreation Department of NYS. I don't know, and I don't know about federal.

Cathy Race: Throughout all this conversation and different ideas in talking with people, a lot of people have mentioned like Brenda had said, what if we opened it back up? Would that force somebody to come in and inspect it? At this point, would you suggest we wait until the engineering study is done before we do anything like that.

Dave Blevins: Yeah. I'd rather have a good look at it before.

Cathy Race: I just wanted to make sure we were clear on that.

Rose Warren: That's due to be done by the end of March. Maybe we could schedule another meeting for April. Then you'd have the engineering report, and maybe Dave would have had a chance to look at it, and the committee.

Kermit Bill: If Mr. Harmer is going to make some repair to his property, should that be looked at by the engineers or included as part of the engineering study?

Bill Brunet: He might have that answer himself because he told me he's worked on several bridges throughout his career and he would know the red tape you have to get involved in. The thing I'm trying to keep everybody away from is state grants, federal grants, whatever. Probably state, I don't think you'd get federal, but you get in to what is called rate pay. I don't have any plus or minuses for unions, but the rate pay means you can hire private X, Y, or Z company to come in and work. Those employees

have to be paid rate pay. You're talking anywhere from maybe \$20 to \$50 an hour to do something that could be accomplished for maybe for \$12 an hour. Things have just gotten so out of sight.

Rose Warren: We were told by Carrie Tuttle, who works for DANC that the most we would be able to get was possibly 20%, but that was doubtful.

Bill Brunet: Then they're going to dictate.

Rose Warren: Then it's going to be rate, and by the time you get done that 20% could go pretty fast.

Bill Brunet: I was a union member and have no pros or cons. I would have preferred not to be a union member, but I was. There again, they dictate a lot of things in this country today, unfortunately, and have held up a lot of progress I think. Then it comes back to the old saying "God helps them that help themselves". If you don't, I guess it doesn't get done.

Ed Carpenter: I was under the impression if it's declared historical that there are many more restrictions...you're really, really restricted.

Bill Brunet: Maintain it at its present structure, blah, blah, blah. I have no idea.

Ed Carpenter: Then you're back to the historical point.

Bill Brunet: You might not want to get involved in it.

Dave Blevins: I always look at Pickens Hall in Heuvelton. That's still ongoing. That's millions of dollars so far they've spent on that building, and they're just getting started. They put an elevator in the back that couldn't be attached to the building.

Bill Brunet: It's called pork barrel. Every assembly and senator in the state gets their fingers in the pork barrel to distribute to their community, and that's just one small community. I don't know if Hermon has every received any funds from the state, but again that's what you get from politics. You get the pork barrel. Tax grant monies are up. I was sort of amused with it a year or so ago and was going to try to keep track of the grants money issued in St. Lawrence County, but just gave up on it. I was astounded to see it keep coming and coming, \$35,000, \$40,000; I wanted to say to Mr. Lightfoot (directed at Mr. Denesha) if the county could give the community of Waddington \$40,000 for a fishing derby...take it from there...and they did through the Chamber of Commerce. It's your tax money, no problem.

Brian Brunet: Probably getting the bridge fixed is not such a big deal, but you've got so many chains you've got to go through.

Bill Brunet: But do you if you do it yourself? It's a repair, it's not a complete rebuild.

Cathy Race: I think we're lucky to have the resources we do in just this room.

Dave Blevins: You've got culvert on your side. It's not a bridge, and any township can put a culvert in at any time they want. They don't have to call DEC. A culvert includes repairing stream beds.

Cathy Carpenter: We had to get a permit to mow our lawn on the banks of Tanner Creek and cut the brush off it. It took three months to get a permit.

Bill Brunet: That's insane.

Rose Warren: I've talked to Bill several times. In fact, for a time he called every day. This man has lost sleep thinking about this project. He says he dreams about it; eats dinner and thinks about it so I think we really owe him a debt of gratitude.

Dave Blevins: We're fine and look forward to doing it.

Bill Brunet: Maybe between now and our next meeting date, do you feel the committees have a purpose in meeting? I guess that should be up to the committee heads if they decide they want to call a meeting. If there is somebody who is not here, make them aware of their specialty and that they may be able to contribute something to this. It's all free! It's all voluntary! Nobody's going to get paid, but there might be a couple of individuals out there who could set with Dave. The fella in the back (Kermit Bill) seems to know what you're talking about. And it's up to the chairman who is on their committee.

Brenda Sanderson: Thank you two for volunteering.

Red Grandy: I would suggest you contact your attorney.

Cathy Race: I can do that and get in touch with Charlie Nash.

Our next meeting date will be by May 9th at 2:00 p.m.

