

History and Project Status - School Street Extension DRAFT v2

November 24, 2025

PROJECT HISTORY

Background & Discovery (2021)

The project originated from a conflict discovered during stormwater planning:

- **October 2021:** Engineering Ventures identified a potential conflict between planned School Street stormwater improvements and an existing water line
- **November 2021:** The Selectboard learned the water line wasn't scheduled for replacement but could be addressed during the stormwater project

The Ownership Issue (Historical)

The complications stem from a 1989 land transaction:

- The former Bristol Town High School operated from a building at the corner of Park St. and School St.
- A 1" galvanized water line (installed circa 1905) runs north along the private portion of School Street, serving the former school and four residential properties (#11, #14, #15, #17, and #19 School Street)
- **August 29, 1989:** When the Bristol Town School District sold the old high school property to Twin Birches, Ltd., the school district **reserved ownership of the water line** along with rights to maintain and repair it
- **December 10, 2018:** The Bristol Town School District transferred these water line rights to Mount Abraham Unified School District (MAUSD) via quitclaim deed
- **Result:** MAUSD currently owns this aging water line, not the Town

Project Re-emerges (2024)

- **May 2024:** The School Street water line issue resurfaced as complications became apparent, including leaks reported by property owner Dale Dingler at 17 School Street
- **July 2024:** Selectboard began discussing Town vs. property owner responsibilities and explored accepting the new waterline as a public system extension
- **August 26, 2024:** Town Attorney Kevin Brown confirmed the ownership history through land records research. The Board agreed to install a valve at the School/Park Street intersection

Legal & Financial Negotiations (August-September 2024)

- **August 29, 2024:** Town Attorney Kevin Brown sent formal letter to MAUSD Superintendent Patrick Reen and Business Manager Floyd Davison, requesting MAUSD coordinate and fund replacement of their water line

- The Town obtained quotes ranging from **\$75,692.20 to \$161,844.81** for the replacement work
- **September 9, 2024:** Property owner Tom Wells (Wells Mountain LLC, owner of the old high school property at 14 School Street) responded, suggesting this was "sloppy lawyering" from the 1989 transaction and advocating for a shared solution among all parties (Town, MAUSD, and affected property owners)

PROJECT DESIGN & BIDDING (Summer 2024)

Engineering Services

- **July 11, 2024:** VTM Engineering was engaged under Work Order #1 for design and bid phase services (not-to-exceed \$9,800)
- **July 19, 2024:** Final construction plans completed for approximately 275 feet of 2" copper water line replacement
- The project includes (5) services - (4) 3/4' copper and (1) 1" Copper along with a new isolation valve.

Bidding Results (August 2024)

Four contractors submitted bids on August 22, 2024:

1. **Champlain Construction Company, Inc:** \$75,692.20 (lowest) (lowest bid)
2. **Bruce Meacham Property Maint:** \$81,958.38
3. **J. Merrell Construction:** \$98,028,00
4. **Waters Excavation Inc.:** \$161,844.81

Engineering Invoices Paid

- Invoice #211 (August 1, 2024): \$4,625.00 for Final Design Phase Services - **PAID August 13, 2024**
- Invoice #215 (September 3, 2024): \$3,510.00 for Bid Phase Services - **PAID September 11, 2024**
- **Total VTM Engineering costs:** \$8,135.00

CURRENT STATUS

Original Project Timeline

- Original contract specified completion by **November 15, 2024**
- Notice to Proceed was anticipated for September 1, 2024

June 2025

- **June 2, 2025:** A document discussed the School Street water line, describing it as "a galvanized line installed in 1905, owned by the school." It noted that a quit claim deed from the school would allow the Town to address the line replacement. The document indicated this work could not be included in the Phase Two Bristol West project but could be included as an addendum to the Phase Three Bristol East project.
- Further discussions identified that adding the School Street water line replacement to the Phase Two Bristol West project could constitute a change order on that project. The costs would not be covered by DWSRF funding for the Phase Two Bristol West project and would need to be borne solely by the Town.
- The latest update from the Town involve the Town's water operator, VTUMS, replacing the water line rather than including it in the Phase Two Bristol West project.
- **Current estimated construction pricing from VTUMS is \$40,000**

Outstanding Questions

Based on the documents, several critical issues appear unresolved:

1. **Funding responsibility:** Who will pay for the construction cost?
 - MAUSD (as owner of the failing water line)?
 - Town of Bristol (who has collected water fees from these properties)?
 - Affected property owners (who benefit from the service)?
 - Some combination of all three?
2. **Ownership transfer:** Will MAUSD quitclaim the water line to the Town after replacement?
3. **Contract execution:** Who should the Town contract with for the construction?
4. **Construction status:** When should this work be done?