West Newbury Capital Improvements Committee Meeting Minutes

Meeting date & place: 7:30 PM, October 20, 2021, 1st Floor Hearing Room 1910 Building and Remote Participation via GoToMeeting

Members Present: Via remote and in person participation Julia Boria, Rick Parker, Polly McDowell, Patrick McCoy, Elisa Grammer, Joe Heyman, and Chair Judy Mizner. Also participating: Department of Public Works (DPW) Director Wayne Amaral.

Call to order

7:34 PM

Approval of Minutes From 9/21/2021

By 6-0-1 vote (Mr. Heyman, not present, abstaining), the Committee approved the minutes of September 21, 2021, as amended.

Review Litmus Test

At the <u>January 20, 2021 meeting</u>, the Committee considered then-Chair Nathan Kelly's recommendations that the litmus test be replaced with a more streamlined, less arbitrary means of ranking capital improvement proposals. He did not offer an alternative and the matter was tabled for further discussion.

Ms. Mizner said that she reviewed the Town's <u>capital improvements planning policy</u> and viewed the criteria for evaluation in that document as not substantially different from those in the existing litmus test. She noted that any scoring will be somewhat arbitrary and that the litmus test has worked pretty well in that committee members use intermediate gradations and committee members have been doing their scoring consistently. Mr. McCoy, Ms. Boria, and others agreed that it the test can be arbitrary and Mr. Parker said that in his experience, the Committee has never failed to recommend a proposed capital improvement. *Noting that we have no better alternative, the Committee agreed to keep the existing litmus test.*

Potential Bylaw Amendments

Ms. Grammer noted that Town Manager Angus Jennings has proposed amendments to the capital improvements planning bylaws. This was discussed at the <u>January 20, 2021 meeting</u>, at which time the Committee agreed with Mr. Parker's suggestion to table the bylaws amendments. Ms. Grammer noted that Mr. Jennings, not present at this meeting, has not raised this again and wondered if this was moot. Mr. Parker recommended that the matter be tabled.

Updating and/or Revising Capital Improvements Plan Spreadsheet

Spreadsheet summary with future projected capital fund income and outflow

Ms. Grammer noted that at the Committee's October 29, 2020 meeting, the Committee strongly supported the new Capital Improvements spreadsheet Mr. Amaral and Mr. Jennings had developed, and agreed to add former Committee Chair Dick Preble's cumulative summary to show future projected adequacy and needs of capital improvements funding:

Merging the Two Documents Mr. Kelly urged that these two documents be merged so that the information is integrated, reducing opportunities for error, and providing greater efficiencies. Mr. Jennings said that he saw value in keeping aspects of the older format, particularly the overview information, which he shared onscreen:

TOTAL ASSET REPLACEMENTS (Transfer from Free Cash)	**			873,020	2,355,000	687,000	390,000	515,000	160,000	710,000	935,000	125,000	1,420,000
ANNUAL APPROPRIATION		1,543,000		800,000	800,000	700,000	600000	600000	600000	600000	600000	600000	600000
STABILATION FUND TOTAL		1,524,520		1,451,500	-103,500	-90,500	119,500	204,500	644,500	534,500	199,500	674,500	-145,500
		2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030

Ms. Grammer suggested that perhaps this could be accomplished with nested spreadsheets that take the detailed information from the new format to automatically input data for the aspects of the older format that we would want to continue.

By unanimous roll call vote, the Committee agreed to integrate the two documents discussed above into a single document that retains some of the overview information from the legacy format and uses as input the dollar values and the more detailed information in the document more recently developed.

Ms. Grammer had shared a draft at the Committee's <u>February 24, 2021 meeting</u> but had not been able to obtain the actual values needed to do this, and had again shared the draft summary prior to the instant meeting, stressing that the numbers used are hypothetical—but the intent is to give an idea of the needs for stabilization investment in future years.

Mr. Parker said that the Town Manager is working on this and we should have numbers in the next few weeks. The Committee generally supported a summary going ten years out, perhaps with a column for year 11+. This will be taken up at the next meeting.

Updates of detailed information about capital assets in the spreadsheet

Messrs. Amaral and Parker said that updates to the capital improvements spreadsheet (which, as on the website, currently dates from September 2020) should be available in January or February.

Capturing infrastructure capital costs like the Middle Street Bridge in the spreadsheet

Ms. Grammer noted that the capital improvements program failed to capture and plan for the very costly need to repair the Middle Street Bridge. She asked if there were lessons learned so that going forward the Town would not be caught by surprise by very large infrastructure-related capital costs.

Mr. Amaral said that this is a good question. He explained that West Newbury does not have a mechanism to do this analysis—and neither does Newburyport. It would take engineering analyses that Town staff does not have time or resources to do. Mr. Parker said that perhaps grants, such as those associated with the Climate Change Resiliency work, may provide a solution. Mr. Amaral said that the Town is making progress in mapping its culverts.

Page School

The Committee had discussed the problem of Page School's ongoing need for very costly repairs (and the question how to evaluate when the costs would outweigh those of a new school) at its <u>January 20</u>, <u>2021 meeting</u>, and <u>February 3</u>, <u>2021 meeting</u>—and shortly before the start of this meeting, Mr. Jennings provided background information about earlier assessments of the Page School.

Ms. Grammer said that she had briefly reviewed the materials Mr. Jennings sent, noting that they were not particularly complete nor perfectly prescient. Mr. Amaral agreed, saying that the information provides a starting point. Ms. Grammer said that as part of a Historical Commission project she and Dot Cavanaugh discovered a number of boxes of records about Page School in the Town Offices basement and they will try to get this information in one place.

Ms. Mizner asked whether an analysis of a tipping point for Page School is within the purview of this Committee—and the general view was that it is not. Parker said that this needs to be discussed by the Select Board, the Town Manager, and the DPW Director to determine what next steps might be taken.

Review schedule for upcoming Capital Improvement Committee meeting(s)

Ms. Mizner noted that the Committee has nothing on its agenda until Spring Town Meeting capital improvements are presented. The Committee agreed to wait until that time to schedule another meeting.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:19 PM

Meeting Documents

West Newbury Financial Policy re: capital improvements

2021 10 20 Meeting Packet

Respectfully submitted

Elisa Grammer