

West Newbury Capital Improvements Committee Meeting Minutes

Meeting date & place: 7:30 PM, February 15, 2022, 1st Floor Hearing Room 1910 Building and Remote Participation via Zoom

Members Present: Via remote and in person participation Julia Boria, Rick Parker, Polly McDowell, Elisa Grammer, and Chair Judy Mizner. Department of Public Works (DPW) Director Wayne Amaral, and Town Manager Angus Jennings.

Call to order

7:35 PM

Approval of Minutes From 10/20/2021

By a unanimous vote the Committee approved the minutes of October 20, 2021, as amended.

Review FY 2023 Capital Proposals

1. \$27K from the Water Enterprise Fund Account reserves for engineering services to update the Water Departments existing hydraulic model and water distribution system study originally completed in 2003
Mr. Jennings said that the overall cost may change. The Select Board may propose additional funding for this study. The Town water system serves about 60% of the Town but requires extensive capital improvements to its aged mains and other facilities. These costs are beyond the ability of the water users alone to bear.

Chair Mizner clarified that the current bylaw under which the committee is operating provides that qualifying capital improvements of all departments—including the Water Department—are subject to committee review. Ms. Grammer agreed.

2. \$25K from Free Cash to fund an evaluation/audit of the Page School brick exterior with special attention to the failing lintel stonework

Mr. Amaral said that DPW has an old quote from 2017. Additional problems, including flooding and mortar falling off the building, make it highly likely that actual costs will be higher. The intent is to hire an independent expert (perhaps a preservation firm like the one that evaluated Carr Post) that will not be bidding to do the work. The goal is to determine what fixes are needed to make the building exterior safe for perhaps another ten years.

3. \$85K from Free Cash to fund a Structural Safety and Component Assessment Study for the Page School
The question, said Mr. Amaral, is when to stop putting money in an old, outmoded building in bad repair whose size far exceeds the need, making energy costs unrealistic among many other problems. He said that the Town needs a highly qualified consultant, obtained through a Request For Proposal process, to make a comprehensive study of all the upgrades that are needed so an informed decision can be made about the school building. A study was done in 2009 and some improvements were made, but new problems are arising.

4. \$65K from Capital Stabilization to fund the replacement of Town Offices phone system including all hardware and software

Mr. Amaral noted that the phone system now in use was purchased used about a decade ago, is breaking down, lacks new software support, and cannot be repaired. It is outmoded, problems with its quality are

mounting, and the Town could find itself without a working phone system. The cost estimate may change based on decisions whether to buy or lease, etc. These issues would be negotiated with the vendor.

5. \$56K from Capital Stabilization to fund a replacement pickup truck for the Facilities Division of DPW

Mr. Amaral noted that he was pleased that members of the highway crew were very open to buying an electric F-150 truck. Ms. Boria inquired about the length of time and difficulty in obtaining these vehicles. Mr. Amaral said that a wait is expected. Also, with the extended battery and the relatively small distances to travel in Town, the limited range of an electric vehicle should not be a problem. Ms. Grammer noted that it may be possible to get a \$7,500 rebate through the [MassEVIP](#) program and that the Town should be sure to [apply](#)—even though it is prudent to include the entire amount in the Town meeting article.

6. \$80K from Capital Stabilization to fund a replacement for the F-350 Dump Truck (1 Ton) with new F-550 Dump Truck for Highway Division Operations of DPW.

Mr. Amaral reported that this 14-year-old truck is showing signs of wear and tear and is losing power. Moreover, the Town has purchased a salter—which is heavily used—and it is now clear that the truck is undersized for the salt spreader. A new, heavier duty truck is proposed.

7. \$39K from Capital Stabilization to fund new public safety emergency communication equipment on the roof of the Page School and remove the outdated equipment and tower from the old Parks and Rec Building

Mr. Amaral said that the existing communication equipment is outdated and so poor in coverage that the safety officers need at times to use their cell phones. The proposal is to remove the existing tower, which is failing, and locate new equipment atop Page School, which is the highest spot in Town. If Page School no longer is available, then the equipment can be removed and relocated to a new tower or other suitable place. Removing the existing tower will permit, at a future point, demolition of the old Park & Rec building, which is otherwise empty, in poor repair, and a hazard.

8. \$27.5K from Capital Stabilization DPW Annex / Water Department Garage Roof Replacement Project

Mr. Amaral said that the underlayment of the existing roof is in good shape, but the shingles are starting to fail. It will save money to replace the shingles, which can be done by Town staff, so that the structure under them will last.

9. \$35.9K from Capital Stabilization DPW Annex / Water Department Garage – Facilities Workstation Relocation

Mr. Amaral explained that DPW staff work on carpentry projects (such as current repair to the cupola on the Town gazebo) whenever they have some available time. As the projects sit awaiting repair, they are exposed to grease, oil, and other materials from automotive repair occurring in the next bay. This proposal would carve out and provide HVAC for a dedicated carpentry area.

Discussion of Capital Improvement Program

Updating the Capital Improvements spreadsheet available to the CIC & posted on the website; Including in the spreadsheet Mr. Preble's summary projected capital fund income and outflow in future years
Mr. Jennings explained that because he is extremely busy with critical matters (often unfunded mandates) and needs more staff he has not had the 20 hours needed to complete updates since September 2020. The goal is to have this done before the next CIC meeting scheduled for March 24, 2022.

Capturing large infrastructure capital costs like the Middle Street Bridge in the Capital Improvements Program

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 we should 1) find better ways to identify and capture these costs, or 2) set aside additional funds (perhaps in lieu of the return of Free Cash at Fall Town meeting to reduce taxes), or 3) leave things as they are and hope for the best in terms of having funds to pay for capital improvements.

Mr. Amaral and Mr. Jennings identified future large costs as including Page School and stormwater management. Ms. Mizner mentioned the climate change threats to River Road.

The question of how to fund as-yet-unknown but reasonably anticipatable capital costs remains for consideration.

Other business

It was agreed that Ms. Grammer will compile a new Litmus Test for this year's proposed capital improvements and circulate it among the committee members.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:29 PM

Meeting Documents

Materials discussing proposed FY 2023 capital improvements

Respectfully submitted

Elisa Grammer