

Capital Improvements Committee Meeting Minutes

Second Floor Conference Room - Town Hall

One Avenue A, Turners Falls MA 01376

Wednesday, February 15, 2017

Meeting opened at Town Hall at 3:00 PM. Attendees included Capital Improvement Committee (CIC) members Fred Bowman, Don Valley, Greg Garrison, and Steven Ellis, Town Administrator.

Review and approval of minutes

- Mr. Garrison moves to approve the minutes of February 8 as amended to reflect that capital infrastructure costs are included in estimates of DPW facility project cost. Mr. Valley seconds. Motion passes 4-0.

Motions to recommend proposed capital improvement projects to the Finance Committee

- Mr. Valley moves to recommend to the Finance Committee a WPCF request for \$35,000 to support valve automation and SCADA alarm system and Mr. Garrison seconds. Motion passes 4-0.
- Mr. Garrison moves to recommend to the Finance Committee a request for \$200,000 to be allocated to the WPCF Capital Stabilization Fund and Mr. Valley seconds. From speaking with the Town Accountant, who submitted this request, we understand that the goal is to place \$200,000 in this capital stabilization fund each year following certification of retained earnings and prior to use of those funds to reduce sewer rates. This ensures the routine and ongoing capital needs of the plant can be addressed in a timely fashion without further appropriation. Motion passes 4-0.
- Mr. Garrison moves to recommend to the Finance Committee that \$75,000 be allocated to the DPW Discretionary account and Mr. Valley seconds. Discussion of FY17 expenses to date and planned expenditures, as well as FY16 carryover that led to a total of just over \$109,000 available in this account in FY17. Current data show \$51,042 in the account at present and Mr. Bergeron previously indicated a substantial portion of that would be spent on a new body for one of his existing trucks. It was noted that Mr. Bergeron is coming to the Finance Committee this same evening about a transfer request (from reserves) to cover replacement of a 2006 F350 4WD pickup that blew its motor in the last storm. Motion passes 4-0.

Mr. Garrison indicated he feels it should remain as a \$75,000 line item, though the request this year was for \$100,000. This (\$75,000) is the same as it was in FY17. Mr. Bowman noted that Mr. Bergeron does a very good job of handling his discretionary account and we can trust it is well managed. Strong consensus expressed that \$75,000 is an appropriate figure. Motion passes 4-0.

Motion to recommend proposed Public Works Facility

- Mr. Bowman notes that we won't know the true cost of the current \$11.5M project proposal until we have a build ready design for the facility. It is clear that the present

building is not compliant with state safety codes and doesn't want to Town forced into actions that would require further investment in the current, inadequate facility. Feels we should move to approve the project now as it will become more expensive if we wait.

- Mr. Garrison states his general agreement but will abstain from this vote because he doesn't feel he has enough information to vote responsibly. He is concerned that undisclosed costs remain in relation to engineering and infrastructure; doesn't like that everything is not under cover and the costs of getting it under cover are not truly accounted for yet. It's not a complete plan as yet. He wants clarification of how this garage will affect operating costs as relates to the new building and those that may remain in use. Supports the need but doesn't have all the answers he needs.
- Mr. Bowman acknowledges gaps in the information we have available right now, believes it needs to be built and doesn't want it to be put off.
- Mr. Ellis wants to recommend it but feels we are not looking at a complete project at the moment. Notes the Facility Building Committee continues to work on elements of the plan that are not complete, related to vehicle storage options at the same site or converting the old DPW garage to cold storage. Believes the Town can bear this expense, but we're not sure exactly what the expense will be yet.
- Mr. Valley is very concerned about the affordability of this project and is very aware of the trade-offs committing to a project of this scale will force on the town as it considers the need for improved library and senior/recreation center facilities, as well as other capital project needs that are likely to surface. He sees the DPW is almost doubling its square footage in this proposal. The plan accounts for an increase in staff from the present 17 to 26, but doesn't see the need as our town's unlikely to increase its road miles – we repair and maintain, we don't build new roads. Sees operating costs as likely to skyrocket in this new scenario.
- Mr. Valley expressed concern that the committee may not have sufficiently challenged Weston & Sampson engineering design consultants after the first cut, and lamented the lack of “if this, then” design alternatives presented in the final feasibility study report. Fundamentally, he is not convinced of the savings associated with indoor storage, referencing an additional 5-7 years of life for vehicles that was referenced by the building committee. Feels that this is a better building than is affordable and would intend to vote against this specific proposal while still supporting the need for a new facility.
- There was consensus that the CIC should vote on whether to recommend this project to the Finance Committee, even if CIC members feel the need to abstain due to the lack of a complete plan. There was general consensus on the need for a closure or maintenance plan for the old buildings, as well as greater understanding of the operational costs we can expect to bear. Mr. Ellis suggests we take two votes - one to the question of whether we see a need for a new facility and the other focused on the present plan.
- Mr. Garrison moves to affirm the CIC's agreement that a new DPW facility is needed. Mr. Bowman seconds and the motion passes 4-0.
- Mr. Garrison moves to recommend the public works facility design and cost as presented by the Public Works Facility Building Committee and it is seconded by Mr. Bowman. Mr

Ellis, Mr. Garrison, and Mr. Bowman abstain; Mr. Valley votes no. The motion fails to pass 0-1-3. Mr. Ellis and Mr. Garrison express an inclination to support a project at this figure if a more complete plan is presented and is compelling.

Motion to recommend a change in Town Bylaws to reduce the size of the Capital Improvements Committee

- Reflecting on past conversations regarding the inability of the committee to attract a full roster of six individuals, with one member appointed by and from the planning board and five additional members appointed by the Town Moderator, Mr. Garrison moves to place an article on the Annual Town Meeting warrant to reduce the number of additional members from five to four, reducing the total size of the committee to five (the planning board appointee and four members appointed by the Town Moderator). Mr. Ellis seconds and the motion passes 4-0.

Meeting adjourned at 4:30pm