Capital Planning Committee Minutes

October 26, 2021

The Capital Planning Committee met in the Ritter Building as scheduled with the following members present: Tom Alonzo, Dave Passios, George Martin, Paula Bertram and Brian Lehtinen. Town Manager Heather Lemieux was also in attendance.

1. **Call to Order** – Chairman called meeting to order at 5:36 p.m.

2. **Public Comment: Comment from the Committee, Comment from the Public** – No public or Committee comment.

3. **Approval of Minutes** – No minutes available, Paula will send out minutes of last meeting and this meeting before the 11/2/2021 meeting.

4. **Review Capital Requests Submitted by Fire Department and Land Use Director** –

Land Use Director – Adam Burney, Land Use Director, explained that the Planning Board is requesting funding to complete a Master Plan. Previously the Boards strategy was to submit two $50,000 articles in two fiscal years. The first of which was approved. During the process it was determined that we had very inaccurate population projections. A portion of the $50,000 funding ($7000) was used for a population study. Following the population study, a bid was put out for completion of 2 chapters of the plan: zero bids were received, and all potential bidders indicated that the Town was asking too much for the small amount of funding available. Adam conducted research and found that other communities were spending between $135,000-$225,000. Mr. Burney noted that the ramp up and mobilization by the successful bidder is the bulk of cost, once that is completed, during the writing of the various elements all the same general sets of data, information, public input, and participation is utilized. The cost of ramp up/mobilization is in the 65,000 range. Therefore, the Planning Board has requested $110,000 in this year's Capital Plan. Coupled with the $43,000 remaining from the initial article, there is $153,000 available to complete the entire Master Plan as one project. The master plan sets a foundation for policy and for decision making and creates one unified document that helps guide municipal decisions that are made on many different levels.

George Martin asked for further information about what a Master Plan is. Mr. Burney explained that a Master Plan is required by Mass General Law. It is a blueprint or map to where the Town will go over the next 20 years. It covers land use and zoning, cultural and natural resources, housing, and economic development. It is designed to guide decision making through consensus building. There are 8 elements within the plan, each element has goals and objectives, and the plan outlines an implementation plan that helps the Town achieve those goals. An example would be if the goal were to encourage more industrial development the plan would identify areas that would be appropriate, identify possible uses, and ways to help facilitate that goal. Tom Alonzo asked for clarification regarding the required funding; the original plan was to eventually obtain $100,000 and now the Planning Board is seeking a total of $153,000? Mr. Burney replied affirmatively. Tom Alonzo question if the Board would make a commitment to keep the Master Plan up to date? Paula Bertram, (Planning Board member) stated that she thought the Board is committed to updating the plan as needed to keep it current. Adam Burney noted that the current plan is 19 years old. Mr. Burney has dealt with communities that have much older plans. Paula Bertram noted that the community has changed significantly since it was originally written (advent of sewer and dense development). Adam Burney told the Committee he expects that it will take 18 months to 2 years to complete update. Brian Lehtinen asked if any consideration was given to doing the plan inhouse? Mr. Burney responded that there are certain elements that really can't be done inhouse. For example, completing the facilities element in house could be a recipe for disaster and it may be colored by political views. Mr. Burney added that it would be an incredibly big lift to do inhouse and having a consultant would be advantageous. Tom Alonzo noted that doing the plan inhouse would take much longer as the Planning Board is occupied with conducting current business and could also negatively affect volunteerism.

Heather Lemieux questioned how many chapters the funding would cover. Mr. Burney responded that the requested funding covers 8 elements, the existing open space plan (OSB) would be incorporated as one of the 8. Heather Lemieux questioned if an update to the OSP would be needed? Mr. Burney responded that some minor updates may be necessary. Heather Lemieux questioned the benefits of an updated Master Plan. Mr. Burney responded that the Master Plan could identify grants that would be available and provide background data for grant applications.

Mr. Burney added that in the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness grant program there were several projects that came up and the grant criteria could not be met. As the Master Plan is developed, we can look at sustainability. Heather Lemieux questioned if any consideration was given to utilizing a regional planning agency. Mr. Burney noted that in the past MRPC's attention to proposals has been lacking and there has been significant staff turnover recently; staff members have left, John Hume is no longer the Director, Karen Chapman is now the Planning Director. Throughout the COVID pandemic, MRPC has hired part time planners. Mr. Burney stated that he feels that MRPC is trying to get their own house in order, and he is concerned that the Town won't get the focus and attention needed due to internal turmoil. Mr. Burney noted that MRPC also facilitates the DLTA grants which consumes most of their resources. Ms. Lemieux noted that it is possible to go out to other planning commissions, Mr. Burney agreed and commented that there would still be a cost. A planning agency could potentially reduce some of the cost, however Mr. Burney believes that the cost would still be over $100,000 to complete. Mr. Burney noted that if we hire a private consultant the process will go rapidly as they have more resources and can meet a tighter timeline.

George Martin asked if there is a cost to utilizing MRPC? Heather Lemieux responded that the Town pays a regional assessment and added that MRPC serves us in other capacities, such as the abatement of hazardous waste at the gas station on Mass. Ave., DLTA grants and GIS services.

Adam Burney noted that some communities have done online master plans that are interactive. Tom Alonzo said it was important to have both a hard & soft copy. Heather Lemieux remarked that a searchable document would be ideal.

Fire Department – Chief Sullivan informed the committee that the Fire Department does not have anything on the Capital Plan for this coming year and provided a quick summary of what's coming up in future years:

Item	Year	Estimated Cost	Comments/Discussion
Replace Engine 2 chassis	FY2024	$115,000	Chief Sullivan was not satisfied with the estimates received and has pushed this item off a year. The cost is hard to pin down due to availability of chassis and components. Dave Passios questioned the cost of replacing the entire vehicle. Chief Sullivan responded that unofficially the cost would be estimated at $200,000+-.
Rescue 1 Replacement	FY2026	$432,000	The current vehicle will be 12 years old at replacement. The estimated cost of this item has increased from $362,000 to $432,000. Existing vehicle would be rotated to become water rescue unit and the 1998 vehicle (ex-ambulance) currently serving in this capacity would be disposed of.
Car 2 Replacement	FY2026	$56,000	Vehicle serves as Fire Prevention/Duty Officer Vehicle. Car will be 10 years old at replacement. Dave Passios remarked that it is important that other departments are contacted when one vehicle comes out of service as other departments may be able to utilize. Mr. Passios noted that a year or so ago he purchased an Acadia sold by a department which only needed $3,000 worth of work while the DPW Director has been utilizing a utility truck.

Item	Year	Estimated Cost	Comments/Discussion
			Chief Sullivan commented that possible usage varies by the vehicle. His old car was given to the animal control officer and didn't last very long. The old service truck is currently being used by the DPW mechanic. Heather Lemieux pointed out that as a green community, an energy efficient vehicle cannot be replaced with a less energy efficient vehicle.
Squad 3 Replacement	FY2027	$1,146,000	Vehicle is currently a 2008 Rescue Pumper that serves as the Departments Heavy Rescue and Pumper. Vehicle will be at 20 years when replaced.
M1 4x4 Utility Vehicle with Plow Replacement	FY2027	$106,000	Department service vehicle, will be at 10 years when replaced.
Rescue 2 Replacement	FY2029	$500,000	Ambulances are rotated on a 5-year cycle. Newest vehicle utilized as primary ambulance and oldest as backup. Vehicle will be at 10 year replacement point. George Martin questioned if the replacement will include all the equipment. Chief Sullivan responded that the stretcher is included but all other components would come from the old vehicle.
Engine 5 Replacement	FY2032	$863,000	Reserve pumper for Department, serves as the heavy duty brush truck. Vehicle was originally purchased through an AFG Grant at a cost of $30,000 to the Town. Vehicle would be 30 years old when replaced.

Heather Lemieux noted that all the identified capital items in the Fire Department are replacements, there are no new items identified. Chief Sullivan responded that air pack replacement may be necessary depending on how the new items hold up. The Manufactures states that they are have a life span of 10 years, however they may not hold up. Tom Alonzo questioned status of the turn out gear. Chief Sullivan said the new gear has not been received, the original budget was based on 5 units per year however due to cost increases the department can only purchase 2 per year.

Action and Agenda Items for Next Meeting – Next meeting 11/2/21, School is coming in (Facilities Director and Superintendent). 11/23/21 Police, DPW 11/30/31, 11/9/21 records retention and IT. 12/7/21 possible site visits.

Dave Passios said he would like to talk about moving police vehicles into operating budget; take part of the budget funding and create a line item to fund the cruiser replacement schedule within department budget. Tom Alonzo noted that the cruiser replacement fits the definition of a capital expenditure. He added that if vehicle replacement is incorporated within the omnibus budget, then the department head is not required to purchase a vehicle. Town Meeting votes on the entire department budget, not individual line items. There is a risk that the Town would not get vehicle rotation as anticipated whereas items specified in the Capital plan are mandated. This topic will be added to a the agenda of a future meeting.

5. **Public Comment: Comment from the Public, Comment from the Committee** – None.

6. **Adjournment** – At 6:19 p.m. Paula Bertram made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Dave Passios, passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted:

Paula Bertram

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