

Capital Planning and Investment Committee

December 16, 2021

Voting Members Present: SusanMary Redinger, Nate Finch, Jeffrey Lin, Richard Maiore, Dick Fellows

Also Present: Tim Bragan, Linda Dwight, Jared Mullane, Dan Daly, Paul Cohen Members of public

Meeting called to order at 7:02pm by Chair Nate Finch. Pursuant to Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2021, An Act Relative to Extending Certain COVID-19 Measures Adopted During the State of Emergency and signed into law on June 16, 2021, this meeting was conducted via remote participation.

Committee votes are in **bold** below.

- Discussion about the Athletic Field Complex
 - Dan Daly addresses points brought up in the last meeting about the athletic field complex.
 - Mr. Daly referred to the question about asking for money before a parcel is identified, and responds by saying that if the parcel is identified first, it gives the seller leverage to raise the price.
 - Mr. Daly referred to the question of CPIC having stated at previous times that they do not fund funds. Mr. Daly refers to department of revenue allows for creation of a stabilization fund for a variety of uses and in his opinion, this falls under that area.
 - Mr. Finch agreed to forward on Mr. Daly's email to the rest of the CPIC members.
 - Mr. Finch notes that he didn't think it was ever a legal question about whether or not we could, just that it was said in the past that it was something we should not do.
 - Mr. Bragan noted that there was an older law that limited the total in these stabilization funds to 10% of total town valuation, and no more than 10 funds total. He noted that the 2017 law changed stabilization funds only such that there was no longer a limit. He noted that the Conservation Commission came to CPIC to ask for money, and CPIC at the time said "as a policy we do not fund funds, we fund projects".
 - Mr. Bragan suggested that we follow the plan of purchasing the COA building or school building. The Conservation Commission is the only committee that doesn't have to follow the procurement process.
 - Mr. Bragan asked what it would take to tighten up the cost estimates.
 - Dr. Dwight noted that the amount asked for is to show commitment by the town.
 - Mr. Daly noted that you can't get a solid price without a site. Site development makes a huge difference in cost.

- Mr. Bragan asked about the Open Space Committee's capital plan. The members on the call said they don't have one yet.
- Mr. Bragan notes that he understands the town needs fields, and discusses the history of some of the athletic fields and how they are placed.
- Mr. Bragan notes that land purchases have to go through the procurement process, with an RFP and appraisal.
- Mr Bragan notes that the land has to be identified through the procurement process, and that the town successfully did that in 2 months time for the COA building, so the open space committee should be able to do that, too.
- Mr. Daly asked to be pointed in the right direction, and notes there are people from town hall and select board on the open space committee and that this advice is coming late in the process.
- Mr. Bragan notes that the open space committee was charged with giving the select board a 5 year capital plan, and that the \$4.5 million dollar request is a surprise.
- Mr. Cohen states that the process to purchase and build fields on land is a long process, 3-5 years. He states that the money requested would give the town credibility that the town is serious about constructing a field. He states that the OSC could go through the procurement process, but they need the money for credibility.
- Mr. Finch states that he doesn't think anyone is against new fields, but that it's the process that is the main issue.
- Mr. Finch states that the procurement process is standard, you send out a request for proposals, gets responses, and choose one to bring to town meeting. He states that even if you have money in an account for the land, you still have to go to the town to get a vote to spend that money and purchase that land, so the money being in a separate account doesn't really matter.
- Mr. Daly states that it was his understanding that the Select Board had empowered the Open Space Committee to act as a town liaison to direct town funding for the open space acquisition. In layman's term, to broker a deal for the land. Mr. Daly asked Mr. Maiore for clarification.
- Mr. Maiore says that was his understanding.
- Mr. Maiore further notes that the capital plan for the OSC does not seem relevant to the discussion. He notes that the problem seems to be whether or not you need to identify the land before you have money for the land.
- Mr. Bragan states he does not think the capital plan is irrelevant, because it gives the residents knowledge of what other requests the OSC would be looking for.
- Dr. Dwight states that the original 800,000 request was just a way to let the voters vote on the project incrementally. She states she believes this is a way to introduce the idea of new fields to the town, so it's not a surprise, and to get a feeling for the town's enthusiasm for the project.
- Mr. Bragan notes that bringing a project without a cost to town meeting will of course be approved, but then if it comes back too expensive, it will not get approval.

- Dr. Dwight notes that this is how it was done with the school, with a feasibility study that was less expensive. And notes that there was an incremental approach to the COA building, as the old COA building had many repairs done before they found the new building.
- Mr. Finch notes that he doesn't think you need \$800,000 to show the town wants to spend money on fields. And since you have to come back to vote on the land anyway, that he would prefer a smaller amount.
- Mr. Fellows indicates he's not comfortable with the incremental approach, because you don't know how much money the final project will cost.
- Mr. Lin notes his agreement that he is not comfortable with the incremental approach, especially since there doesn't seem to be agreement about the correct process.
- Ms. Redinger notes that there is broad support for this ,and the committee shouldn't kick the can down the road. She asks if maybe a lower amount would be agreeable, maybe 400,000 or 500,000 in a fund for the property.
- Mr. Bragan notes that's what the capital fund is for.
- Mr. Cohen says that we need the money to be taken seriously in a negotiation for property.
- Mr. Cohen notes that with the COA building, there was clearly an identified property before the RFP went out, and then the RFP was written to make it legal, and that's what the OSC is looking to do.
- Ms. Redinger suggests tabling the discussion on fields for now.
- Mr. Finch agrees.
- Dr. Dwight suggests that a lower amount might be a good way to get the message out about the fields.
- Mr. Finch tables the discussion for the night.
- Discussion of next meeting
 - Mr. Finch notes the committee needs to meet again before Tuesday.
 - Mrs. Redinger notes that we can't post a meeting for Monday, because there needs to be 48 hours of notice.
 - Mr. Bragan indicates that the committee could recess the meeting to be picked back up on Monday.
- Review of Committee's Ratings of Projects
- Discussion of school HVAC.
 - Mr. Bragan asks if there were quotes that came back. Dr. Dwight said that there were three quotes that came back, and all were \$220,000 or more, despite only being approved for \$150,000.
 - Dr. Dwight states that doing a larger project that replaces more HVAC units at once might save money.
 - Dr. Dwight notes that she has heard of a school that did all their HVAC for about 1.5 million.
 - Dr. Dwight noted the school is looking into an MSBA (Massachusetts School Building Authority) accelerated repair project. She is not sure if HVAC is something the MSBA will cover, but that they should know soon.

- Ms. Redinger asked if the school wanted more than \$150,000 to cover the HVAC, given the quotes.
 - Dr. Dwight noted that there are smaller units that could be replaced instead of the large one.
- Discussion of Public Safety Building Elevator
 - Mr. Lin notes that this does not seem to be a critical issue.
 - Mr. Finch notes that it's not a safety issue so much as an accessibility issue if the elevator can't be fixed for 6 months because of a lack of parts.
 - Mr. Finch notes that we usually regret not keeping up with maintenance, and this seems to fall under that.
- Discussion of process
 - Mr. Finch notes that we usually pick a line in the list projects by rating and vote for all the projects above the line.
 - Mrs. Redinger suggests we keep talking about projects, so we can at least touch on all of them.
- Discussion of Bromfield Network upgrade
 - Mr. Bragan asked if the requested amount is the full amount or the e-rate that the school can get.
 - Dr. Dwight responds that they always ask for the full amount since the lesser e-rate is subject to approval.
 - Dr. Dwight notes that the lower rate is for the hardware costs, but not the labor costs.
- Discussion of DPW Bucket Loader
 - Mr. Finch noted this is a replacement of an existing vehicle.
 - Mr. Bragan expressed surprise that this project was not rated higher, due to its use for road maintenance, for example during snow storms.
 - Mr. Fellows expressed some skepticism about the necessity of the vehicle.
 - Mr. Maiore noted there's no real alternative except people with shovels.
- Discussion of DPW Building Design
 - Mr. Fellows opined that he did not think the town can afford a new building, while admitting that the building does need to be replaced.
 - Mr. Fellows also stated he felt the price for the design seemed too high.
 - Mr. Bragan noted that covering the building via debt is problematic due to the town already being at the 12% debt ceiling.
 - Mr. Fellows worried that going above the debt ceiling would cause the town's debt rating to go down, thus we'd pay more for debt.
 - Ms. Redinger noted that some old debts would be coming off the budget in coming years.
 - Ms. Redinger stated that 500,000 was how much the town paid for the designs for the whole school, so the price for the DPW building design seemed high to her.
 - Mr. Finch agreed that the building needs to be replaced, but also that money is tight right now.

- Mr. Bragan asked if anyone asked the Permanent Building Committee whether or not the requested amount had been vetted and if they agreed with it.
 - Ms. Redinger noted that the PBC had not raised any red flags on the price.
 -
- Discussion of Fire Station Design
 - Mr. Bragan notes that he received an email from the fire chief that said that the Select Board allows for \$9500 to be used from the burning permit fees, and then this \$29000 request goes away. Mr. Bragan was unsure how to reconcile the disparity between the two numbers, so he responded to the fire chief.
- Discussion of Bromfield Locker Rooms
 - Mr. Finch noted that the committee had granted money for a design for this, but the quotes that came back were way over the estimate.
 - Mr. Finch noted that he had wanted a space study since it was a challenging space, but agreed that the quotes for the study were way too high.
 - Mr. Finch further noted that he had visited the locker rooms and that they were in desperate need to major repairs, and that making them not-awful was important.
 - Ms. Redinger noted that the request for the lockers was put on the 5 year plan 5 years ago.
 - Mr. Maiore asked if the schools had to make a choice, would they choose the locker rooms over the lockers?
 - Dr. Dwight was reluctant to choose one, but agreed the locker rooms were more important.
 - Mr Lin noted the locker rooms were in bad shape even when he was at Bromfield 10 years ago.
- Discussion of DPW Mower
 - Mr. Finch noted this was a request from Parks and Rec.
 - Mr. Bragan noted that this was a different kind of mower for mowing the athletic fields, the specific type requested by Parks and Rec.
 - Mr. Fellows expressed surprise at the price of the mower compared to a high end home mower.
 - Mr. Finch noted that everyone wants the town to have better fields, and that \$26,000 is not a lot for the capital stabilization fund.
- Discussion of Ayer Rd Study
 - Mr. Fellows notes that the public had voted down this study multiple times.
 - Mr. Maiore notes that the first stage of the process would be funded by the Select Board and thus more information would be available to the public before town meeting had to vote on the next phase.
 - Mr. Maiore also notes that this kind of study is one of the few ways the town has to raise revenue aside from taxes or selling assets.
 - Mr. Lin noted that there was grant money that was received to cover phase 1 of the project, but the town had already paid for that part with money from the Rand Tool trust, using leftover money from another project. Mr. Lin asked where the grant money would go in that case.

- Mr. Bragan responded that it was on the agenda for the Select Board the next week. He stated that the grant funds could be used to cover phase 1 or phase 2, and that if the grant money covered phase 1, the Rand Tool trust money would be held in abeyance.
- Mr. Finch noted he was generally in favor of studying how to best leverage this area. But he didn't feel comfortable voting on it until phase 1 was done. His example was saying that if the study says the area won't make money, then he would vote it down.
- Ms. Redinger noted that the study will report more than just whether or not the area will make money.
- Mr. Maiore noted that there's a lot the study could say about using the area, and if the study comes back and says there's nothing good to use the area for, that we could pull the article from town meeting.
- Ms Redinger noted that the new COA building will be in this area, and that we need to see how to handle zoning for the area.
- Mr. Maiore noted it's safety, aesthetics, as well as revenue.
- Mr. Finch asked to rescind his comment about not voting for it if it didn't make money, since he agreed it could give the town valuable information.
- Discussion of Accessibility Self Evaluation
 - Mr. Bragan noted that we don't know if we got the grant for this yet, but that we should know by the next day.
 - Mr. Finch asked if the grant would cover the full amount or only part of it.
 - Mr. Bragan said he thought it was only part of it.
 - Mr. Finch noted he thought it was valuable to find out what parts of the town need work to be accessible, so we know
 - Ms. Redinger asked Mr. Maiore why this was rated low.
 - Mr. Maiore said it was no particular reason, just how it fell into the rating scheme.
 - Mr. Fellows said that making the town buildings accessible is good, but going above and beyond seemed unnecessary.
 - Mr. Finch noted that this was not necessarily about going above and beyond, but perhaps just looking for places we have missed.
 - Ms. Redinger asked Mr. Bragan if he was concerned about liabilities about accessibility in the town.
 - Mr. Bragan said he was concerned about the Beach House and other places in town, and that the plan would help find these things.
 - Ms. Redinger asked Mr. Bragan if he thought this was important for the town. Mr. Bragan said yes.
- Discussion of Bromfield Study
 - Mr. Finch noted he likes studies that look broad and tell us all the things that need work, so that we don't get surprised by projects.
 - Mr. Fellows agreed that he seemed to think it makes sense.
 - Ms. Redinger noted that the CPIC rating form is hard on studies. She noted we need to take care of the facilities we have.
- Discussion of Athletic Fields

- Ms. Redinger asked if there was a decision to delay more discussion until Monday.
 - Mr. Finch noted that the members had talked about delaying until Monday, in the interest of time.
- Discussion of How to Approve and Funding Sources
 - Discussion of what to put as Capital Stabilization Fund
- SCBA Discussion
 - Mr. Finch suggested using excluded debt for the SCBA, Bucket Loader, and maybe the Ayer Rd Study, since they're expensive.
 - Mr. Bragan notes that the Study may not be able to be used with a loan, since there's no physical product.
 - Ms. Redinger asks if we should do debt or CSF for the SCBA.
 - Mr. Fellows offers that he's opposed to the SCBA request because it's too expensive.
 - Ms. Redinger notes that we are committed to having a fire department, and we need to give them the safety equipment
 - Mr. Fellows notes we just bought a two million dollar fire truck, and that operating our own fire department is too expensive.
 - Mr. Finch suggests the committee vote on whether or not to recommend the SCBA, and then if it passes, the committee can figure out a funding source.
- SCBA Vote
 - **Ms. Redinger moves to recommend the town spend \$370,534 for the SCBA packs.**
 - **Mr. Maiore seconded.**
 - **Vote - 4-1 in favor**
- Fire Ponds Vote
 - **Ms. Redinger moves to recommend the town spend \$62,000 on the fire ponds.**
 - **Mr. Maiore seconded.**
 - **Vote 5-0 in favor**
- General discussion of what the committee can afford to fund.
 - Discussion of funding sources for SCBA.
 - Ms. Redinger asks if there's less support for the lockers than the locker rooms?
 - Mr. Bragan asks if the school will be funding any of it out of the Devens fund.
 - Ms. Redinger responds, saying no, because the school has already increased its reliance on the Devens fund, and they don't know if they might need to hold some for next year to cover additional costs. She states that they will deplete the Devens fund in two years at the rate they're using it.
 - Mr. Fellows asks if the committee is really doing their job if they approve everything.
 - Mr. Fellows suggests several of the smaller items are legitimate and need to be done, until they get down to the bucket loader.

- Mr. Finch notes that the capital fund has been growing in recent years, and that since it's the taxpayers' money, it's not right to just let it sit around. He notes that spending it on capital funds seems like an appropriate use.
- Mr. Mullane notes that actually the capital fund has gone down the last 3 years, in 2020 it was at \$4 million, and at the end of last year it was at \$3.1 million.
- Mr. Finch asked Mr. Maiore if he thinks we should choose between lockers and locker rooms.
- Mr. Maiore says it was just idle speculation.
- Mr. Lin asks if the current expenses count the \$200,000 promised to fund the school building debt.
- Mr. Bragan says no, that's not included.
- Ms. Redinger suggests the bucket loader should be debt funded.
- Mr. Fellows and Mr. Finch agree.
- Discussion of DPW Building Design
 - Mr. Finch suggests the DPW building design get delayed due to being expensive.
 - Mr. Fellows suggests we need to wait to see if we can afford it.
 - Ms. Redinger notes the fire station design is also coming.
 - Mr. Fellows notes that if we approve the DPW and Fire Station, people's taxes will go through the roof, and he doesn't think we can afford it.
 - **Ms. Redinger moves that the committee decline the DPW study and resubmit later. Mr. Maiore seconds. No vote is taken immediately as discussion continues.**
 - Mr. Bragan asks how we'll know how much the DPW design will cost next time, if the funds we used to determine the cost of the building design were already expended.
 - Ms. Redinger suggests someone could add on to the cost to account for inflation.
 - Mr. Bragan notes that using debt to fund the SCBA and Bucket Loader will cause the town to go over the debt limit.
 - Mr. Bragan notes that he doesn't think we can continue to fund everything from now on.
 - Mr. Bragan asks if we're pushing out the athletic fields.
 - Ms. Redinger says no, we're waiting to look at the feasibility of establishing a fund for the athletic field.
 - Ms. Redinger states that the committee thinks the DPW building design is too high, and she can't see the \$550,000 coming out of the capital stabilization fund.
 - Mr. Bragan asks how we can know if the \$550,000 is accurate.
 - Ms. Redinger says we can't know that.
 - **Ms. Redinger asks if the committee voted on her motion not to recommend the DPW Design.**
 - **Mr. Finch notes they had not, and asks for a second, Mr. Fellows seconded.**
 - **Vote 5-0 to not recommend DPW design**
- Further
- Ms. Redinger suggests the committee take no action on the fire station study, since the Fire Chief said he might be able to cover the cost. All agree.

- **Ms. Redinger noted that there was \$45,000 in grant money to apply to the Ayer Rd Study, and moves that we recommend the study for \$220,000, to force the use of the grant money to cover the estimated \$265,000 total cost. Mr. Finch indicates he likes the idea. Mr. Maiore seconds.**
- **Vote is 4-1 in favor.**
- Ms. Redinger asks if we are using CSF funds for the Ayer Rd study. Mr. Finch says yes, and Mr. Fellow agrees, saying he doesn't think we should use debt for a study.
- **Ms. Redinger motions the committee recommend the Disability Study for \$32,000 coming out of the capital fund. Mr. Maiore seconds.**
- **Vote is 5-0 in favor.**
- **Mr. Fellows moves to recommend the Bromfield study for \$100,000. Ms. Redinger seconded.**
- **Vote is 5-0 in favor.**
- Ms Redinger notes the committee is tabling Athletic fields until Monday.
- Mr Finch notes that the committee still has a few things that need votes, like the smaller things at the top of the ratings sheets, and the \$200,000 to help cover the school debt.
- Mr. Bragan states the committee made a commitment and can't vote no on it.
- Mr. Finch agrees, but also states that the committee still has to vote on it.
- **Ms. Redinger motions that the committee approve the \$200,000 for the school debt. Mr. Maiore seconds.**
- **Vote is 5-0 in favor.**
- Discussion of meeting time on Monday.
- Mr. Maiore reminds the committee that they are recessing the meeting until Monday.
- Mr. Bragan states that the language is that the committee is recessing the meeting, to be resumed on monday.
- **Mr. Fellows moves to recess and reconvene on Monday the 20th at 9am. Ms. Redinger seconds.**
- **Vote is 5-0 in favor.**
- Meeting Adjourned at: 9:21pm