



FINANCIAL PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

March 2, 2021
7:00 PM

MEMBERS PRESENT: David DeVries, Chair
Michael Hodge
William Peterson, Jr.
John Rapa
Thomas Spataro

At 7:00pm, Chairman DeVries stated that this Open Meeting of the Financial Planning Committee was being conducted remotely consistent with Governor Baker's Executive Order of March 12, 2020, due to the current State of Emergency in the Commonwealth due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 Virus.

Chairman DeVries added that in order to mitigate the transmission of the COVID-19 Virus, the Town has been advised and directed by the Commonwealth to suspend public gatherings, and as such, the Governor's Order suspended the requirement of the Open Meeting Law to have all meetings in a publicly accessible *physical* location.

Chairman DeVries noted that the Order allows public bodies to meet entirely remotely so long as reasonable public access is afforded so that the public can follow along with the deliberations of the meeting. He indicated the ways in which the public may view this meeting as listed on the posted agenda. He noted that this meeting will feature Public Comment.

Chairman DeVries confirmed that the following members and persons anticipated on the agenda were remotely present and could be heard.

Financial Planning Committee

David DeVries, Chair
Michael Hodge
William Peterson, Jr.
John Rapa
Thomas Spataro

Others

John Coderre, Town Administrator
Becca Meekins, Asst. Town Administrator
Todd Helwig, CPC Member

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – FEBRUARY 24, 2021 REGULAR MEETING

Chairman DeVries postponed the approval of the February 24, 2021 meeting minutes to the March 9th meeting as they are not yet completed.

REVIEW OF FY2022 CPC PROJECT REQUESTS

Community Preservation Committee (CPC) Member Todd Helwig was remotely present. He indicated that at their February 4, 2021 Community Preservation Committee public hearing, the CPC voted unanimously to recommend the following applications be placed on the 2021 Annual Town Meeting warrant:

Historic Preservation Category:

\$203,780 for debt service associated with the acquisition of the White Cliffs facility located at 167 Main Street.

\$20,000 for the Historical Society, which will be used for the exterior painting of the building located at 52 Main Street. The project includes the painting of the exterior of the building; washing, removing mold and dirt; and cleaning debris from gutters and downspouts.

Open Space and Recreation Category:

\$290,250 for the DPW and Recreation Departments for the construction of six outdoor pickleball courts at the Ellsworth McAfee Park, including site preparation and installation of drainage, landscaping, and fencing.

\$400,000 for the Conservation Fund for the purpose of future open space preservation and/or acquisitions. The Conservation Fund is managed by the Conservation Commission with assistance from the Open Space Committee.

Housing Category:

\$65,200 will be allocated to the Housing Reserve Account for the future creation of affordable housing.

Administrative Funds:

\$32,600 for the administration of the Community Preservation Act (CPA), which includes clerical assistance, office supplies, property surveys, appraisals, attorney's fees, recording fees, and printing.

The FY2022 applications recommended for funding, including the \$32,600 for administration, total \$1,011,830. \$591,830 will be allocated from new revenues; \$400,000 will be allocated from the unreserved account; and \$20,000 from the Historic Reserve Fund.

Mr. Coderre explained the CPC process and how it relates to the capital planning process. The CPA is designed as a dedicated funding source for projects relating to affordable housing, historic preservation and recreational opportunities.

Mr. Spataro noted that \$400,000 is for the Conservation Fund for the purpose of future open space preservation and/or acquisitions. He asked what the cumulative balance is in the Conservation Fund? Mr. Coderre will look into this and get back to the Committee. Mr. Spataro asked if the Conservation Commission has the sole authority to purchase open space? Mr. Coderre responded that they do have the authority to purchase open space independently of Town Meeting using the criteria of the Open Space Plan. He added that the process typically includes a public hearing and that the Purchase & Sale Agreement would be negotiated with the help of his office and Town Counsel.

Mr. Coderre reviewed the Revenue Budget for the Community Preservation Fund and indicated that the State Match has significantly decreased over the years from 100% in FY2006 to 14% in this last round. He also reviewed the spending requirements of the Community Preservation Fund, noting that at least 10% must be used for Open Space, 10% for Historic Resources, and 10% for Affordable Housing and not more than 5% can be used for administration purposes.

In terms of the FY2022 CPC projects, Mr. Coderre recommended that the Financial Planning Committee render an opinion on the White Cliffs Debit Service and the Pickleball Court, which DPW Director Scott Charpentier previously presented. The remaining CPC projects do not qualify as Capital Projects for purposes of the Financial Planning Committee’s work.

FINAL REVIEW OF FY2022 CAPITAL BUDGET

Mr. Coderre reviewed the FY2022 Capital Budget below:

Project	Cost	Funding Source
Police: Cruiser Replacement (3)	\$150,000	Free Cash
Fire: Car 3 Pick-Up Truck Replacement	\$ 80,000	Free Cash
Fire: Care 1 SUV Replacement	\$ 76,000	Free Cash
CPC Recreation: Pickleball Courts at Ellsworth McAfee Park	\$292,250	CPA Funds
DPW: Roadway Improvements/Maintenance	\$310,000	Free Cash
DPW: One Ton Dump Truck with Plow	\$115,000	Free Cash
DPW: One Ton Pick-Up Truck with Plow	\$ 74,000	Free Cash
Sewer Enterprise Fund: Supervisory Control & Data Acquisition System (split Water 50% - Sewer 50%)	\$500,000	Water & Sewer Enterprise Funds
Water Enterprise Fund: Reservoir Dam Compliance	\$200,000	\$50,000 Sewer Enterprise Fund / \$150,000 Grant
Water Enterprise Fund: Utility Tractor (split water 60% - sewer 40%)	\$ 80,000	Water & Sewer Enterprise Funds

Mr. Coderre reviewed the Capital Budget funding sources, which include:

Free Cash	\$ 805,000
Community Preservation Fund	292,250
Grants	150,000
Water & Sewer Fund Balance (Free Cash)	130,000
Water & Sewer Fund Bonds	<u>500,000</u>
TOTAL	\$1,877,250

Mr. Coderre briefly reviewed the 6-Year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for future equipment and/or projects for the Fire, Police and DPW Departments, which were reviewed in full detail at the Committee’s earlier meetings. He also indicated that the Town Offices Building project and future Master Plan Implementation projects are anticipated for FY2023 and FY2024 with placeholders for funding to be determined.

Mr. Coderre shared the amended 6-Year CIP for the K-8 School Department, indicating that he and School Superintendent Greg Martineau discussed adding \$25,000-\$30,000 to a new equipment line item within the K-8 Schools FY2022 operating budget that is dedicated to small equipment needs such as snow blowers and carpet and furniture replacements, if needed. As the Committee knows, the CIP policy does not allow for items like these to be bundled together and presented for consideration under the CIP. Following additional review, Superintendent Martineau reported back that many of the smaller equipment needs originally included in the K-8 Schools FY2022 capital requests are eligible for Federal grant funding under the COVID-19 CARES Act and will be included in the FY2022 Operating Budget without requiring an additional increase.

With regard to the big picture over the coming years, Mr. Coderre indicated that some of the large-scale building projects in the 6-year CIP include the Fire Station, Town Offices and Peaslee School. He added that the Committee may have to consider issuing some short-term general obligation debt to fund some future capital projects, such as the \$600,000 roof replacement at the Zeh School in FY2023 since Free Cash levels are down due to the economic impacts of the pandemic.

PUBLIC COMMENTS RE: PROPOSED FY2022 CAPITAL BUDGET

Chairman DeVries stated that those who wish to speak under Public Comment will be admitted to the meeting as an attendee and will be asked to provide their full name and address for the record. Public comment will be limited to 3 minutes per person.

Lisa Maselli of 13 Maple Street asked why it cost \$500,000 for a feasibility study for Peaslee School? Mr. Coderre responded that under the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) building project process, a feasibility study that meets their criteria is required. He added that similar to the \$500,000 feasibility study for the Lincoln Street Elementary School, MSBA has a specific format and detail they require for potential grant funding. She asked why there are no plans for additional sidewalks considering that the residential tax base is responsible for three-quarters of the tax revenue. Mr. Coderre responded that the Town has a full pavement management plan that includes an assessment of all sidewalks. The general approach is to fix the existing sidewalks and roadways that are in need of repair. He added that the Town's top legislative priority that will be discussed at the March 8th Selectmen's Meeting is an increase to the Chapter 90 Transportation funding, as there are very limited funds to maintain, in priority order, the existing sidewalks and roadways.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee felt it had all the requested information and is ready to vote its recommendations on the FY2022 capital projects, which total \$1,877,250.

Mr Hodge added that there is nothing controversial or surprising in the proposed FY2022 Capital Budget and the requested projects have been in the CIP for years.

Mr. Hodge moved the Committee vote to recommend approval of the FY2022 Capital Budget as presented by Mr. Coderre; Mr. Spataro seconded the motion; the roll call vote was taken as follows:

DeVries	“aye”	Rapa	“aye”
Hodge	“aye”	Spataro	“aye”
Peterson	“aye”		

Mr. Coderre thanked the Financial Planning Committee for their work, indicating that the Capital Improvement Plan continues to work well for the Town in that it allows departments time to find grant funding opportunities, it allows the Town to spread out the tax impact, if there is any, and it allows the Town to issue debt on good schedules to smooth out the impacts. It also allows departments to have a reasonable expectation that projects will progress in an orderly fashion.

COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE CAPITAL PROJECTS

The Committee acknowledged the presentation made this evening by CPC Member Todd Helwig on the CPC requests for FY2022.

CPC- White Cliffs Debt

Mr. Hodge moved the Committee vote to recommend approval of the White Cliffs Debt as presented by Mr. Coderre due to the Town's legal and contractual obligations; Mr. Peterson seconded the motion; the roll call vote was taken as follows:

DeVries	"aye"	Rapa	"aye"
Hodge	"aye"	Spataro	"aye"
Peterson	"aye"		

COMMITTEE DRAFT REPORT

The Committee agreed to meet again on March 9th to review and finalize the draft of the Committee's report, reflecting the recommendations and votes this evening.

NEXT MEETING

The Committee agreed to meet on March 9th to approve minutes and the Committee's report to Town Meeting.

Mr. Coderre invited Committee Members to view the March 22nd Selectmen's Meeting where they will jointly hold the FY2022 Operating Budget Hearing with the Appropriations Committee. He added that he will be presenting the FY2022 Capital Budget to the Board of Selectmen at their April 12th meeting.

OTHER BUSINESS

None.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Hodge moved the Committee vote to adjourn; Mr. Rapa seconded the motion; the roll call was taken as follows:

DeVries	"aye"	Rapa	"aye"
Hodge	"aye"	Spataro	"aye"
Peterson	"aye"		

Meeting adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John W. Coderre
Town Administrator

Documents used during meeting:

1. March 2, 2021 Meeting Agenda
2. FY2022 CPC Project Requests
3. FY2022 Capital Budget