



Joint Capital Planning Committee Minutes

March 16, 2023 Meeting

Link to Meeting Video: [Joint Capital Planning Committee Mar 16, 2023 - YouTube](#)

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Members Present: Town Councilors Cathy Schoen, Pam Rooney, and Mandi Jo Hanneke; Library Trustees Alex Lefebvre and Farah Ameen

Members Absent: School Committee Members Jennifer Shiao and Irv Rhodes

Others Present: Town Manager Paul Bockelman, Finance Director Sean Mangano

Chair Schoen called the meeting to order at 1:01, announced the meeting was being recorded, and check to ensure all members could hear and be heard.

Meeting Discussion

Cathy noted that the meeting would focus on discussion and potential recommendations for the JCPC report to the Town Manager.

Sean came prepared with suggested changes in the FY24 proposed project list based on issues raised by the Committee to projects initial proposed and additional discussions with Staff and the Town Manager. The focus was on reductions. Town Manager Paul Bockelman joined for this part of the discussion.

Sean proposed the following reductions, including some that shifted projects to a future year:

- Postpone the DPW request for a side walk plow for one year and explore less expensive options. (Reduction of \$200,000)
- Purchase vans with remaining funds in from the Cost Escalation Reserve fund established last year. Reduction: \$35,000
 - He said have used \$30 to 40,000 so far so room
- Cruisers: purchase 3 rather than 4. Reduction of \$75,000 (from \$300,000 to \$225,000)
- Recreation: Include top dresser (\$15,000) and minimal parking lot repair. Postpone irrigation on other requests.
- Reduce the Facility General budget by \$50,000 and School general BY \$50,000. There are funds remaining from last year.
- APD HVAC is critical. Will do using other resources. (Reduction \$65,000)
- Electric school bus: Would need to appropriate the full cost. Would need to pull from old capital
- Field equipment: Do phase 1. Wait for Phase 2. Reduction: \$109,000.
 - Mandi observed that the equipment depended on operating budget support for supplies and staff. She recommended to Sean and the Town Manager that this



first phase equipment should be considered in conjunction with decisions about the DPW operating budget

- Electric school bus. Cathy asked about need for more assessment. She said the company doing leasing has several towns. There was discussion about the high cost of one bus, questions regarding potential leasing arrangements and whether hybrids might be an option. Sean responded that Town does not yet have a proposal. Not clear will be less expensive over multiple years.
 - The choice either this bus or diesel. Urgent to make the decision. Diesel would be around \$125,000.
 - Asked if hybrid Sean said not sure if available
 - Alex remarked this is a very large expense. She whether the extra \$250,000 or more expense was the best value for sustainability and reducing the Town carbon footprint. She asked to for assessment by Stephanie. “Biggest bang for our buck” suggested the need to assess other potential uses.
 - Sean agreed to discuss with Stephanie.
 - Mandi agreed with need to assess. Very high expense. Would we get better yield if doubled the sustainability fund,
 - Sean also noted that the budget needs to show the total cost of this and charging station even though a grant would help offset part of the cost. This would be adjusted later and with the grant coming to the Town.
 - Sean later suggested the Committee might to consider including the bus in the Sustainability budget to allow further analysis if the funding could be flexible.

Pam asked why the budget does not show any allocation from capital stabilization fund. Could this be part of the discussion. This will need further discussion.

Paul noted the questions about the bus make sense. The Town needs to assess given the very high costs. Sean added the E-Lion bus also a concern. Should we continue to invest in this bus given the challenges with the bus in terms of repairs. Sean said he would get more information on this issue.

Alex asked whether the extra funds should go to roads or sidewalks. Paul responded discuss interchangeable. He encouraged the Committee to suggest how to divide.

Sean showed the impact of the proposed changes in a spreadsheet.

The total changes turned an initial \$260,000 deficit to a \$467,874 “surplus” that could be allocated to roads and sidewalks. He remarked that Paul and staff are hearing a lot about roads. (See the revised Summary and Detailed Tables in Packet)



Sean and Paul asked for Committee reactions. There was a general endorsement to the proposed reductions and shifts of some projects to later years.

There was initial endorsement of allocating the \$467,874 to roads and sidewalks, with specification of how to allocate between these two uses. When questioned by Mandi whether it made sense to do this all in one year, Paul responded that a larger budget could make the Town more competitive in secure contractors. There are only a few companies that do such work in our region. A larger purchase could encourage a company to add a crew.

Pam asked whether we might want to increase the allotment for trees. Paul responded that the tree warden challenge right now is removal of trees due. He suggested leaving as requested.

Paul left the meeting after the first hour following the discussion about roads.

Discussion regarding other projects:

- Electric school bus battery (\$150,000): There was concern whether buying a battery for a bus that has had repeated problems was a wise investment. The Committee acknowledged that deciding not to buy the battery would likely require buying a second bus.
 - Members discussed a need for an overall assessment on electric buses given the very high expense. Including charging stations.
- Regional sharing costs: Mandi noted that some of the proposed projects would benefit the Regional School. She asked how the costs might be shared. This includes charging station and field equipment.
 - Sean responded that in the past this has been informal. The Town has access to the swimming pool, basketball courts, with the perception of fairly even swap. He noted this could be revisited.
- Body Cams. Committee members had asked about reducing the number requested; could these be shared. There is also a need for the Council surveillance policy to review the proposed use.
 - Cathy suggested reducing the number and wait to secure grant support.
 - Mandi favored approving the request contingently. This would allow time for further discussion at the Council about use and number needed: wait and see and be flexible.
- Resident proposals.
 - Road Safety Related (speed humps, cross walk, speed displays) The Committee and Sean noted that most of the proposals were about roads and safety. There is a need to develop a policy and priorities. This should include discussion with TAC. It is otherwise difficult for JCPC to assess.



- There was also not a review by Staff. The process needs to be improved
- Bike Station: Sean suggested that this request could be funded out the Sustainability budget. The Sustainability Director Stephanie Ciccarello oversees the bike share program. This proposal came with an offer of private matching funds. Stephanie will have authority to follow up on the request.

At the conclusion of discussion, Cathy committed to preparing a draft report with Committee recommendations. She summarized the approach used in previous years that focused on recommendations in specific areas, with acceptance of others as proposed

Cathy will aim to send the draft by Monday, March 20. This will be the focus of the March 23 meeting.

The meeting adjourned by 3 PM.

Minutes prepared by Cathy Schoen

Material presented during the meeting: Proposed revision. Posted to packet after the meeting.