# West Newbury Capital Improvements Committee Meeting Minutes

**Meeting date & place: 7:30 PM, February 29, 2024 First Floor Hearing Room**

**Members Present:** Judy Mizner, Rick Parker, Elisa Grammer, Paul Niman, Ross Capolupo, and Polly McDowell. Ex officio, Town Manager Angus Jennings; also present Pentucket School buildings manager Jonathan Seymour, Department of Public Works (DPW) buildings supervisor Brian Richard, DPW highways superintendent Butch Hills, DPW project manager Christine Wallace; DPW business manager/procurement officer Katelyn Barker; Police/Fire Chief Dwyer

**Call to order** 7:30 pm

**Review and approve Minutes from previous CIC meeting**

*Mr. Niman moved, Mr. Parker seconded, and the Committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes of February 9, 2024, as amended.*

**Updates regarding proposed FY25 capital projects**

Mr. Jennings provided an update about the capital articles proposed for spring town meeting, as described in his February 25th memo to the Committee. He identified the following projects as having been removed from the warrant at the Select Board’s February 20th meeting

1) Replace A/C Unit in Council on Aging / SAGE Center (#24)

2) Page School Interior Improvements/Repairs (#27)

3) Add'l Accessories for DPW Trackless Vehicle (#30)

4) Roof replacement, Public Safety Complex (#33)

He also noted that the Page School standpipe engineering article (#37) was removed based on new advice from Chief Dwyer.

Mr. Jennings described changes to other articles

1. Annex flooring replacement cost (#23) increased from $49.2 K to $62K based on quote received. This includes abatement work to address mastic containing asbestos. The floor will be scraped down to the concrete, so abatement is a one-time cost.
2. Electronic Town Offices key system (#32) has been scaled back to apply only to external doors and the archives/server room in the basement. With this change the cost would be some $9K, below the level for CIC review.
3. Public Safety Complex interior/exterior improvements (#34) will now be done mostly in-house, reducing the cost. Originally former DPW Director Wayne Amaral developed the cost estimate based on contractor bids, but Mr. Richard is now planning to do the work with a contractor he works with for about a third of the initial estimate. The roofing replacement will be deferred until the work on the fascia and other aspects of the exterior, which needs to be completed before the roof work can begin.
4. Middle Street Bridge status is described in Mr. Jennings’ memo. The Town is seeking all possible funding sources and has submitted a request for federal budget earmark money. Mr. Jennings has a meeting with the Newburyport City Council tomorrow and anticipates having an updated intermunicipal agreement draft tomorrow.
5. Rocks Village Bridge warning signals (#22) will become a Mass Department of Transportation (DOT) item and thus not included on the town meeting warrant. The Town had been corresponding with DOT for months about this and recently heard back that DOT views this as a viable proposal, which DOT will pursue since the bridge is a DOT asset.
6. Telecom upgrades (#31)—discussed later in the meeting.
7. Page School elevator (#38) has been revised in scope to concentrate on near term operational reliability, at a significantly reduced cost.
8. Page engineer design site traffic circulation (#39) ultimately may not appear on the warrant. Since the Town’s project for improved pedestrian safety at Rt 113 and Page School is now under review at DOT, the consultant engineers thought that it might be most efficient to modify the existing project to add a widening of the Page School exit (which is at the same overall location as the crossing) to allow dedicated left and right turn lanes. The next step is to get the engineers’ cost proposal for the widening design work.

Mr. Jennings recommended that the CIC focus in the near term on review of the following projects, whose background materials are largely unchanged

1. Replace Fire Pumper Tanker (#21)
2. Annex flooring replacement, based on updated cost (attached) (#23)
3. Replace Generator for Town Offices/Annex (#25)
4. Page School flooring repairs (#26)
5. DPW Plow Truck (#28)
6. Zero-Turn Mower for DPW (#29)
7. Replace Water Pump at Wellfield (#35)
8. Engineering funds for Coffin Street culvert replacement (#36)

Mr. Jennings noted that he is not expecting votes or formal actions on these matters at this point.

**Discussion with article sponsors regarding article updates, and Committee member questions or requests for further information**

Ms. Mizner said that since the proposals’ sponsors are all present, the Committee could turn to discussions with them about their projects.

Replace Fire Pumper Tanker (#21)

Chief Dwyer and Rick Parker (the CIC member assigned to reviewing this acquisition) provided an overview. The vehicle dates from 1984 and has been rebuilt, with the pump rebuilt several times. It now presents safety issues, its transmission is on its last legs, rust is a problem. The Fire Department and the Board of Engineers considered alternative trucks but settled on the proposed E 1 stock (as opposed to custom) vehicle. An advantage with this particular seller is that they can do much of the repair and maintenance work onsite here in West Newbury. Although the Department applied for grants for this acquisition, Chief Dwyer said that the funding would go to municipalities with greater financial need than West Newbury.

In response to Ms. Mizner, Chief Dwyer explained that in considering alternatives, they looked at different manufacturers and determined that the selected truck best met the Town’s needs. Another truck offered more firefighter seating, but cost over $800K and could hold less water than the selected vehicle.

DPW Plow Truck (#28)

Mr. Niman, still new to the CIC, explained that he had not had a chance to discuss these items with DPW. Mr. Hills said that the existing plow truck is 13 years old and has run for 37,000 miles. It is no longer reliable. Mr. Hills stressed that this is the time to acquire a replacement. Supply issues persist after COVID and a major unknown is the plan to switch to other technologies as environmental requirements become more stringent. Cummins is working on a hydrogen fueled or battery vehicle, but the longevity and reliability of the new technologies is a concern until the new systems are proven. If this acquisition is approved, delivery would be in 2025. Mr. Parker commented that he is extremely concerned about emissions and environmental impacts, but fully supports this project as the only reasonable choice in these circumstances. In response to Ms. Mizner’s question about the life expectancy of the new truck, Mr. Hills said that it should last 10-15 years. After use, the DPW blasts the truck with water to clean off salt and works hard to maintain the vehicles. Mr. Parker noted that these vehicles do not run for so many miles, but work very hard.

Zero-Turn Mower for DPW (#29)

Mr. Hills said that the new Kubota zero turn mower would replace a 2002 Kubota model. This is one of two diesel mowers and the other one is 10 years old. The one to be replaced is experiencing overheating and other problems. The mowers are used every week through the growing season. The new model will have a climate controlled cab. Mr. Parker mentioned that in discussing potential new carbon free mower technologies at a John Deer show room, he learned that John Deer may introduce a commercial grade electric mower in a few years.

Replace Water Pump at Wellfield (#35)

Ms. Mizner said that there was no new information about the replacement pump beyond what is in the materials.

Replace Generator for Town Offices/Annex (#25)

Mr. Capolupo (the CIC member looking into DPW renovation and construction projects) said that the current emergency generator is 30 years old and is not adequate to provide power to both the 1910 Building and the Annex. The current generator should last another 3-5 years. In considering whether to replace it in kind or upgrade, questions have arisen about what loads need to be maintained via the generator. Mr. Richard said that an electrician has looked at the panels and it appears that the western corner of the 1910 Building is a suitable location—but this would be a very long run, with expensive cabling—to reach the annex.

Mr. Niman suggested that two generators—one for the 1910 Building and another (which perhaps could be subject to a rental agreement that guaranteed availability) could be for the annex. Mr. Richard said that a single generator that would run everything, soup to nuts, would cost over $250K.

*After discussion, the CIC expressed a general preference for two generators and agreed that there is too much uncertainty at this point about what is needed and desired and what it would cost for acquisition of a generator(s) to be on the warrant. Mr. Richards will talk with an electrician and Mr. Jennings will explore the idea of having engineering work to better determine needs and solutions.*

Public Safety Complex interior/exterior improvements (#34)

Mr. Capalupo said that by having Mr. Richard do the work with help from a contractor, the cost was reduced from over $70K to around $24K. Mr. Richard said that the work will involve replacing trim including about 50% of the soffit and fascia. He said that there can be rot, particularly behind the lighting, and if found, that would need to be repaired. *At Mr. Jennings’ suggestion, a contingency was added to make the cost $25K.*

Telecom upgrades (#31)

Mr. Capalupo said that work was ongoing to determine a price for this. The Town committed $65K in spring of 2022 and now the work for cabling is at issue. Ms. Wallace said that the telephone system for the town buildings is in desperate need of being replaced. She, Ms. Barker, Mr. Richard, and the Town’s IT consultant have been working on this. The IT consultant noted that the wiring was old (dating from the 1990s) and it soon became clear that there should be an upgrade of communications cabling in the building.

Mr. Jennings noted that the Finance Committee has questioned the need for phone lines when wireless systems are available. Staff will be working on a memo about this. The IT consultant explained that for reasons of cyber security it is important to have segregated computer lines that can be secured. Mr. Jennings noted that this is important for insurance purposes. The cabling would involve a pair of new wires (1 for computer 1 for phone) for each office and for other locations such as the annex and the foyer of the 1910 building as well as the library and the public safety building. The big cabling cost (with an upgrade to Cat 6) is for the labor and *Mr. Richard is working on obtaining cost estimates for cabling*.

Electronic Town Offices key system (#32)

Ms. Wallace said that with the project reduced to include only exterior doors and the archives/server room in the basement, this may cost under the $20K limit for CIC review. The entry device could be a code, a fob, a hotel type card or a smartphone. Mr. Niman said that in his experience it is very important to have a record identifying what persons enter the building, and was told that would be included in the new system.

Mr. Jennings noted that a complication in terms of securing the 1910 Building is that the senior housing has an emergency exit into the Council on Aging, which in turn connects to the foyer of the 1910 Building.

Page School flooring repairs (#26)

Polly McDowell (the CIC member reviewing the school projects) said that the Page School floors are a continual repair project and this year the amount is proposed to be $50K. Mr. Seymour said that the floors have an unusual gypsum/mesh construction that breaks down if exposed to water or heavy wear. Mr. Jennings shared images and a report about the flooring.

Page School elevator (#38)

Mr. Seymour, Mr. Richard, and Ms. McDowell explained that this project has been changed from a new ADA-compliant elevator to a solution to get the elevator working well for the next 10 or so years, in light of the Town’s ongoing re-evaluation about what to do with Page School. They explained that last summer a contractor was hired to do quite a bit of work but not long into the fall the elevator started to fail again. More recently, it failed inspection. Mr. Richard explained that another contractor, City Elevator, who has done satisfactory work for him will work on fixing known problems of the Page School elevator, getting it to pass inspection, and making it work for the next decade or so. The immediate cost is $4K but the longer term work is unknown at this time.

Page School internal site traffic circulation (#39)

Mr. Jennings said that the matter for this warrant would be an engineering assessment to widen the Page School exit to allow dedicated right and left turn lanes. This is not an urgent matter, but could be pulled into the geographic scope of the existing safe crossing project for purposes of seeking DOT funding. The timeline for obtaining a cost estimate for this study is the next week or so. Longer range, there’s also a need to look at interior site circulation, which is complicated because the area has a four-unit apartment building, DPW and Water Department workspace, and the Children’s Castle.

Engineering funds for Coffin Street culvert replacement (#36)

Ms. Wallace and Mr. Hills explained that two culverts on Coffin Street were overwhelmed during the flooding in August 2023 and need replacement. Ms. Wallace said that the reports of consulting engineers GEI in connection with the MVP climate change grant for River Road flooding provided information about the culverts, including those on Coffin Street. She and Mr. Hills shared the GEI data about and images of the two culverts. The plan is to refine the scope for engineering and other work and to seek authorization of $50K for this.

Appropriation and/or debt authorization for Middle Street Bridge (#20)

Mr. Jennings said that Newburyport applied yesterday for a $500K grant for this project but there is a shortfall of some $1.6M. He and Ms. Mizner noted that an intermunicipal agreement for this is an essential aspect. Mr. Jennings said that they are pursuing many potential funding avenues and this is not a lost cause. They are looking at this calendar year to obtain funding. Prior grants required estimated schedules and timelines for bidding, contracting, etc. The item for the town meeting warrant currently is a placeholder for Town funding.

**Discussion of assessment process for requested capital projects and confirm schedule for Vote/Ranking for proposed FY25 capital expenses**

*Deferred*

**Schedule next meeting** March 14, 2024 7:30 pm

**Adjournment** 10:06 pm

**Meeting Documents**

Meeting packets provided by Town Manager

Respectfully submitted

Elisa Grammer

March 14 7:30