

Capital Planning Task Force
Minutes
March 17, 2021 – Approved March 31, 2021
Via Zoom

Present: Terri Ackerman, Select Board member;; Elise Woodward, Stephen Crane, Town Manager, Karle Packard, citizen, Cynthia Rainey, Concord School Committee, Parashar Patel, Finance Committee Liaison, , Laurie Hunter, Superintendent of Schools, Jared Stanton, Director of Finance and Operations
Absent: Kerry LaFleur, Concord Finance Director
Meeting was convened at 3:04

The minutes of 2/03/21 and 2/17/21 were both approved with Dr. Hunter abstaining.

Next meeting will be held on 3/31

The committee moved to the draft recommendations. Ms. Woodward reviewed the actions that the charge requires.

- A. Definition of a very large project
- B. 'Develop a template format draft created, but not voted on yet. "Flatten the debt curve template"
- C. Annual review of a needs assessment
- D. Criteria list around climate change etc.

The above listed items may be reordered when we outline the process in the report.

Mr. Crane expressed concern for the viability of the template as a capital planning instrument.

Ms. Ackerman would like clarification on what really goes into the template in terms of long range planning. Two templates? A debt service template and then a planning template.

Ms. Woodward stated that large projects take about 5-7 years. We can easily sequence these projects, but the difficulty is how to prioritize.

Mr. Patel asked that the committee be clear on what the very large projects that we know we need today. We do not need to know the exact dates associated with the projects we just need to have a list according.

Mr. Crane shared a debt service calculator which would allow a taxpayer to enter their address and the calculator would provide the estimated taxes for the duration of the bond for a large project.

Mr. Crane recommended that the calculator be included with the template.

Ms. Ackerman asked that the Task Force go through the items and determine if there is consensus on the items.

Ms. Woodward presented the template and asked the committee if they agreed on the use of template.

Ms. Ackerman made a motion that the committee agree on the following items. Definition of a very large project. The template and the criteria. Ms. Rainey seconded the motion. The motion was amended by Mr. Packard to add that the Task Force move forward with the items. Ms. Rainey seconded the amendment.

Vote: The amended motion passed unanimously

The committee discussed the process. Mr. Packard presented some refinements re use of a standing committee for capital planning. Committee would meet annually. Perhaps we look at a 20-year plan. Noting that the previous long range planning committee recommended a 20-year plan.

Ms. Woodward noted that the committee has been discussing a standing committee and has not reached consensus.

Mr. Patel asked what kind of interaction would the standing committee have with the Concord Finance committee. The Finance committee could easily make these calculations. The Finance Committee does not currently have capital planning in their charge.

Ms. Woodward asked what we would gain or lose with standing committee. Mr. Packard offered that the standing committee would allow more citizen involvement.

Ms. Ackerman would like to see more “teeth” or specifics in the enhanced process. Specifics regarding citizen participation.

Mr. Patel offered that perhaps we would present an annual report and then allow a comment period as occurs with Federal Regulations.

Ms. Woodward suggested we can take straw vote on consensus re: enhanced process vs. standing committee. The Task Force decided to defer this vote.

There is a MGL re town capital committee.

Ms. Ackerman asked if we might have a placeholder town meeting article.

Mr. Crane commented that we have our elected officials to represent the community.

Ms. Woodward suggested that it is premature for the committee to have an article at this years annual town meeting.

Citizen Comment:

Karlen Reed commented that she recommends the enhanced process. As this allows more flexibility for the town and schools. She sees some merits in a standing committee, but does not feel it is necessary at this time.

Dean Banfield commented that the Finance Committee is looking to the town to establish a committee. He referenced the 2003 report that he did not feel was followed. He believes that the standing committee would be most successful as this would be their only job. He referenced the CPC and the Finance Committee as most successful in their process. He strongly recommends a committee.

The committee decided to defer a straw vote until the next meeting.

Ms. Rainey asked that the committee review correspondence prior to the next vote.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:35.

Respectfully submitted by Cynthia Rainey