

Capital Planning Task Force Minutes
April 14, 2021 – Final approved at April 28, 2021 meeting
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

Absent: Kerry LaFleur, Concord Finance Director

The meeting was convened at 3:04

No minutes were reviewed. The committee will review the minutes of 3/31 and 4/14 at the next meeting of the committee on 4/28,

The committee moved on to the refinement of the enhanced process and the committee recommendations.

Ms. Ackerman got input from Mr. Packard and Mr. Patel on the enhanced process and presented the following information:

A. The recommended Long Range Capital Plan and template shall be included in the annual Finance Committee report, which is printed and distributed prior to the annual Town Meeting.

B. A series of 3 separate public meetings shall be held annually in order to review the Long-Range Capital Plan:

1. In September of each year the Town Manager and Superintendent shall hold a hearing to present a draft 10-year capital plan, with recommended sequencing and timeframes. After the presentation, the public will be given plenty of time for input, questions, and deliberation.

2. No later than Dec 15 of each year, the Fin Com shall hold a public hearing on the capital plan, with focus on the long-range perspective, including sustainability, resilience, maintenance costs, and smoothing of the debt curve. Public participation will be encouraged.

3. No later than Jan 15 of each year, the Select Board and School Committee shall hold a joint session to discuss, amend, and endorse the capital plan in time for inclusion in the annual Finance Committee Report.

C. The Capital Planning process shall be codified in some fashion such as via APPs (Administrative Policies and Procedures.)

Mr. Patel wondered why the finance committee report would be a primary vehicle for the distribution of the information.

Mr. Packard said that the Finance Committee report would be a good vehicle for the capital plan because it is distributed to all residents and promotes the more extensive

presentation available on the town website.

Mr. Crane said the whole tier 3 capital plan is maybe four slides. It is a small number of projects, but a large amount of money.

Mr. Crane described the plan as the project, scope, site, and approximate schedule or timing.

How do we get to the capital plan? Ms. Ackerman proposed that first in September, the Town Manager and Superintendent hold a hearing with a draft recommendation. After their presentation, public discussion would be encouraged. Following the hearing, the public could also weigh in with written comments.

Ms. Woodward asked why the FinCom would be responsible for item B.2, a public hearing? Mr. Packard responded that eventually, the FinCom would be responsible for weigh in on the projects.

Ms. Woodward commented that it would make more sense for the FinCom to weigh in with a public hearing when there were many more details on the project.

Mr. Patel outlined the process for the first 18 months on the enhanced process. The Town Manager and the Superintendent would develop a plan with guidance and updates with the Select Board and the School Committee, and present to the FinCom after the first few months. The Town Manager and the Superintendent would then incorporate the recommendations from the FinCom and the public, and then present to Select Board and the School Committee. In the fall, there would be an open public comment period, where the public would have XX number of days to submit their comments, similar to the federal government comment practice. The Select Board and the School Committee would vote on the capital plan at a joint meeting. The first year might take a while but subsequent cycles would not be as time-consuming.

Mr. Packard observed that a traditional meeting does not allow as much public participation as a hearing.

Mr. Patel said that using written comments puts more responsibility on the public to write in their comments, and then staff would assemble and respond to the written comments.

It was decided to add a written comment period as well as a hearing.

Ms. Rainey asked how the written comments would be incorporated into the capital plan. Ms. Rainey expects that there will be feedback from the public about what they need to see and why that is not on the list. Ms. Rainey hopes that the public may come up with things that no one has even considered, which is a good thing.

Dr. Hunter just wondered about the timing vs. the annual warrant cycle.

Ms. Woodward said we should not be too concerned with the calendar details at this point.

Dr. Hunter also asked why we need B2 and B3 above.

Mr. Packard commented that the hearing should focus on the long-range perspective, including sustainability, resilience, maintenance costs, and smoothing of the debt curve. Public participation will be encouraged.

Mr. Stanton commented that the ten-year plan is too long. A 5-year plan might be better.

Ms. Woodward commented that the ten-year plan is not a static process but a kinetic process.

Ms. Rainey asked for clarification that this process is entirely separate from the 5-year current tier 1 and 2 capital plans.

The committee agreed to align the dates with the town meeting process.

B3 would include a presentation and a public hearing.

There was discussion as to where this will be presented and highlighted for the public. The joint meeting would occur in advance of the presentation/publication of the capital plan.

We would target X number of days before the warrant closes and X number of days before the town meeting.

Ms. Ackerman asked about how this would be codified into an app and policy.

Because Ms. Lafleur was unable to be in attendance, Ms. Woodward asked if anyone had an idea about her opinion around the proposed enhanced process.

Mr. Crane commented that he believes she would support it. She might be concerned with adding more work to the FinCom load, and that she probably would prefer it be aligned with the current town meeting schedule.

Ms. Woodward thanked Mr. Patel, Ms. Ackerman, and Mr. Packard for their work spearheading the process.

Ms. Ackerman commented that up until today, she had been having trouble deciding between a standing committee and an enhanced process. But there are enough specifics in this proposed process and we may have achieved the best of both options.

Ms. Woodward took a straw poll to gauge support of the proposed enhanced process.

Mr. Stanton announced that the region has been working with the bond advisors to refinance the HS debt to save 3.4m over the next 18 years.

VOTE

Mr. Crane proposed that we accept the enhanced process as proposed at today's meeting.

Motion: Adopt the enhanced process with the refinements as discussed today, and we will review them in writing at our next meeting and perhaps make additional refinements next week.

Ms. Ackerman seconded

Roll Call. Yes: Terri Ackerman, Select Board member; Elise Woodward, Stephen Crane, Town Manager, Karle Packard, citizen, Cynthia Rainey, Concord School Committee, Laurie Hunter, Superintendent of Schools, Jared Stanton, CPS Director of Finance.

Nay: None

(As a liaison from the Finance Committee, Parashar Patel does not vote.)

The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Crane commented that he hopes that the public can see that this committee put in the work to get this enhanced process right.

Citizen Comment: None

Ms. Woodward stated that we need to prepare a public report. Ms. Packard committed to the background story. Ms. Ackerman committed to the public comments. Ms. Ackerman committed to summarizing the discussion we had to get to the enhanced process.

Ms. Crane would work on the current capital planning process.

Mr. Patel volunteered to do write down the recommendation for our next meeting.

Ms. Woodward proposed that Ms. Rainey put all prior minutes in the Appendix i.e., as a [link](#) for review.

Ms. Rainey asked about a sample/example APP. She said she would be happy to work on that project.

Appendices will include best practices

The next meeting of the committee is 4/28.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:35.

Respectfully submitted by Cynthia Rainey