

TOWN OF WILLINGTON

Capital Improvement Committee

40 Old Farms Road
Willington, CT 06279

Regular Meeting
Hybrid — In Person and Online

February 21, 2024
7:00 PM

Committee Members in Attendance:

Christina Mailhos, Chairman – In person
Stuart Cobb – In person
Jennifer Goodale – In person
Melissa McKinnon – via Zoom
Peter Tanaka, First Selectman – In person
James Marshall, In person
KarenAnn Caldwell – via Zoom
Stephanie Summers, Board of Finance Delegate – In person (arrived at 7:07PM)
Donna Latincsics, Business Manager – In person

Committee Members Absent: Jim Bullick

Phil Stevens, Superintendent of Schools – In person
Chief Alexander Moore, Willington FD #1 – In person
Mike Makuch, Willington Hill FD #1 – via Zoom
Ralph Tulis, P.E. – via Zoom

Members of the public were present in person and on Zoom.

1. Call Meeting to Order

Ms. Mailhos called the meeting to order at 7:03 PM.

2. Present to Speak - none

3. Approval of Minutes

a. February 14, 2024

Mr. Tanaka motioned to approve the minutes of the February 14, 2024 meeting as amended.

Ms. Goodale seconded the motion.

Discussion:

*Edit: item 4a, strike, "Center School (*indicates priority project)" and replace with, "Center School (*indicates priority project submitted year 1)"; strike, "Hall School Priorities, * indicates priority projects" and replace with, "Hall School Priorities, (*indicates priority project submitted year 1)"*

All in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

(Ms. Summers was not in attendance to vote.)

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4. CIP Plan, Year 1

Ms. Mailhos reviewed year 1 of the CIP Plan.

The following items were highlighted.

Board of Education

Last year, a \$1.0M shock absorber was put in the capital reserve earmarked for the BOE and \$1.0M was put into each year after for a total of \$5M over 5 years. This year, \$1.5M was requested (roof, ventilation solar). If granted, the account would have \$2.5M. Years 2-5 would have \$1M. The total going to capital reserve, if the \$1.5M is funded, the amount on the town side will need to be reduced. It is believed this will work.

Superintendent Stevens noted that the ramp can be bumped out of year 1 to prioritize other projects.

Mr. Marshall commented that he would like to see additional detail and that they are assuming that the projects are grouped together efficiently. He believes that the vestibule and security upgrades are not year 5 projects as noted by Superintendent Stevens and this should be discussed. Ms. Mailhos explained that a backup page with detail could be created but she does not believe the Committee can determine where the projects should be placed.

EMS

Year 1 includes \$110K for the survey for the WHFD (Survey & Engineering 25 Old Farms). While this was not recently not approved, it is still in the capital reserve fund. In year 1, \$200K is included for the project (WHFD Design & Engineering 25 Old Farms).

A request for \$11.5M was submitted for two fire stations and is in year 2. The bond payment for this is included in years 2-5. The calculation was based on a 20-year term.

Public Works

It is believed that the Salt Shed (\$1.0M) will be covered by a STEAP grant and the Village Hill Drainage (\$500K) could be covered by TRIP funds. In year 2, the bond payment for Liska & Schofield (\$2.2M) would start (\$225K).

Library

The library bond payment ends in year 3 (\$153K).

Selectmen

Mr. Tanaka noted that the Common Room Floors (\$35K) can be moved out a year. Before this project is addressed, reconstruction of the room needs to be completed.

Assessor

The revaluation number is a constant coming from the capital reserve.

The total for year 1 is \$1,956,980.

In the current year, the Selectmen's Budget does not have anything in the Capital Outlay. In year 1, it would be \$102K and \$35K would move out of this for the Common Room Floors. The

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Public Works (Lease Payments for Equipment) will be lower in year 1 than in the current year. The transfer into the Capital Reserve Fund (04) in year 1 would be \$71,378 for general projects and \$1.5M for the schools. The transfer into the Open Space Fund (15) would be \$30K. Last year, the Local Spending Total was \$1,779,073 and in year 1 it would be \$1,956,980 which is a little less than the 10%, the number they have been trying to stick to for the capital projects.

A discussion followed.

Emergency Services

Mr. Marshall commented that they need to start thinking long term. Items are pushed out, but escalatory factors are not included. He cited the school projects for \$5M in year 3 that will be almost, or a little less, than \$6M in year 5 as well as the \$3.7M in year 5 which will be a \$4.5M project. He added that the \$11.5M for the fire stations is underfunded. As good as the picture is in year 1, they are delaying the hurt. He explained that he wants to see everyone succeed but the \$11.5M request is the "land of make believe". There has not been any public oversight as to what is best. The designs have been produced internally and they are planning for future growth that the town cannot support. The Emergency Services Building Committee for the fire stations is a great start and needs to be publicly driven with one member from each fire department, perhaps a non-voting member, and public without ties to the fire departments so there is a degree of accountability. What comes from the committee needs a degree of validity that can be supported. There has not been any public input as to the type of building or designer qualification processes. The piecemeal approach to the designing and funding stages of the project delays the inevitable. A realistic budget needs to be provided. He believes that everything being budgeted will likely come in at double the amount and added that there is no need for the two stations to be done concurrently. It would create a delay which will cost more. Mr. Marshall wants to address the immediate need and not do something that will cost the town more later. He noted that the WHFD needs to have a feasibility study performed so they sell that it is a project that can be realized and afforded by the town along with a scale of the need.

Mr. Tanaka explained that they need to research the information and have a plan. Input from the fire departments and the town is needed. He is forming an Emergency Services Building Committee to gather all of this information, but it will take until next month to form the committee. The charge is currently being written. Mr. Marshall commented that they need a single bond for the projects that covers all design and contingencies. Mr. Tanaka responded that they should wait until the data is available before making any decisions. Mr. Marshall commented that it costs more to the town and there is an operational effect if the project is delayed any further. He believes there should be a bond in year 1 of the CIP. Ms. Goodale commented that when they do big projects in town, people with expertise discuss what Mr. Marshall is noting. Mr. Marshall commented that the Emergency Services Building Committee can run concurrently with the project and get an OPM on board. Ms. Goodale commented that she is hearing that they would ask for a bond for an unknown amount of money and asked who would vote for this. Mr. Marshall responded that they have 2.5 months. It is a risk and not the best plan but delaying this will cost millions of dollars more. Ms. Goodale explained that it is frustrating because, while it may not be perfect, due diligence was done and as a committee they have a responsibility to hear what people say and figure out how to get there. She also hears that Mr. Marshall wants to go in a different direction. Mr. Marshall explained that he is

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saying that there is no reason for the two projects to jointly bond. Ms. Summers commented that as a relatively new member to the community he has the advantage of having a fresh attitude and some background in the construction area being discussed but he is making a snap decision on what should happen. Mr. Marshall commented that they are not moving the needle because everyone is trying to hedge for one side or the other and it is frustrating. They have not moved the needle in 20 years. Ms. Mailhos noted that they have been on the path and doing studies, but the landscape and project have changed, and they have not planned for this. Mr. Marshall commented that he can come up with a number with some certainty that would be defensible based on the same square footage. Ms. Summers explained such a number would not include any planning – presumptions would be made. Mr. Marshall responded that he can provide a range of square foot costs for new construction. This is how towns budget for such items. He suggests pursuing one station rather than both as quickly as possible.

Mr. Tanaka asked if \$500K should be put into planning. They could come up with a comprehensive plan by year 2, and then bond the whole thing. Mr. Marshall commented that he does not believe that both projects need to be bonded concurrently. Mr. Tanaka explained that Station 13 needs to be built first. The WHFD is behind, but they can start building one of the stations, then the second, and bond both together.

Mr. Marshall expressed concern that they are representing inadequate numbers for the fire stations. Mr. Tanaka explained that with a study they can come up with a more realistic number. Mr. Marshall commented that as the CIP Committee they can evaluate whether a reasonable assumption or request is being made. He believes Station 13 would be around \$7M and the station for Willington Hill is a \$15M-\$18M project. In terms of the CIP, he would like to see a project in year 1 and have it put before the public. The schools should be funded as well. It would be a tremendous waste to risk grant funding. The \$1.5M is a minimum request.

Ms. Mailhos explained that they know the projects are coming. If they step up, it will not be a large hit in one year. Further, Mr. Tanaka needs to submit the budget next week to the Board of Finance (BOF) which needs to get involved in the discussions. The Town Meeting is in April.

Ms. Goodale commented that over the past couple of years the CIP Committee has discussed long-term planning and looking to the future. The school building was a cautionary tale. She wants to see data and understand what she is going to sell the taxpayers. It sounds like Mr. Marshall wants to go for a bond with a big number and then pursue having a Emergency Services Building Committee. Mr. Marshall explained that the project needs committee and public oversight and an all-encompassing project value that would need to be adhered to. Ms. Goodale recommended that the work be done by the Emergency Services Building Committee efficiently and effectively. It can then be presented to the town in year 2. Ms. Mailhos commented that if they do not have the information, she does not believe they can ask for the funds. Mr. Marshall explained that there are advantages of moving now. They have the money to get through the design stages, so construction pricing starts a year sooner and does not have a year of escalation (6%). Ms. Goodale commented that information was presented to the CIP Committee, and she wants it to be reviewed by a committee that works with a professional. Mr. Marshall explained that he wants to provide something and suggested that Chief Alex Moore use the \$80K to help the Emergency Services Building Committee with an OPM to support both stations. Chief Moore noted that the plans were presented to the Board of Selectmen (BOS),

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Board of Finance, and the CIP Committee but were from 2017. They are currently looking at the design.

Ms. Mailhos asked about including funds for the first step. She does not believe it would be realistic to get a bond in the next year. The Emergency Services Building Committee would need funding. Mr. Marshall asked what would happen over the course of the year. It is not only escalation. There needs to be study funding and they need to take the \$110K out of the budget for an unrealized project. The WHFD needs a feasibility study and due diligence needs to be done on the site. Ms. Summers asked about the cohesiveness in doing separate phases in an emergency services plan for a town of 34 square miles, with 5,500 people, and 3 interstate exits. She asked if they have exhausted finding another solution. Ms. Goodale asked if they could start the facilities study and discuss this in year 2. Mr. Marshall commented that he would concede with objection. Ms. Goodale commented that they need to present something that is palatable and have intelligent conversations about what is best for the town.

Mr. Makuch noted that he is representing the WHFD on this item. He appreciates the discussion, but they are in a circular conversation. There is a certain validity that they have to jump because they perceive an emergency at one of the stations and then circle back to doing due diligence. They then talk of one station vs. the other station. The departments started out of a need to serve the community. This is their purpose, and the individuals believe in serving the community. They support their respective organization because part of what makes people run into burning buildings and icy highways is a spirit of commitment to the organization. The WHFD is trying to say that it wanted to access the \$110K in the current fiscal year budget because it was told by the CIP and the BOF that it had to advance its design work. It needs to do due diligence. There is an emergent situation at the WFD#1 station on route 32 at the north end with the water but this has been going on for almost one year. Mr. Makuch noted that he spoke with Chief Moore. There is a drainage problem around the building that may be causing water to come up through the floor. It is possible that it cannot be fixed but not all of the due diligence has been done. They need to know more before they can say that the entire house is ruined. It is possible that a new station is needed, but it comes back to due diligence. At the Efficiency Committee, both departments, requested a Station Location Study. This will answer many of the questions. The elephant in the room is that both departments are concerned that the study will say that a service belongs in another part of town and the departments are concerned that their apparatus or work could be shifted. Mr. Makuch believes that in the end, the positive is the community gets its due diligence and the services are placed where they serve the community best. Thus, he recommended helping get the Emergency Services Building Committee moving forward and doing due diligence so when they ask the taxpayers for millions of dollars, they have something to stand on and say this is how the community would best be served. In the meantime, they are going in circles. They need to find a way to get past where they are tonight so they can serve the townspeople. Mr. Makuch noted that this is the message Chief Tom Snyder gave him and noted that he could share the message this evening. Due diligence is clearly needed, and they would like to get moving so they have the least amount of escalation.

Ms. Mailhos asked about the Station Location Study. Mr. Marshall commented that part of it is almost completely independent of the building project needs, feasibility, and due diligence. Mr. Tanaka disagreed. Ms. Mailhos asked about the cost. Mr. Makuch explained that this was the

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\$30K requested a few months ago at the end of the administration of the previous Board of Selectmen (BOS). It was denied at that time. The study would show stakeholders the types and locations of emergencies the emergency responders have responded to. It would include timing with information on where resources should be located as well. The town then can make a decision on what should be done based on the data. Ms. Mailhos noted that this would likely be a request of the Board of Finance so the Committee would not need to plan for it in the CIP for next year but should plan for something for next year. There will be costs to start the bond project. Ms. Mailhos asked why the request was denied. Mr. Marshall responded that it was going to be another study in isolation. It needs to be a comprehensive process. Ms. Mailhos asked Mr. Tanaka if he believed money should be put into year 1 for the Emergency Services Building Committee. Mr. Tanaka responded that they should. He recommended moving the \$95K that Mr. Stevens will not need for ramp in year 1. Mr. Cobb recommended taking the \$80K (or the remaining balance) from WFD#1 and the \$110K and putting it under the purview of the committee. Ms. Mailhos summarized that they would take \$80K from the WFD#1 project and the \$110K for the committee. The first step would likely be to do the Station Location Study. Chief Moore noted that architects are working on a study to determine what can be done. Mr. Cobb noted that they would need to hold what is already due to architects. Ms. Mailhos recommended putting \$150K in without taking it from either source. Ms. Summers asked if a priority could be put on the study. Ms. Mailhos responded that they can recommend that a priority be put on the study. The \$110K (WHFD year 1) is still in the savings account and should remain as it will be needed at some point. It should not be used for this. Mr. Marshall disagreed and commented that it would be for the same purpose. He asked what would happen to the \$200K for WHFD 25 Old Farms in year 1. He cannot justify spending more money on top of this. Ms. Mailhos explained that she does not feel the Emergency Services Building Committee could have something in place to bond this fiscal year, but it could start doing the engineering on WFD#1. Ms. Goodall asked if they are proposing taking the \$110K out and if it could be reallocated to the Emergency Services Building Committee. Mr. Cobb explained that it can. Both fire departments will be represented on the committee.

Mr. Makuch commented that the money has already been allocated to WFD#1 (\$80K) and WHFD (\$110K) and the CIP Committee cannot reallocate it but can make a recommendation to the BOF, but it may have to go back to the taxpayers because they approved the plan and its funding. They approved that the money be set aside for those projects. In the meantime, he recommended that the Board of Selectmen or the Emergency Services Building Committee try to acquire funds in the current year from the BOF to get the study started. Whatever the CIP Committee decides to make available July 1st in year 1 would be the next piece to be accessed. Ms. Mailhos agreed and noted that in the new fiscal year they could have \$200K available to start the bonding process. Mr. Tanaka confirmed that \$400K would be committed in this case. Mr. Marshall does not believe the \$200K is needed. Mr. Cobb explained the bond process. Typically, there is a fee for the bond (approximately \$45K) and a bond anticipation note (construction loan). Once the project is completed, it is moved into a full bond. Ms. Latincsics noted that the legal costs for the bond are the same regardless of how much is being borrowed. Ms. Summers explained that the suggestion for funding year 1 is because the \$190K is uncertain. Mr. Tanaka commented that she does not believe the plan for the \$110K and \$80K (balance of) is feasible. He explained that they need to add what they believe the Emergency Services Building Committee will need for planning and sell the vision to the BOF.

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Public Works

Mr. Cobb commented that five leased pieces of equipment are in years 1, 2, and 3. In year 4, there are four pieces. He recommended moving the dump truck out one year and the loader to year 5 when almost all the leases are done. Ms. Mailhos explained that the lease stabilizes the payment and keeps it in the budget. Mr. Cobb agreed. He is recommending having fewer leases in a single year. Ms. Summers noted that they need to factor in the longer vehicle lifespans. Ms. Latincsics confirmed that the John Deere loader is now in year 5. It was \$230K in year 3 and will be \$230K in year 5. Mr. Cobb noted that they would need to adjust for inflationary costs and price changes. He estimated it to be 5% annually.

Board of Education

Mr. Cobb commented that \$5.2M in one year (year 3) would likely not be economically possible. He recommended spreading part back to year 2. Mr. Marshall commented that he does not believe they will be ready in year 2. It will be a big bond in year 3. They need to fund in a way to improve the chances that the town will be awarded the grants but the \$5M will be a bond.

Ms. Goodale noted that Superintendent Stevens indicated that \$1.5M was the minimum needed to do the projects in the most effective way in regard to the grants. Mr. Marshall commented that the Superintendent said this was the minimum and may not be enough. They need to apply for the grants before December and local support must be in hand to apply. They need to plan for this, and he believes the project will come in higher than what is being budgeted. Ms. Mailhos recommended putting in the request and if a last-minute adjustment is needed, it can be addressed.

Ms. Mailhos noted that the totals are for what Superintendent Stevens submitted for each year.

Ms. Latincsics noted that if funds will be spent two years out, the financial resources for the \$5M will not be needed in year 3 because this is when they will finish solar and ventilation. Mr. Marshall commented that from a planning perspective they should allocate where the known expenditures are likely to be. Ms. Mailhos explained that that they can equalize it for each year or leave it as it was presented. It is when the funds are being appropriated, not spent.

Library

Ms. Mailhos noted that money was requested for the building envelope in year 1 and LOCIP funds may be used.

Ms. Caldwell noted that they do not yet have the quote for the gutters. Ms. Mailhos noted that it is likely that ARPA funds will be available.

Board of Selectmen

Mr. Tanaka confirmed that the Common Room Floors (\$35K) could be moved to year 2.

Public Works

Ms. Mailhos explained that the town received permission to use grant funds (approximately \$350K) to be used toward the Salt Shed and explained the history and administration of the grant. The number presented is an estimate for site reconfiguration.

5. CIP Plan, Years 2-5

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Mr. Cobb noted that under the 5-year budget projection for Fund 17, the annual additions to the fund are estimated at \$145K. He noted that this number was from more than ten years ago and asked if it was still a good estimate. He asked about the previous four-year average and if this could be used. Ms. Latincsics noted that she could do a five-year average but added that the second ambulance created a spike last year and the question is if the trend will continue or if they should be conservative. She noted that the number is net of expenses. Mr. Cobb explained that he would not use the trend but take the average of the last 3-5 years. The number of calls has increased mainly due to mutual aid requests. This increases revenue. He would like Fund 17 to be available to pay for some emergency services type expenses if the income supports it.

Ms. Mailhos will update the spreadsheet and share it with the members. She explained that the recommendation will be made to the Board of Selectmen and if they make changes, the Committee will meet again.

Mr. Cobb requested the estimated income for Fund 17 as well.

Mr. Tanaka noted that he will send the fire departments the format for the apparatus list as soon as it is available.

6. Adjourn

Mr. Tanaka motioned to adjourn at 9:45 PM.

Ms. Goodale seconded the motion.

All in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Pascuzzi

Lisa Pascuzzi

Recording Secretary

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WILLINGTON, CT.

2024 FEB 26 A 7:17


TOWN CLERK