Comprehensive Capital Budget Committee
MEETING MINUTES
Tuesday, November 22, 2022
Location – Remote Meeting on Zoom

Members present: Chris Doyle, Aaron Pikcilingis, Adam Dash, Larry Link, Catherine Bowen, Susan Burgess-Cox, Pat Brusch, Claus Becker
Members absent: Melinda Huang
Other attendees: Jennifer Hewitt, Assistant Town Administrator

[Chair Chris Doyle called meeting to order at 7:33am]

1. Capital Budget Preparation Schedule backing up from Town Meeting
    a. Jennifer Hewitt provided an over of the schedule
        i. Unsure how best to answer questions for timing of submissions for Town Meeting
        ii. Instead, she poses the question: What is realistic to tackle
            1. We need to provide a final report in May, leaving time for some back and forth among relevant committees
            2. This means we probably need a preliminary list of projects by the end of March at the latest
                a. Chris Doyle suggests we need a preliminary list by the 0end of February to leave enough time
                b. This leaves is with ~3 months to prepare this 1-year report material
                c. We also need to prepare our 5-year and, eventually, our 30-year reports, which will require the development of a framework for how we make a 30-year report
            3. Town has started collecting capital information from Town Departments. They do not yet have meetings set up, but will start scheduling them for the next two weeks.
            4. *They will be able to share our requests by ~mid-December. This puts a realistic timetable of January for our group to begin meeting with departments. She suggests we establish a regular schedule and she will help coordinate having Department representatives join our meetings beginning in early January*
                a. Chris suggests that Facilities, DPW and Public Safety should be early priorities
                b. Chris asks that Jennifer share any forms that Departments have filled out to give us a structured starting point
                c. Kate agrees -- we should be collecting information from Departments that will enable us to create a multi-year plan (1- and 5-year reports this year, 30-year next year)

d. [*Jennifer shared an example form of the ambulance funding request form from Public Safety*]
    i. **Jennifer will share this template and the underlying spreadsheet with us soon**
    ii. **Jennifer will share the *completed requests* with us by mid-December (Chris suggests 12/16)**
        1. Susan asks about the schedule of producing materials → timeline for our committee meeting with departments should be ~January
        2. This aligns with Jennifer's current plan
e. Kate asks how this feeds in as a request
    i. This information feeds into a master spreadsheet
f. Kate asks how "urgency" is defined
    i. Jennifer: This will be up to us to operationally define
    ii. Jennifer: The current pieces are a placeholder in the database
g. Kate asks: Who would ensure that the requests are aligning with the current financial policies, energy goals, etc.
    i. Jennifer: The CCBC!
    ii. Jennifer: It's hard to develop a rubric that applies to all projects, but we will continue to improve, add nuance, etc. But she cautions against making it overly granular
        1. Harder to maintain, harder for departments to respond to
        2. Aaron suggests using the Comprehensive Master Plan, when it's done, as a guiding document that we can use as we develop our plans
h. Format of Department materials collected – 1,5 years information
i. *[Pat Brush left the meeting at 7:45am]*
j. Jennifer: the goal is to get departments to start thinking beyond 1 year, identifying projects that are longer-term and perhaps not specifically planned. We need these visions and high-level plans to be able to *start* working on these projects.
    i. Kate asks how much the departments think ahead and how we will capture their longer-term needs
    ii. Jennifer: this is simpler in some departments (e.g., the fire department) because they have a relatively

consistent set of capital needs, like fire trucks, that have a predictable replacement schedule

      iii.   Kate suggests that departments' internal processes for developing capital requests may vary, and our process won't dictate the details of those internal processes

      iv.   Jennifer: Notes example of the fleet management suggestion from the SCIG. We have begun to implement this with the help of Norma Massaroti

            1.   Our insurance agent gave us access to a fleet management software that provides this functionality (for free), but it has been hard for departments to implement this because of staffing demands

            2.   This implementation will likely happen once we have increased staff capacity

    iii.   Chris suggests that our next meeting may focus more on the funding side as we won't yet have detailed requests

        1.   Hoping that we will have a slight dollar increase in the amount allocated from the operating budget

2. Format of Department materials collected – 1,5 years information *[this topic was discussed as part of agenda items 1 and 3]*

3. Screening/Ranking of Projects
   a. Chris suggests thinking about how this requirement might be built into the current request database, rather than building our own tool
   b. Jennifer suggests that we build our own criteria and tool to implement it
      i. Easier to just provide the output of the rankings rather than have a collaborative document
      ii. Aaron suggests doing it separately might help comply with Open Meeting Law
   c. Chris suggests talking about discussing this offline
   d. Susan was thinking about this kind of tool earlier
   e. Larry asks about the spreadsheet -- suggests we might do an extract from the one true data source, then process that extracted data into our report
   f. Asks about why some capital needs are spread over time vs. one-time lump sums (e.g., ambulance vs. ladder truck)
      i. Chris says we should put this question in the parking lot
      ii. Susan notes that there is an existing tool
      iii. Larry notes the systemic pattern of opacity as to why some projects fall into one or the other category
      iv. Jennifer: Ambulance geneates revenue
         1. This aligns with how it was handled by the CBC in the past

        2. Chris: How do we determine how requests get put into the "projects we save for over time" versus those that do not. Hopes that this is something we can revisit

    v. Claus: Reviews the transparent, consistent process he created with Melinda to help systematically rank projects
        1. Collection step
        2. Review step - "reasonableness," costs, benefits, alignment with town strategy
        3. Synthesis into a ranked list of projects that are viable
        4. Claus and Melinda will connect on this to present in the future meeting
        5. Did not previously get to implement it, but we can try to roll this out, perhaps a soft rollout, for the purposes of this committee
            a. He is hoping this tool can be developed to account for longer-term needs, like some maintenance need at the new 7-12 school
        6. Chris and Susan to connect with Jennifer to plan how to build our prioritization tool, whatever form it takes, into the database

4. Review of Funding Sources [*not discussed, though this topic did come up as part of our discussion of other agenda items*]
5. Committee Role in reviewing current year capital spending
    a. Chris: Did the prior committee have a role in reviewing how capital spending was proceeding during the year (e.g., did they receive updates)?
      i. The WC does this with the operating budget throughout the year
      ii. Susan: The CBC did not get quarterly reports, but the submissions from the CBC asked "what happened with the project in the past year?"
         1. There were questions but no formal reporting
         2. Adam notes that the capital budget is less consistent/steady than the operating budget. Quarterly might be too frequent, but every 6 months might work.
      iii. Chris suggests we research how this has been handled in other towns
         1. Jennifer: We can work this in as a later evolution of the process/templates. In her previous role (Lexington), she included a report that showed was remained from prior authorizations and status update (e.g., pavement management program). Otherwise it was an annual update to Town Meeting on the prior authorizations.
            a. New town Accountant has spent a lot of time to clean up the unspent prior authorizations (last year there was $500k)
            b. She requested an update this year and there aren't a lot of outstanding projects out there
         2. Not necessarily something we will do

3. Claus suggests checking in halfway through the year to make money available for other things when projects don't proceed
    a. Can TM adopt a strategy like this by funding things with contingency funding so they can proceed if funding becomes available?
    b. Adam: Might be a question for Town Counel because TM appropriates funding for a project for a specific project
    c. Chris: Suggests we reallocate project funding
    d. Aaron asks if we ask for requests to include timing
        i. Adam: Sometimes, but sometimes not predictable
        ii. Kate: At mid-point maybe we can re-appoint funding (requires calling Town Meeting)
            1. Jennifer: the operating budget works differently: capital items are standalone authorizations and are not appropriated for a specific period of time
                a. If the accountant closes them, the funding go to free cash
                b. Last year, the available balances were made available for other capital spending
    e. Aaron: When project funds are returned, where do they go? Free cash or back to a dedicated capital projects fund?
        i. Jennifer suggests that this is not what usually happens, but it *has* happened in the past as a concerted effort (e.g., when we cleared a back-log of projects and the total amount was ~$500k)
6. Committee monitoring of related committees (CPC, Cap Endowment, Structural Change Implementation Committee)
    a. Chris suggests that members of this committee be attuned what these groups are doing, particularly the CPC, to build a bridge to those committees
        i. We are obliged to send someone to the SCIC, but not obliged to send someone (SCIC is a voting seat)
            1. Select board meets 12/5 and could make the appointment
                a. *Adam asks Jennifer to add to the SB agenda for 12/5 to take up the possibility of amending the SCIC charter to allow a "designee"*
            2. We need to send someone to serve on this committee
                a. Kate suggests we should get a better sense
                b. Chris suggests we might make it possible to change the SCIC charter to allow "or designee" as we may have trouble appointing someone

     c. Adam asks Jennifer to add taking up a discussion of this change to the Select Board agenda for their 12/5 meeting
  ii. The other are bridging/liaising roles
    1. Capital endowment
     a. Larry expressed interest in serving as a liaison to the CEC
    2. Community Preservation Committee
     a. Chris suggests rotating the liaison for this group
     b. Adam notes that the lift for CPC is not that big
     c. Aaron and Kate express support for rotating participation in CPC meetings
     d. Susan notes that the LWV board has a monthly report
 b. Chris will talk with Elizabeth Dionne and Paul Rickter about the needs and will come back with more details on the expected time commitment, meeting frequency, etc. for our next meeting
7. Upcoming meetings
 a. Hold upcoming three Fridays, skipping the day after Thanksgiving, and we will adjust depending on our need
  i. 12/2, 12/9, 12/16

[Meeting adjourned at 8:52am]
Adam moves, Claus seconds
Moved 6-0

Minutes prepared by Aaron Pikcilingis