

Natick Finance Committee Capital Subcommittee

Meeting Minutes for March 14, 2023

Approved on Mar 23, 2023

The meeting was called to order at 5:01 p.m.

Roll was called with the following subcommittee members present:

Cody Jacobs
Richard Pope
Betty Yobaccio

Announcements

None

Public comment

None

Review and approve minutes from the February 23, 2023 meeting

Ms. Yobaccio made a motion to approve the minutes which was seconded by Mr. Jacobs. A roll call vote was held and the minutes were approved by a 3-0 vote as follows:

Mr. Jacobs: Yes
Mr. Pope: Yes
Ms. Yobaccio: Yes.

Article 15 – Capital Equipment & Improvement

Jon Marshall, deputy town administrator, explained the capital cycle and how it works timing wise every year.

Ms. Yobaccio asked about how the requests are related to staffing levels and Mr. Marshall explained that they continue to build the capital improvement plan with the idea of full staffing in mind.

Ms. Yobaccio asked when that might happen and Mr. Marshall said he did not expect it to happen in the next six months but it's hard to predict.

Mr. Marshall then went through each motion and reminded us of what the requests were for before answering questions.

Motion A

Mr. Marshall presented motion A which covers requests for capital improvement projects and equipment that will be funded by borrowing.

Motion B

Mr. Marshall presented motion B which covers requests for capital improvement projects and equipment that will be funded by free cash. Mr. Marshall explained that a difference is that they are not listing the vehicles individually but as one item all together. Mr. Marshall explained that he cleared it with town counsel.

Mr. Jacobs asked a follow up question about whether this consolidation would authorize changes in the vehicles being purchased. Mr. Marshall said it theoretically did but they wouldn't do that—the purpose of the change is if one vehicle comes in higher and another one comes in

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lower that they have the flexibility they would need to purchase both vehicles that they wouldn't have with fixed voted amounts for each.

Mr. Jacobs asked why the hybrid vehicle switch in the police department does not lead to the cars lasting longer. Mr. Marshall said that the engine hours are going down but the components still wear down such as the seats, the seatbelts, etc. He said that within 2 and a half to 3 years they are still putting over 100,000 miles on the vehicles.

Mr. Marshall further explained that they looked at surrounding communities about this as well and he said that the 100,000 marker and 3 years was still the recommended time frame for replacement.

Mr. Marshall explained that engine hours and mileage are two different things that are both tracked. Kenny Fisher, Supervisor of the Equipment Maintenance Division, added that while with the police vehicles we are saving significant engine hours, we aren't saving the mileage.

Ms. Yobaccio asked if the old police vehicles have scrap value when the town is done with them. Mr. Marshall explained that they are surplus at auction and they typically do have value and they are often bought by governments in other states or even other countries. We have a surplus revolving fund where the money goes that helps with materials, parts and things like that.

Mr. Jacobs asked why the amount being requested for the playground upgrades was so low. Mr. Marshall said it is for rehabbing the stuff that currently exists rather than putting in anything new. He mentioned that this is actually an increase from previous years. This is some more significant pieces like climbing nets or bridges that connect one platform to another. Surfacing is more expensive like 50 to 100 thousand dollars and the town will make specific requests when those things come up.

Mr. Jacobs asked whether this includes playgrounds at the schools. Mr. Marshall explained that it does include the schools.

Mr. Marshall added that we aren't where we want to be on the playgrounds but we are having conversations with the school side to try to figure out what needs to be improved.

Mr. Pope asked whether any of the funds for South Natick Dam & Grove Park were for removing the dam. Mr. Marshall explained that no, it was just for the rehab of the parks nearby the spillway. Mr. Marshall also mentioned that last spring town meeting appropriated money for the south natick courts and that ideally they'd design one park system that includes that as well as the parks directly next to the spillway.

Motion C

Mr. Marshall explained that this motion is for items funded by water and sewer borrowing. He added that one note from the prior meeting that has changed is that the water filter expansion for the Springvale site is now 1.5 million dollars instead of 1.2 million. Mr. Marshall explained that the additional filters will get them to a much higher reduction in PFAS than what they have now (he noted we are still within state regulations as of now but this would get us lower and allow us to treat 100% of the water at this plant). 1.2 million is for the seasonal filters, but the 300,000 is for design and engineering work for a more long term solution.

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Mr. Pope mentioned that the EPA has proposed a national PFAS standard and asked whether the department has looked at that and how it relates to Massachusetts' standard. Mr. Marshall said he hasn't seen what came out yet but based on the indications that he had last week that the EPA's standard would be more stringent than Massachusetts. He said based on his understanding, the new filtration systems, when fully implemented, would bring them into compliance with the EPA's regulation but he didn't want to comment for sure without looking at it.

Motion D

Mr. Marshall explained that this motion funds items from water and sewer retained earnings which is typically reserved for smaller scale items.

Motion E

Mr. Marshall presented motion E which is a request to fund a maintenance truck for the golf course through borrowing. Mr. Marshall explained that this request increased from 60,000 to 65,000 dollars from what was presented at the previous meeting. He said that was based on a new review of current prices.

Mr. Jacobs asked why we are borrowing to pay for this rather than using retained earnings. Mr. Marshall said it is always a balance between whether to use retained earnings or not. He said we are spending about 105,000 of retained earnings on other items which brings us down to 390,000. The golf course is a weather driven operation and a bad season could impact that so the town tries to have a good amount of money in retained earnings to help us through bad months. The maintenance truck is going to last a long time so it is more attractive from a borrowing standpoint than other more short term items.

Motion F

Mr. Marshall explained that the golf course sprayer that we had appropriated money for before was disallowed by DOR because we attempted to pay for it with money that had not yet been certified at that time which is why it is back in front of town meeting.

Mr. Marshall explained that they already got the sprayer component itself using operating funding because they needed it badly but they also need the full vehicle.

Mr. Jacobs made a consolidated motion to recommend that the full Finance Committee recommend favorable action to town meeting:

- On motion A in the amount of 1,940,000 dollars;
- On motion B in the amount of 2,566,200 dollars;
- On motion C in the amount of 2,725,000 dollars;
- On motion D in the amount of 285,000 dollars;
- On motion E in the amount of 65,000 dollars;
- On motion F in the amount of 105,000 dollars.

Ms. Yobaccio seconded the motion and the motion passed by a 3-0 roll call vote as follows:

Mr. Jacobs: Yes

Mr. Pope: Yes

Ms. Yobaccio: Yes

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Logistics of next meeting

The committee discussed planning a brief meeting before an upcoming full Finance Committee meeting to approve the minutes of this meeting.

Committee Discussion (for items not on the agenda)

None.

Adjourn

Mr. Pope moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Ms. Yobaccio. The motion passed 3-0 by a roll call vote as follows:

Mr. Jacobs: Yes.

Mr. Pope: Yes.

Ms. Yobaccio: Yes.

The meeting adjourned at 6:15pm.