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Town of Swampscott
Capital Improvements Committee Meeting Minutes
Monday June 7th, 2022 – 4:30 PM
Virtual Meeting

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT

Richard Raymond, David Brodsky, Ryan Hale, Jeremiah Sullivan, Kelley Begin

OTHER TOWN OFFICIALS PRESENT

Peter Spellios, Select Board Member; MaryEllen Fletcher, Select Board Liaison to the Capital Improvements Committee; Sean Fitzgerald, Town Administrator; Joe Douillette, PEG Coordinator

4:34 PM Meeting called to order

Discuss Articles 1& 2 – 6/14/22 Special Town Meeting Warrant

The Chair of the Capital Improvements Committee invited Select Board member Peter Spellios to discuss the background of the land acquisition proposal and any recent updates on negotiations for the one property that is not currently under agreement.

Peter Spellios summarized the proposed acquisitions for the committee.

David Brodsky asked Peter Spellios to discuss the thinking behind the acquisition of the properties, specifically the properties located on or around Archer Street.

Peter Spellios elaborated on the proposed acquisition of the Archer street properties.

Town Administrator Sean Fitzgerald mentioned the town's master plan and open space plans, which prescribe pursuit of open space acquisition when opportunities arise.

Rich Raymond asked for clarification around the reasoning to not label the use of the Hawthorne property as strictly open space. Peter Spellios responded that the motion language will be structured to not trigger Article 97, and to also leave the ultimate use of the property up to a future town meeting vote.

Sean Fitzgerald further commented the health and wellness benefits of the acquisition of open space

David Brodsky asked if the payment that was negotiated for the Affordable Housing Trust in conjunction with the re-zoning of the Glover property could be used to offset the cost of the proposed land acquisition.

Peter Spellios commented that the payment was negotiated as part of the rezoning deal; he did not comment as to whether the use of those funds to offset acquisition would be appropriate or

not but he did comment that any change in the use of funds would need to be renegotiated because the town currently has a signed agreement with the developer.

It was decided to defer the vote on the recommendation for Article 1 until draft motion language is available. Language is expected to be received in time for the Capital Improvements Committee's Thursday 6/9 meeting.

Discuss Article 3 – 6/14/22 Special Town Meeting Warrant

Rich Raymond asked for Sean Fitzgerald to highlight the two projects that were added into the warrant article since the annual town meeting which are:

Facilities – Veterans Telehealth Space at VFW: \$25,000

Sean Fitzgerald discussed

Facilities – METCO Room Upgrade at High School: \$25,000

Sean Fitzgerald discussed

Sean Fitzgerald commented that he identified these items as needs ahead of the upcoming special town meeting, and although atypical he felt that they were a priority which is why he is asking the CIC for their support of these two projects.

Rich Raymond commented that he is in the health care industry and recognizes that there is a big push toward telehealth in the industry as a whole right now. He asked for clarification that the project is generally for a private, dedicated space for the veterans to conduct telehealth appointments.

Sean Fitzgerald concurred that this is the intent, and also commented that the budget also funds some equipment incidental to this use necessary to activate the space for this purpose.

Rich Raymond also asked for clarification that space addresses privacy needs for Veteran's Healthcare i.e. not conducting appointments at home where an adequate level of privacy may not exist.

Jay Sullivan asked Sean Fitzgerald whether there is capacity to fund these projects through alternative funding sources i.e. the operating budget or alternative capital funding.

Sean Fitzgerald commented that he could perhaps squeeze the budget to allocate operating dollars to these projects, however he felt that they were significant enough to add them to the CIC plan and put them forth for a Town Meeting vote as part of the routine capital article.

David Brodsky asked Sean Fitzgerald to clarify why these requests were atypical to him. Sean Fitzgerald clarified that it is atypical for projects to be added to the plan after the CIC, FinCom, and SB made their recommendations to town meeting. However, additional information relative to these needs However, additional information relative to these needs came to light after annual town meeting, and the opportunity to amend the original capital request existed for Special Town Meeting.

Rich Raymond asked Sean Fitzgerald to comment on where the METCO room is located/how many are there/where are they located? Sean Fitzgerald responded that he knows of a METCO room at the middle school and at the high school and he intends to partner with Superintendent Angelakis to allocate these dollars most efficiently

Ryan Hale asked Sean Fitzgerald to discuss how he came up with the budget for these projects. He commented that the team has researched fixtures and furnishings and although there are perhaps hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of out-fittings that could be purchased for these facilities, the request represents a modest investment in these facilities that will add value to these spaces.

Joe Douillette, PEG Coordinator, was invited to discuss whether it is possible to bring forward a phase of the high school auditorium A/V upgrades into FY2023 to address the needs of town meeting/virtual meeting space in the community.

Rich Raymond asked Joe Douillette to rate the current condition of the equipment in the auditorium. He commented that the equipment is in fair condition, and he can't run the space without four people present to work the equipment. He contrasted this project to the renovation of room B129 at the high school which he conducted when he first started as the PEG coordinator, which reduced the setup time for that meeting space from an hour and a half to twenty minutes.

Kelley Begin commented that the normal conduct of the CIC process includes a ranking of projects using an attribute-based scoring mechanism. She commented that the needs of the town have certainly drastically changed in light of the pandemic, and that there perhaps is a significant need for A/V functions in this space and would like clarification on what we are not currently able to do as a town that there perhaps is a need for.

Joe Douillette responded that there is a need for hybrid meeting space to hold public meetings; there are more and more committees that want to run hybrid meetings as opposed to strictly virtual meetings to accommodate public access. There are challenges to all of these spaces, especially with audio feedback and adequate participation capabilities.

Joe Douillette alluded to upgrades to equipment that have been funded from the proceeds of the town's PEG contract i.e. outdated or failing cameras. Hundreds of thousands of dollars over the past few years have been spent to address these needs.

Ryan Hale asked if the phases to the project are useful on their own i.e. if funding for phase one was granted, and subsequent phases did not receive funding, would the improvements still be useful on their own. Joe Douillette responded that the project is useful on its own. Joe Douillette is going to follow up with the town administrator in advance of the CIC's meeting on Thursday.

Ryan Hale commented that he felt the amounts allocated for the METCO room at the high school and the middle school, and VFW Telehealth upgrades, may not be representative of the true need for those spaces.

Kelley Begin contrasted municipal funding with private-sector funding, specifically that it takes a year plus to acquire funding for these projects. Although these requests were not presented in the initial plan, they presented themselves after the development of the initial plan and therefore it was included as a request when the opportunity presented itself via the Special Town Meeting.

She considered both the damage that could be caused to the parts of the community if these investments were delayed another year, versus the process considerations and the possibility that the funding for these projects might not be adequate.

Rich Raymond recognized that the addition of these projects deviates from the discipline that the CIC is used to historically in their process, however he commented that the projects, being small dollars, may be able to make a difference for these parts of the community now versus deferring these investments a year.

Ryan Hale commented that he could support the additional requests for METCO and VFW facilities if the addition is budget neutral

On **MOTION** and **SECONDED** it was voted to approve the requests for METCO and VFW facilities improvements, provided that the roadway improvements line item is reduced by \$50K.

Meeting Adjourned 6:18 PM.

True Attest,



Patrick Luddy
Treasurer/Collector

Minutes APPROVED by vote of the Capital Improvements Committee 9/12/2023