



# Capital Improvements Committee

## Recommendations on 2022 Budget Submissions

Revision Date: 03.11.22

### I. Background

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The Capital Improvements Committee received requests and began meeting with Montague department heads and regional school district leaders beginning in November 2021 to evaluate capital needs as outlined in their Special Article Requests. The Special Article Request forms that were adopted and implemented in 2017 continue to serve as the framework for outlining and presenting the capital needs of each department and are supplemented by required vendor quotes and other documentation.

This year's report of recommendations summarizes the committee's findings following several months of meetings, research, and deliberation and relies upon the same approach to evaluation developed last year. The grading system, explained below, is consistent with that used in past years.

This year the CIC initially received eight (8) special article requests. Over the course of four months, the proposers were brought in for presentation and discussion of their requests. Through these discussions, and as pertinent information became available, some of the original requests were reformulated, combined, disaggregated, withdrawn, or otherwise modified. This report presents the final slate of requests and the CIC's recommendations following its investigation into said requests.

## **II. Approach to Evaluation of Requested Articles**

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### ***Defined Criteria/Rationale Used in Assessing Special Article Requests***

**Public Safety:** Does the capital improvement rectify a safety concern or otherwise prevent a potential public safety issue?

**Cost Avoidance:** Will the capital improvement save the town financially?

**Service Interruption:** Does the capital improvement prevent an interruption in services?

**Other-** Any other reason identified and relevant by the CIC.

### **Grading System**

**Recommend:** Given appropriate budget space, the committee believes that the capital improvement should be funded. The CIC evaluation does not formally consider the question of financial capacity, which is left to the Finance Committee and Selectboard.

**Recommend with Reservations:** The committee would generally recommend the capital improvement but may find that elements of the project scope are unclear or incomplete, that it lacks a convincing professional cost estimate, or doesn't address or account for some long-term needs and concerns of the town.

**Does not Recommend:** The committee does not recommend moving forward with the capital improvement as presented. This may be due to the nature or timing of the project, the apparent need for the project, the availability of scope or cost information, or other reasons.

### III. Recommendations on Requested Articles

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#### 1. Summary Table of FY22 Submissions and Recommendations

The table below offers a summary view of special article requests and CIC recommendations for FY21 capital project spending. Overall, spending associated with recommended articles equals \$1,208,000. These recommendations are further explained in section III.

##### Summary of Final Motions/Recommendations

Request	Amount	Approved	Vote
WPCF Facility Screw Pumps	\$ 730,,000	Yes	5-0
WPCF Back-Up Generator (450kW)	\$ 130,000	Yes	5-0
Carnegie Library Basement Renovation	\$ 130,000	Yes	5-0
Montague Center Library Masonry Repair	\$ 100,000	Yes	5-0
Town Hall Main Roof Replacement	\$ 125,000	Yes	5-0
Shea Theater Lower Roof Replacement	\$ 60,000	Yes	5-0
DPW Discretionary	\$ 50,000	Yes, Amended	5-0
Health Department Vehicle	\$ 30,000	No	5-0

#### 2. Articles Recommended for Consideration by Annual Town Meeting

**WPCF Facility Screw Pump Request (\$730,000):** The WPCF utilizes two helical screws to transfer influent wastewater from the primary treatment area to the secondary process area of the plant. A failure of these pumps (which has occurred previously) requires rental of a remote bypass pump and generator. This backup to the primary system is costly and requires continuous labor input and expense to manage. Since the replacement of any failed screw can take months due to the timeline to appropriate for and acquire this apparatus, such an added expense would severely impact the WPCF budget and, potentially, sewer user fees.

The current screw pump cylinders have reached the end of their useful life and are at risk of failure. The WPCF solicited quotes for replacement. They cannot be rebuilt. Given that the technology is patented, sourcing options are limited. One continuing question was whether carbon steel or more costly stainless steel would be the better option for replacement. After consultation with the WPCF's on-call engineering firm, Wright-Pierce, it was determined that carbon steel was the better choice. Our WPCF's inflow contains a high grit content and this grit would be expected to wear the stainless-steel cylinders prematurely. The conclusion is that carbon steel is the better option based then both on price and expected useful life. This investment is also made with the understanding that the pump's other wear components can

be replaced independently of the screw pumps themselves. The CIC recommends that the WPCF purchase and install new carbon steel screw pumps.

***Service Interruption:*** a primary consideration was that the failure of one or both of the screw pumps would result in a catastrophic failure in the plant's operation. The WPCF would be required to contract outside service pumps to move the material at a cost far exceeding the normal costs of operation. The risk of environmental damage associated with a sustained plant failure is also compelling.

*Capital Improvements Committee grade. **Recommend***

**WPCF Generator Request (\$130,000):** The committee viewed this in its in-building location and while it appears to have been well maintained, it is no longer viable and its indoor location is not ideal. While servicing of the generator can continue, many proprietary part replacements cannot be sourced due to the age and availability of parts. Most replacement parts need to be individually machined and the downtime of the generator requires an out-sourced temporary generator to be provided at a substantial cost to the facility.

Removal of the current generator and relocation of the new generator outside will also provide the facility additional indoor office or meeting space, which is sorely needed. There is also the benefit of improving the working environment. When the current generator is operating the decibel level indoors requires hearing protection within the office environment.

The planning department and WPCF explored grant opportunities to subsidize the cost of this generator. Unfortunately, no such grants were available, though the cost of related battery storage could be fundable, at this time the cost and suitability of battery storage is speculative and may not be suited to the application.

**Service Interruption:** Should the generator fail the added expense of an out sourced-generator would add cost to the operation and potentially decrease the plant's functioning without a defined timeline for repair.

*Capital Improvements Committee grade. **Recommend***

## **DPW**

### **DPW Discretionary Fund - \$50,000**

The purpose of the DPW Discretionary Fund is to provide immediately accessible funding for the DPW superintendent to fund purchases of and/or major repairs to DPW vehicles and equipment. From the perspective of the CIC its strongest justification is that it addresses the practical need to address unforeseen expenditures where the timeline is of importance. The goal is to allow the DPW to begin each year with a balance in the range of \$100,000, which was the value of the requested appropriation. Based on the balance of \$70,000 in the DPW discretionary account at the time of the recommendation, this appropriation is expected to

return the total DPW discretionary fund balance to approximately \$120,000 at the end of the current fiscal year. However, we understand that the DPW does plan to replace an aged zero-turn mower at an expected cost of \$30,000. Even with this purchase, the DPW discretionary fund will be in the vicinity of \$90,000.

The DPW vehicle/equipment inventory is current and in good condition. The anticipation of large unexpected expenses is not anticipated—though it may still occur – and the CIC believes \$50,000 to be an appropriate supplement to its existing balance. The CIC is also considering that future requests for light pickup trucks be included in the normal capital improvements schedule instead of through the discretionary account. This is due to the cost of new light-duty trucks now approaching and even exceeding \$70,000.

Service Interruption: Should a costly vehicle or large piece of equipment fail without this source of funds available, that equipment could remain out of service, potentially reducing public safety by hindering snow removal or disrupting a time-sensitive project while the Town works to appropriate and procure a repair or replacement.

*Capital Improvements Committee grade: **Recommend***

#### **Carnegie Library Basement Renovation (\$130,000):**

The basement space in the Carnegie Library has had repeated and chronic moisture-related issues, resulting in a previous Board of Health determination that the air quality in the basement was unfit for library employees' use on a full-time basis. As a result, some library staff were relocated to previously public spaces on the main floor. Although some moisture remediation steps have been taken, it remains a poor office or program space. Owing to a lack of space, the Library Director, a part-time worker, and volunteers still use the basement for office space.

The goal of this project is to renovate a substantial portion of the basement, removing existing ceiling panels, wall paneling, wall framing, and insulation, and replacing them with new, clean finishes to create a habitable workspace. This is planned to be done in conjunction with exterior site drainage remediation (regrading and paving of rear driveway) that is already in-process and is not included in this scope. This exterior grading and paving work will be performed by the DPW.

In Phase 1 of the project, a new subpanel will be installed on the second floor of the building and temporary office space set up to allow for the relocation of the Library Director and other staff to the second floor for the duration of the renovations. Phase 2 will include the demolition of wall and ceiling finishes in the basement, installation of new finishes, upgraded light fixtures, expanded window wells, installation of 2 new mini-splits, and the creation of a separate office for the Library Director. Once the basement is completed the temporary office set up on the second floor will be removed. Electrical and communications improvements on the second floor will remain in place.

The projected cost for this demo and construction work will be \$100,000, with mini-split HVACs requiring an additional \$20,000 and an additional \$10,000 set aside for project contingency. With regard to the HVAC, it is expected to include two 2-ton HVAC units (mini-splits) with outdoor compressors. The system plan was considered and discussed on-site with Mr. Burbank, who estimated the cost. Formal quotes for this element of the project are pending, but the allowance is considered sufficient based on recent similar quotations. Note that the \$10,000 for construction contingency was added after the CIC suggested it to the Trustees.

**Public Safety:** The condition of the basement space does not meet the requirements of an appropriate professional working environment and air quality remains a concern. Having made or commissioned other improvements to reduce entry of moisture to the basement, it is an appropriate time to move forward with this appropriation. Improving the space will allow the staff at the Carnegie library to better support and manage the library's operations, and enhance space available on the 1st floor for programming.

*Capital Improvements Committee grade. **Recommend***

### **Montague Center Library Masonry Improvements (\$100,000):**

The Montague Center Library masonry shows evidence of failure as a result of degradation of the mortar in the brick masonry. This issue was initially presented to the CIC in FY21 and has been the subject of some substantial evaluation with a [building assessment report](#) and subsequent engineering review confirming the need to attend to it. The library obtained a quote for repair of the mortar and necessary drainage improvement to reduce basement moisture and the CIC reviewed this quote of \$105,376. Fortunately, the DPW has already addressed an important element of that intended scope - focused on the drainage and pointing of the accessible ramp and re-grading to improve water drainage - leading to a reduced request of \$100,000 for this project.

**Cost Avoidance:** The Montague Center library remains a centerpiece of the Montague Center village. The recommended repairs will stabilize this critical element of the building's envelope. However, additional repairs will be required to stabilize and improve the systems and accessibility of this building over time. The capital Improvements Committee views this as an important step in addressing the needs of this building, as delay may expose the town to higher costs and more complex repair needs in the future.

*Capital Improvements Committee grade. **Recommend***

**Town Hall Main Roof Replacement (\$125,000):** The Montague town hall asphalt shingle roof is failing. It currently does not leak, but the asphalt shingles are actively shedding from the roof. It is at imminent risk of failure, as detailed in a study report produced by Northeast Roof Consultants in January 2022.

The CIC reviewed a detailed estimate of the expected cost of asphalt replacement shingles and also considered whether a metal roof was a good option. After consideration of both the

architectural shingle and metal roof options, the CIC recommends that the roof be replaced with 30-year architectural shingles. The central reason was that metal was estimated to increase the cost by a factor of 2 to 2.5x. That was a preliminary estimate provided by a commercial steel roofing company in western MA that was recommended by our roof assessment consultant, Jack Skyeck of Northeast Roof Consultants. If cost were not a factor, steel would likely have been preferred.

**Cost Avoidance:** Replacing the town hall roof at this juncture will mitigate much larger costs in the future and the potential for damage to internal systems and office spaces under the roof.

*Capital Improvements Committee grade. **Recommend***

### **Shea Theater Lower Roof Replacement (\$60,000):**

The lower mezzanine EPDM roof of the Shea theater leaks. The leaks are significant and ongoing, even after attempts to patch and repair. The CIC previously recommended the main roof be replaced and that work was completed in 2018 and has resolved all the issues with the main roof surface.

The area to be resurfaced is located on the street side mezzanine and it hosts a large HVAC unit and ductwork that has to be removed, by crane, to complete the work. The existing structure will not require reinforcement, but new insulation and EPDM roofing will be installed, along with any new decking that may be required. The [Shea Theater Lower Roof Assessment](#) is available on the CIC web page.

**Cost Avoidance and Service Interruption:** The Shea theater is a cultural center space for the town and central to the downtown economy. Its ability to attract performers and hold programs is reliant on the building function properly and remaining aesthetically pleasing. This repair will make that happen. Failure to do so will require the Shea to block off areas of the public entrance during rain events and damage interior finishings, and diminishing the public experience.

*Capital Improvements Committee grade. **Recommend***

**Board of Health Inspectional Vehicle (\$30,000):** The board of health requested a vehicle to support its inspectional services, which presents a conceptual ask – provision of a town vehicle(s) for use by employees on Town business – that appears to have merit. The CIC, however, believes this request should not advance in isolation of a broader review of this need across departments, and development of appropriate strategy and policies related to it. The CIC did engage in some discussion of the option to purchase EVs and install a charger port on Town Hall, if that is where they'll be located when not in use. These requirements would likely exceed the requested appropriation. No member spoke in favor of moving the present request forward at present.

**The CIC does not recommend**

Respectfully Submitted,

Gregory Garrison, Chairman

John Martineau

Jason Burbank

Steven Ellis

*March 11, 2022*