



Montague Capital Improvements Committee

FY25 Capital Plan

Town Meeting Report

Approved by the Capital Improvements Committee

February 28, 2024

I. Background

The Capital Improvements Committee (CIC) reviews and maintains the Town's Capital Improvement Plan and vets each capital expense before it comes to Town Meeting floor. The CIC received requests and began meeting with Montague department heads and regional school district leaders beginning in November 2023, 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.

This report of recommendations summarizes the committee's findings following several months of meetings, research, and deliberation. The grading system, explained below, is consistent with that used in past years.

This year the CIC reviewed fourteen (14) capital 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as pertinent information became available, some of the original proposals were reformulated, combined, disaggregated, withdrawn, or otherwise modified.

Three (3) articles were fast-tracked for approval at the March 14, 2023, Special Town Meeting. This report presents the final slate of nine (9) Annual Town Meeting capital requests and the CIC's recommendations following its investigation into these requests. The final slate maintenance of pavement at parking lots and alleys, ongoing rehabilitation of the sewer system, replacement and upgrading of key public-works equipment, and planning for a future main library branch project. Each of the recommended projects was programmed in the 5-year capital plan, which suggests that the Town is keeping up with its capital planning goals.

II. Approach to Evaluation of Requested Articles

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, either in expense or increased productivity.

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

Other- Any other reason identified as relevant by the CIC.

Grading System

Recommend: Given appropriate budget space, the committee believes that the capital improvement should be funded. While CIC members are keenly aware of budget concerns, 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, limited scope or cost information, or other considerations.

III. Recommendations on Requested Articles

1. Summary Table of Fiscal Year 25 Submissions and Recommendations

The table below offers a summary view of special article requests and CIC recommendations for capital project spending. Overall, spending associated with nine recommended articles equals \$1,483,419. These recommendations are further explained in section 2. below.

Summary of Final Motions/Recommendations

Department	Project Description	On Cap Plan	Funding Recommend	Funding Source	CIC Recommendation
CWF	Montague Center Pump Station Rehab Equipment and Major Repairs	YES	\$ 283,800	CWF Cap	YES 4-0
DPW	(Discretionary)	YES	\$ 64,218	taxation	YES 4-0
DPW	Replace 10 Ton Trailer	YES	\$ 40,401	Free Cash	YES 4-0
DPW	Town Hall Parking Lot Rehabilitation	YES	\$ 296,000	Town Cap	YES 4-0
DPW	Alleyway Paving	YES	\$ 30,000	Free Cash	YES 4-0
DPW	Manhole and Sewer Pipe Re-lining	YES	\$ 78,500	Town Cap	YES 4-0
DPW	10 Wheel Dump	YES	\$ 365,000	Town Cap	YES 4-0
GMRSD	Hillcrest Pavement and Sidewalks	YES	\$ 175,500	Town Cap	YES 4-0
Libraries	New Main Branch Feasibility Study	YES	\$ 150,000	Town Cap	YES 4-0

Note: Town Cap = Town Capital Stabilization Fund

2. Capital Requests Recommended for Approval at May 4 Annual Town Meeting

Clean Water Facility (\$283,800): Montague Center Pump Station Rehab

The Montague Center Pump Station is the town's largest-capacity sewage-collection station. The station and its components date back to its original installation in 1982. A 2012 assessment of Montague's 8 pump stations noted several important maintenance and safety concerns for this station. Twelve years later, The CIC strongly agrees that this project should not be delayed.

The CIC discussed alternatives and agreed that rehabilitation, as proposed, is the preferred approach. A new pump station would be a multi-million-dollar project with similar performance results. The overall structure of the 1982 pump station is sound, so a completely new station is not necessarily needed.

The project would be managed in-house, with the Clean Water Facility acting as general contractor and avoiding the need for engineering costs. The CIC agrees that the project scope is attainable with this approach to construction management.

Service Interruption, staff safety: This is an overdue rehabilitation of one of 8 municipal pump stations. Loss of service to the town's largest-volume pump station would be a substantial and costly environmental disaster. Additionally, this article will remediate confined-space entry that is a risk to operator safety.

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

DPW Vehicles and Equipment (Discretionary) Fund - \$64,218

This fund provides available year-round funding for the Department of Public Works (DPW) superintendent to purchase and/or make major repairs to DPW vehicles and equipment. Expenditures from this fund are governed by a policy adopted in 2022. That policy requires Selectboard approval for any expenditure exceeding \$25,000. The policy also indicates that the fund should be replenished at Annual Town Meeting to a total of \$100,000 for the coming fiscal year, based on the amount in the fund as of March 1.

Based on a balance of \$35,782 in the DPW discretionary account as of March 1, this appropriation is expected to return the total DPW discretionary fund balance to approximately \$100,000.

The DPW vehicle/equipment inventory is current and in good condition. Large unexpected expenses are not anticipated, but may still occur. In the past year, the DPW used the fund to replace an old tractor that had become unrepairable for \$41,000.

Service Interruption: Should a vehicle or large piece of equipment fail (without this appropriation), it is quite possible that said equipment could remain out of service, potentially hindering snow removal or disrupting a time-sensitive construction project while the Town identifies a method to appropriate funding to repair or replace.

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

Public Works Department- Replace 10 Ton Trailer (\$40,401)

The new trailer will replace a 1987 10-ton trailer. The CIC finds that the trailer is due for replacement. The steel is fatigued and the trailer itself is not ideally suited to the use of modern equipment. The new trailer will have longer ramps and a tilting bed that will make loading safer. The new trailer will be wider to accommodate current equipment loading needs. The new trailer will allow DPW to haul two pieces of equipment at once, which translates to increased productivity.

Service Interruption: An unavailable or underperforming trailer can interrupt service or slow productivity.

Capital Improvements Committee grade. Recommend

DPW- Town Hall Parking Lot Rehabilitation (\$296,000)

The pavement at the Town Hall Parking Lot is in poor condition. It has not been repaved in over 20 years. In this project: The blue “butler building” as well as the red “shed” attached to the Annex would be removed to make additional space available for overflow parking. The parking lot entrance off First Street would be better defined and safer with the inclusion of curbing and a vegetated buffer. The newly paved lot would be properly painted and marked with code-compliant signage.

The project will be administered by the DPW. The bulk of the work will be contracted out to a paving contractor. The structure demolitions will be contracted. The DPW will set the new and replacement curbing in advance of the paving contractor.

The CIC feels this project is timely because the planned loss of the First Street parking lot for the purpose of developing affordable housing will modestly increase parking demand on the Town Hall lot. In addition to securing a safe parking and walking surface for all residents who have business at Town Hall, this project will allow the town to remove the surplus butler building, to repurpose that space, and open sightlines to the treasured downtown riverfront.

Parking lots are not a state € Chapter 90 eligible expense.

Public Safety: Will ensure a code-compliant, ADA-compliant parking lot. Will make a safer entrance/egress onto First Street. A new lot will be easier and safer to plow.

Cost Avoidance: The Town will avoid deferred maintenance costs to the blue butler building and the red shed attached to town hall.

Capital Improvements Committee grade: Recommend

DPW- Alleyway Paving (\$30,000)

The condition of most of our alleyways is poor to fair. Alleys have been traditionally undermaintained because they are not eligible for state Chapter 90 funds (traditionally the source for funding pavement

projects). The alleys are important for public safety and sanitation. DPW proposes to start with the First Street Alley and do others as funding allows. It is timely to start with First Street to align with the planned 5-unit affordable housing development on First Street which abuts the alley.

The DPW intends to conduct the paving “in-house” using DPW equipment and labor.

Public Safety: The alleys in the densely developed downtown are important for public safety and sanitation.

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

DPW- Manhole and Sewer Pipe Re-lining (\$78,500)

There are hundreds of sewer manholes and over 63 miles of sewer pipe in Montague. Significant portions of the sewer collection system are 60 to 100 years old. Some lines are asbestos pipe and are beginning to seep water. There are also lines that need relining because they are clay pipe that has become infiltrated with roots – consequently leaking water into the sewer system. This is causing the Clean Water Facility (CWF) to re-process clean water, increasing overall system costs.

Five (5) sewer manholes have been identified through recent studies and DPW inspections to be substantial contributors of infiltration into the municipal sewer collections system. The DPW proposes to use an industry standard re-lining to rehabilitate the manholes and reduced infiltration.

The DPW has also identified a 360 -foot section of asbestos pipe along Millers Falls Road that is in urgent need of re-lining. The Town is required under its (NPDES) permit to proactively address inflow and infiltration (INI) issues and make preventative repairs to its Sewer Collection System. Less INI will also reduce "overage fees" from Erving and reduce treatment expense at the Montague Clean Water Facility

The town may work with an engineer to review the bid specifications. The implementation work will be bid to a qualified contractor.

The CIC anticipates that more relining will be required in future years to get ‘caught up’. The town is currently scoping out a larger re-lining project that may be a candidate for bonding. In the meantime, the CIC agrees that these priority issues should be addressed in FY25.

Cost Avoidance: Reduced INI in the Millers Falls system will directly translate to cost avoidance through reduced “overage” charges from Erving. For other improvements, the reduction in INI will be less direct, but those upgrades will reduce treatment costs at the Clean Water Facility. Re-lining asbestos pipe is significantly cheaper than replacing it.

Other: NPDES permit compliance. The town is showing a good faith effort to maintain and upgrade its sewer collection system to maintain compliance goals in the town’s federal sewer discharge permit.

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

Public Works Department- 10 Wheel Dump Truck (\$365,000)

This truck will be a 2025 Western Star 10-wheeled dump truck with plow sander and wing plow. It will retire the 2002 dump truck that was planned for replacement in FY25 in the Capital Plan. The 2002 dump truck was irreparably sidelined this past winter.

The CIC recommends this scheduled replacement. The CIC also approves of the upgrade to a larger 10-wheeled truck. The larger truck will allow DPW to take on more projects “in-house”, allow for more efficient winter maintenance, avoid contracted hauling costs, and increase productivity through reduced trips. The cost differential between the 6-wheeler and the 10-wheeler (\$35,000) is not money worth saving, given the significant and sustained productivity gains the larger truck will provide. The DPW facility can adequately house the larger truck.

The DPW already has one 10-wheel dump truck that is scheduled for replacement next year due to age and wear. The CIC will monitor the effectiveness of having two 10-wheelers in the fleet prior to authorizing the replacement of the other 10-wheeler.

Service Interruption: The current vehicle does not start or perform consistently and is a maintenance burden. The vehicle is currently out-of-service.

Cost Avoidance: The new larger vehicle is expected to increase productivity and allow the town to perform more work internally.

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

GMRSD- Hillcrest Pavement and Sidewalks (\$175,500)

The pavement at the Hillcrest grounds is over 20 years old and is in very poor condition, especially the sidewalks. The employees park in a dirt lot and the area is prone to flooding. The surface is degraded and uneven and is dangerous during winter months. The sidewalks need to be upgraded to meet ADA requirements.

A recent building assessment identified the need for this project, and the project is listed on the Capital Plan.

The CIC recommends that existing paved areas be milled and resurfaced (as opposed to full-depth reconstruction). This choice costs about \$65,000 less but has shorter life expectancy of 5-7 years. The CIC feels this approach better aligns with long term plans, as GMRSD is actively pursuing state funding for a new elementary school that would result in the closure of the Hillcrest Building.

The work would be bid out to paving contractor.

Public Safety: Will provide safer walkways and parking on school grounds. Will reduce liability and facilitate ADA compliance. This addresses hazardous conditions for students, staff, and families.

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

Libraries- Main Library Branch Feasibility Study (\$150,000)

The Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners requires municipalities applying for state construction funding to appropriate \$150,000 for the planning and design phase of the Massachusetts Public Library Construction Program. Should the Town fail to be accepted into the state construction program, these funds will not be used.

During the planning and design phase of the project, the Library Director, the Trustees' Building Committee, and a special Community Building Committee will work with an architect on design options for both an expansion of the existing Carnegie Library and for a new main library, which would be located at 38 Avenue A. Public comment will be sought and a ballot initiative will be voted on at a future Town Meeting. Based on Montague's community need, the Town is eligible to have 67.53% of eligible construction costs covered by the state program.

The CIC understands that the current library is undersized and not accessible to all members of the community. The Capital Plan anticipates the need to study the possibility of expanding the Carnegie or constructing a new main branch library.

Other/Cost Savings/Public Services- Massachusetts Public Library Construction Program would fund up to 67% of the eligible costs of a new library or addition. The program only opens every 7 to 10 years and the grant match may not be as favorable in the future. Montague is well positioned to take advantage of the program in this current round. The result would be a code-compliant, appropriately designed modern facility that meets current community needs.

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

FY24 Special Article Request Lookback

While not relevant to the development of the FY25 Annual Town Meeting warrant, the CIC wishes to provide a summary of capital article requests that were submitted as part of the FY24 Capital Requests Cycle. Each of these projects received funding as requested in the FY24 budget year, with authorization received at either the October or March Special Town Meeting.

Submitted by	Project Description	Appropriation	CIC
AIRPORT	Pioneer Aviation Ramp Project	\$152,315	RECOMMENDED
DPW	Skid Steer	\$90,000	RECOMMENDED
DPW	Ferry Road Culvert	\$222,800	RECOMMENDED
Parks	Montague Center Park	\$500,000	RECOMMENDED
CWF	Facility Generator Replacement	\$130,000	RECOMMENDED
CWF	2 Pump Station Generators	\$95,000	RECOMMENDED
Total		\$1,190,115	

Respectfully Submitted,

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