

# **MONTAGUE CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS COMMITTEE**

## **Meeting Minutes**

**Wednesday, June 14, 2023 3:15 PM**

### **Meeting Held Remotely**

#### **In Attendance:**

CIC Members: Gregory Garrison (GG), Ariel Elan (AE), Jason Burbank (JB) (3:45), Chris Menegoni (CM)

Town Staff: Water Ramsey (WR)- Assistant Town Admin

Meeting convened 3:15, GG presiding

#### **1. FY24- 29 Capital Improvements Plan (CIP)**

1. Review feedback, comments, and questions received through end of comment period end 6/13/2023

Sparked by Jeff Singleton's comment's, WR met with the Historic Commission on 6/12 to review the CIP. WR identified several projects on the CIP pertaining on each of the 7 buildings that are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. CIC and Historic Commission agree to work together collaboratively on those projects when they become part of the annual capital plan. Historic Commission Member Chris Sawyer Laucanno provides some project spec guidance for library projects. Walter to follow up with an email.

Deb Radway's comments sparked a discussion around the waster treatment facility and sewer collections system. It was acknowledge to be a huge component of Montague's capital assets and required a closer investigation. The CIC wants to be engaged on the topic and wishes to help the town chart a strategic plan.

Overall the CIC was happy to receive written feedback from 5 individuals. WR responded to each and the CIC was satisfied that the plan did not need to amended based on the comments and question from the general public.

#### **2. Vote to adopt FY 24-29 Capital Improvement Plan**

**MOTION** by GG to adopt the FY24-29 Capital Improvement Plan. Seconded by AE. GG-AYE, AE-AYE, CM- AYE.

**3. American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Capital Projects**

**1. Discuss general implementation strategy of approved projects**

Annex Solar: The plan is to issue the RFP for Town Hall Annex rooftop solar summer 2023. Greg Volunteered to be part of the RFP review team. His company is going to recuse itself from bidding on the project. Greg reported an update that the payback is closer to 10 years based on latest calculations.

Old Town Hall: WR is working with Chris Sawyer Laucanno to develop bid specs for the slate roof repair, the masonry repair, and the window replacement. Each project will need to be bid separately. The plan is to bid the roof first.

Unity Skatepark Lighting: Parks and Rec will proceed at their own pace. No design is needed. WR's efforts are going to prioritize fast tracking the annex solar and Old Town Hall Work.

WR announced that on Monday the Selectboard authorized ARPA Wastewater funds for sanitary sewer drying bed design. The CIC wants remain apprised of this project as it develops.

**4. Topics not anticipated in the 48 hour posting requirements: none**

**5. Establish next meeting date(s):** Summer break. TBD and as necessary. CIC members to get sworn in over the summer before the next meeting.

Meeting adjourned 4:10PM

## Historical Commission and Recent Capital Plan

jeff singleton <singleton.jeff47@gmail.com>

Mon 5/22/2023 10:36 AM

To: dpbrule@hotmail.com <dpbrule@hotmail.com>

Cc: Christopher Sawyer-Laucanno <laucanno@hotmail.com>; Suzanne Lomanto <suzannelomanto@gmail.com>; golfserv@comcast.net <golfserv@comcast.net>; Janel Nockleby <janel.nockleby@gmail.com>; webmaster@meloware.com <webmaster@meloware.com>; Assistant Town Administrator <Assistant.TownAdmin@montague-ma.gov>; Gregory Garrison <gregogarrison@gmail.com>; Ariel Elan <arielpublic@comcast.net>; Steven E - Montague Town Administrator <StevenE@montague-ma.gov>; rich kuklewicz <rkuklewicz@gmail.com>; mryanlord@gmail.com <mryanlord@gmail.com>; cboutwell@martignetti.com <cboutwell@martignetti.com>

David:

I do not know whether the historical commission has been in the loop on the current six year capital plan Walter Ramsey has presented to the Selectboard (March 15) but it does involve a number of historic buildings and structures in historic districts. When I asked Walter Ramsey whether the commission had been involved in the planning process he said they would be able to make a public comment during the public comment period which ends at the end of this month.

I personally feel this is totally inadequate and follows a pattern with town leadership. The historical commission does not meet until the last Wednesday of the month so how on earth could you have a discussion of this plan before the deadline unless it was on the agenda of the April meeting, which does not appear to be the case. And in fact the capital plan was not unveiled until May 15.

Furthermore it does not appear that being a historic structure is one of the criteria for prioritizing capital projects in the plan or for the formidable list of projects funded under the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA).

And last week the Selectboard approved an application for a \$22,400 state grant and a \$22,400 town match WAPA money for a mural on the Shea Theater, which is a historic building, with seemingly no input from the historical commission, based on the comments Janel made at the meeting a week ago. And this project was partly justified as consistent with an obscure "mural policy" developed several years ago, apparently without input from the historical commission.

Again this seems to follow a pattern and at least the comment period on the capital plan should be extended until the historical commission can weigh in. There is no huge rush at the moment.

Jeff Singleton as a town meeting member, not reporter.

You may respond to me if you wish and perhaps at a public meeting but a response over email to a quorum of the historic commission would be an OML violation. Sorry Chris but that is the state law and it does make some sense.

WR reviewed  
CIP with MHC  
6/12/23

**Draft Capital Plan Comment**

radwaydeb@gmail.com <radwaydeb@gmail.com>

Sat 5/20/2023 11:03 AM

To: Assistant Town Administrator <Assistant.TownAdmin@montague-ma.gov>

Cc: mryanlord@gmail.com <mryanlord@gmail.com>; StevenE - Montague Town Administrator <StevenE@montague-ma.gov>

Hello Walter:

Here are my comments on the draft FY24-29 Capital Improvement Plan:

1. This is a solid draft. The goals are articulated clearly and the policy is sound. The Town might regularly revisit the \$25,000 threshold. That amount doesn't buy as much as it used to.
2. The Airport probably needn't be its own standalone category. Its capital needs can be distributed to whatever category is appropriate – facilities if the building needs work, infrastructure if a runway needs repairs, etc.
3. Use consistent and accurate nomenclature- the FY 23 plan identifies a building as Old Town Hall, and the FY24-29 Plan identifies the same facility as Montague Center Library. It's the Old Town Hall. The Library just happens to be currently housed there. The Carnegie Library building improvements are fine as identified, but the feasibility study needs to be for a new Turners Falls Branch, unless the Carnegie family wants to fund another building.
4. I would prefer the Town to advance facilities commitments by a year if financially feasible. - The old Town Hall roof and windows can't wait if that building is to be saved. I would like to see those numbers moved up a year to FY24-26-28 and the Turners Falls Branch library feasibility study to FY24. I know the Capital Improvement Plan is not a political document per se, but it will be important to move the library programs simultaneously to demonstrate mutual commitment.
5. I applaud the Pavement Management Program and encourage the Town to increase this commitment when possible. We have one of the larger road systems in the state, with a complex combination of surfaces that require diligent attention. This is offset by the ridiculous number of substandard bridges. The small bridges (South Ferry, Swamp, North Leverett, South) seem to this backseat non-engineer as fixable faster and cheaper through the use of box culverts rather than expensive long span bridges. This would require pushback to the state highway engineers- they seriously overthink their bridges --but would be worth it to save both time and money.
6. Sewer Collection systems- Since Frank Abbondonzio's first term as Administrator, Montague has been fighting a losing battle over sewer I/I and overflow. We've spent millions in CDBG and sewer user fees. I wrote a \$1 million CDBG for Millers I/I in the early 90's, and we did it all over again a few years ago. Perhaps some of this battle has been fueled by engineering firms hungry for admin oversight \$. For environmental reasons it seems logical to continue this fight, but are we throwing good money after bad? Just because its sewer user fees doesn't mean its not still coming out of the taxpayers pockets. I encourage restraint. The bigger cities (Holyoke, Springfield) simply ignore I/I until the Feds issue an order and then help pay for it.
7. I don't see a single pickleball reference in the entire document. How is this possible?
8. If the Capital Improvements Committee still has a vacancy, I am willing to serve.

Deborah Radway  
Precinct 1

**Re: Capital Projects**

Assistant Town Administrator <Assistant.TownAdmin@montague-ma.gov>

Tue 5/30/2023 3:52 PM

To: Paulette Billiel <fred.billielj@verizon.net>

Hello Polly,

Thanks for sharing your comments and questions. The plan does not necessarily endorse a certain building project over another, but it is only meant to identify potential building needs so we can plan and budget accordingly. There are certainly tough decisions that the voters will need to decide as to which project(s) to move forward in the coming years.

Regarding the schools, the current proposal from the Gill-Montague School District would be to close Hillcrest and build an addition attached to the Sheffield School. The District has advised that there is not enough space to combine the two schools into a single building at this time. Enrollments remain steady at the elementary level, but do taper off as you get into middle and High School. The School District is seeking funding from the state to fund a feasibility study. Regarding the Tech School, that cost would be shared by the county towns- not Montague alone.

The Library Trustees are indeed seeking state funding to support a feasibility study to replace the Carnegie. This is mentioned in the report. I have been involved in that application process along with the new library director. Over the next year the Libraries will do a programming needs assessment and that will parlay into the feasibility study that looks at A) rehabbing the Carnegie site or B) building a new library at 38 Avenue A (next to the Discovery Center).

You are correct that citizen engagement is certainly always challenge, so I appreciate you reaching out and sharing your thoughts. I will share your statement with the Capital Improvements Committee members.

Regards,

Walter

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Walter Ramsey, AICP | Montague Assistant Town Administrator | (413) 863-3200 x 126 | [assistant.townadmin@montague-ma.gov](mailto:assistant.townadmin@montague-ma.gov)

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**From:** Fred Billiel <fred.billielj@verizon.net>

**Sent:** Friday, May 26, 2023 9:32 AM

**To:** Assistant Town Administrator <Assistant.TownAdmin@montague-ma.gov>

**Subject:** Capital Projects

Dear Mr. Ramsey,

It doesn't surprise me that there has been little response to your request for comments on Capital Projects for the Town of Montague. It was disheartening to see the low turnout of registered voters on May 16th. Although town elections do not usually have the drama or excitement of national elections or even state level, they are important, even when many positions are uncontested.

My husband and I have lived in Montague City for nearly 51 years. I recently served as a Library Trustee and Fred as a Town Meeting Member. When we were much younger work schedules were not conducive to running for public office. However, we voted in all the elections and try to keep up with what is going on at Town Hall.

I have to wonder why it is deemed critical that a new elementary school be built. Yes, I understand the cost of making upgrades to both Hillcrest and Sheffield would be costly, but do we expect enrollment to increase enough to justify a whole new building? And FCTS, Will the cost of major renovations be spread amongst the participating towns in Franklin County or will the Town of Montague bear the full cost?

I am also concerned that no mention was made regarding the Carnegie Library. Is that because it is predicated on having grant money from the state funding agency? Some things have been neglected for decades when costs were lower. Yet they seemed to be put aside and now we are bearing those costs for a very long time and at greater expense. While I do not begrudge the police or DPW of new, efficient and safer buildings, it is frustrating that it took that long to get them built.

The Carnegie is a beautiful building, but not adequate for the 21st century users. There really little room for extensive renovations to make it more accessible and a pleasant place to work. I am most concerned that this will die on the vine of public opinion and the whims of whomever is on the selectboard.

Fred and I are retired and cannot know where we might be living within the next 5-10 years. We love living in Montague, but need to think about having a place that will be easier to maintain and be comfortable in. Right now the options in town are pretty slim.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my feelings with you and your taking the time to read this email. Feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

-Polly Billiel

**Re: Capital Improvement Plan**

Sage Winter <[mysagewinter@gmail.com](mailto:mysagewinter@gmail.com)>

Tue 5/30/2023 11:16 AM

To: Assistant Town Administrator <[Assistant.TownAdmin@montague-ma.gov](mailto:Assistant.TownAdmin@montague-ma.gov)>

Thank you for the clarification!

And thank you for reaching out to Jeff Hildreth. I will follow up with the Turners Falls Water Department. Turners Falls has such great water, it's a bummer to have the lead connections still.

And yes it is a great house!

On Tue, May 30, 2023 at 9:05 AM Assistant Town Administrator <[Assistant.TownAdmin@montague-ma.gov](mailto:Assistant.TownAdmin@montague-ma.gov)> wrote:  
Hello Sage,

Thanks you for reviewing and commenting on the Capital Improvement Plan. Water pipes fall under the jurisdiction of the Turners Falls Water Department, which is a division of the Turners Falls Fire District (a special district that is separate from the "Town"). That is why you will not see things like water lines or fire trucks in the CIP. That being said, I have consulted with TF Water Superintendent Jeff Hildreth. He says there are no lead water pipes in town. There are however approximately 300 lead 'gooseneck' elbow connections that are being systematically replaced (about 10-20 per year). If you have further questions about that program, they should be directed to the Turners Falls Water Department.

PS I lived on the second floor apartment of 178 L for 4 years. It a great house! I love that view of the church.

Regards,

Walter

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Walter Ramsey, AICP | Montague Assistant Town Administrator | (413) 863-3200 x 126 | [assistant.townadmin@montague-ma.gov](mailto:assistant.townadmin@montague-ma.gov)

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**From:** Sage Winter <[mysagewinter@gmail.com](mailto:mysagewinter@gmail.com)>

**Sent:** Friday, May 26, 2023 11:44 AM

**To:** Assistant Town Administrator <[Assistant.TownAdmin@montague-ma.gov](mailto:Assistant.TownAdmin@montague-ma.gov)>

**Subject:** Capital Improvement Plan

Hello Walter Ramsey,

I live at and own 178 L St, Montague, MA 01376. I quickly reviewed the capital improvement plan, and one item I did not see is the replacement of lead pipes anywhere.

I know the town replaced them on L street last year, I thought that the rest of them would be included in the capital improvement at least within the next 6 years.

Could you let me know how many lead pipes still need to be replaced?

Thank you kindly!

Sage