

# MONTAGUE CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS COMMITTEE

## Meeting Minutes

**Wednesday, November 12, 2025, 3:30 pm, Town Hall Annex Meeting Room and via Zoom**

### **In Attendance:**

CIC Members: Gregory Garrison (GG), Ariel Elan (AE), Chris Menegoni (CM)

Absent: Lynn Reynolds (LR), Jason Burbank (JB)

Town Staff: Christopher Nolan-Zeller (CNZ) – Assistant Town Administrator

### **Meeting called to order 3:38PM, GG Presiding**

1. Call to Order and Approve any outstanding meeting minutes: 8/27/25

*MOTION to approve the minutes of 8/27/25, by GG, CM Seconded. CM-AYE, GG-AYE, AE-ABSTAIN. MOTION PASSED*

2. Discuss anticipated FY27 capital project budget

CNZ provided updated figures for several common sources of capital funds, including the Town Capital Stabilization Fund, Clean Water Facility (CWF) Retained Earnings, Airport Retained Earnings, Free Cash, CWF Capital Stabilization, Gill-Montague Regional School District (GMRSD) Capital Stabilization, and the Colle Building Receipts Reserved for Appropriation. The Town remains financially stable, and stabilization fund balances are strong, but Free Cash was lower than the prior year.

3. Discuss FY27 capital planning cycle timeline

GG suggested that meetings with department heads making requests be scheduled for December and January, and recommended that CWF and Department of Public Works (DPW) each receive an individual meeting, since together they comprised the vast majority of the requests. GG added that the Airport's single request for upfitting a currently-owned truck could be discussed at one of the early meetings. CM noted that this truck may not be as old as reported in the capital request, and appears to be from the early 2000s rather than 1994. GG suggested that Airport Manager Bryan Camden be invited to the same meeting as DPW, and asked CNZ to begin coordinating these department head appearances.

Upcoming meetings would include a joint discussion with the Finance Committee 11/19 for a first look at the capital requests, meetings with department heads on 12/3 and 12/10, and additional meetings to discuss any remaining requests in January.

#### 4. Initial review and discussion of FY27 non-school capital article requests

CNZ presented the list of requests received so far, with italicized items at the bottom representing requests that had not been officially received but had been explained by various department heads before the 10/30 deadline as being anticipated in the coming weeks, such as the communication system upgrades for the Police Department, which were waiting on a quote. AE noted that Chief Williams had alluded to the need for an improved radio system for multiple years. CM noted that the need for roof repairs at the Carnegie Library had also been a known issue.

GG noted that the committee would ask CWF Superintendent Chelsey Little to speak on the current debt schedule, since the FY27 requests would require additional borrowing. GG also noted wanting to learn more about the intents of the CWF facility improvement study requested and how this would differ from past studies. The meeting with the Police Department could wait until after the New Year in order to give the new Chief enough time to settle in and become familiar with the department's needs.

GG suggested inviting GMRSD to a meeting on 1/7, and handling all additional capital requests not yet covered on 1/14, noting that there were several requests, but relatively few departments making them.

CM asked what the current allocation of excavators was between Town departments. CNZ responded that the Airport previously had the Town's only excavator which was commonly shared with both CWF and DPW, but after approval at Town Meeting last year, the CWF now has a small excavator of their own. CM asked how much of a necessity it was for each department to have its own excavator, questioning whether this was a necessity or a luxury, noting that having underutilized vehicles would be impractical. AE expressed that having well-equipped departments allowed more jobs to be handled in-house, saving the Town money compared with contracting projects out.

AE asked whether any culvert replacements should have been included among DPW's requests. CNZ noted that none were included, but he and DPW Superintendent Sam Urkiel were applying to a state program available to help the Town address problem culverts, particularly those that carry stream crossings of Cranberry Pond Brook.

#### 5. Review and discuss possible revisions to Capital Request Form

AE gave recommendations for improvements to the current capital request form, expressing that the space constraints limited department heads' ability to explain the nuances of their requests. CM expressed that the current form provided sufficient space for explaining the important details of each request. GG noted that the current form is sufficient, and relies on the requestor providing thoroughly detailed information.

CM expressed interest in removing the benchmark replacement schedules for vehicles and equipment from the capital plan, noting that replacements should occur "as needed," rather than be treated as automatically necessary after 12 years for most equipment and

light-duty vehicles and after 20 years for large trucks. AE suggested keeping the 12 and 20-year replacement guidelines, while softening the language to “projected lifespan” instead of “replacement schedule.” GG noted that the Town had moved to the opposite extreme of its former practices, which once relied on using vehicles until they could no longer be driven, which presented challenges with unforeseen expenses and operational impacts.

CM suggested developing a separate form specifically for vehicle and equipment purchases and replacements that could be used during future capital cycles. AE expressed agreement with this suggestion.

6. Review and discuss possible revisions to Capital Planning Cycle annual calendar

CNZ reviewed the annual calendar from page 31 of the Draft FY26-31 Capital Improvement Plan, and noted the previous meeting’s suggestion to revisit how the annual cycle is laid out. CNZ suggested waiting until Spring to formally update the current draft capital plan, which received consensus agreement from the committee. CNZ noted that he would attempt to facilitate the drafting and approval of the FY27-32 Capital Plan prior to the May 2026 Annual Town Meeting.

GG suggested that CNZ update the Town Accountant on a more regular basis throughout the capital planning process to avoid surprises for the Finance Committee in the Spring.

CNZ expressed that the FY27 capital requests were only one piece of the Town’s financial picture, and that major votes expected in 2026 on building projects for the Library and Technical School were also factors to keep in mind.

7. Topics not anticipated in the 48 hour posting requirements

None.

8. Set next meeting date and time

The next meeting would be held in hybrid format in the Town Hall Annex Meeting Room and on Zoom at 3:30PM on 12/3.

9. Adjournment

*MOTION to close the meeting at 4:29PM by CM, GG Seconded. CM-AYE, GG-AYE, AE-AYE. MOTION PASSED*

Respectfully Submitted,

Christopher Nolan-Zeller