

**MONTAGUE FINANCE COMMITTEE, SELECTBOARD AND CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS COMMITTEE  
MEETING**

**Wednesday, March 15, 2023 at 6:00 p.m.**

**This meeting was held via Zoom and recorded: <https://vimeo.com/808659576>**

Finance Committee Chair Francia Wisnewski called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

**Finance Committee members present:** Chair Francia Wisnewski, Vice Chair Gregory Garrison, Clerk Dorinda Bell-Upp, and members John Hanold, Jennifer Waryas, and Fred Bowman

**Finance Committee members absent:** Chris Menegoni

Chris Boutwell called the Selectboard meeting to order at 6:00 PM

**Selectboard members present:** members Christopher Boutwell and Matthew Lord

**Selectboard members absent:** Chair Richard Kuklewicz

Capital improvements Committee Chair Greg Garrison called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM

**Capital improvements Committee members present:** Chair Greg Garrison and members Jason Burbank, and Ariel Elan

**Capital improvements Committee members absent:** Christopher Menegoni

**Others present:** Town Administrator Steve Ellis, Assistant Town Administrator Walter Ramsey, and Town Accountant Carolyn Olsen. GMRSD Business Manager Joanne Blier joined the meeting at 6:15 PM.

The meeting is being recorded by MCTV.

**Meeting minutes:**

Mr. Bowman makes the motion to approve the Finance Committee minutes from March 8, 2023, as presented with corrections. Seconded by Mr. Garrison and approved.

Bell-Upp – Aye, Bowman – Aye, Garrison – Aye, Hanold – Aye, Waryas – Aye, and Wisnewski – Aye

**Student Busing Needs**

- Ms. Waryas brought forth a concern about the lack of transportation for students living in the downtown area. Many years ago, bussing was provided for kindergarten students.
- Ms. Waryas took this question to the School Committee and Superintendent Beck, and they had her contact Ms. Blier, who provided a great deal of information.
- Ms. Blier presented a brief slide show highlighting the areas in question, possible options, and a brief cost analysis.
  - The School Committee has discussed this in the past, and the current policy is to transport students who live more than 1.5 miles from their school, known as a 1.5 mile walk zone. This is pretty consistent throughout the state .
  - Most of the non-bussed students (139 of 220) live between .5 and .9 miles from their school.
  - The district is reimbursed a varying percentage from the state for the cost of transporting the students living outside of the walk zone.
  - Changing this distance would also affect students in Gill, and the Gill assessment.

- Including students in the 1.5 walk zone significantly reduces the reimbursement, and thus adds costs to the district.
- The cost of a single bus is about \$76K per year. Using a 90% reimbursement rate, a bus with only 50% of riders outside the walk zone increases the net cost of the bus from \$4,600 to \$41,800 and it is estimated that at least 4 buses would be needed.
- The School Committee's current position is that it is better to use those funds for education rather than transportation.
- If bus stops were established for certain students, word would get out and other non-eligible students would ride the bus.
- There are a lot of equity issues raised, including whether to include only elementary students, and the presence or lack of sidewalks for different students.
- Adding bus routes would also likely impact start times, require more time for student supervision, and other things that would need to be impact bargained.
- Ms. Bell-Upp asked about students in the Patch and on Montague City Road being picked up. Some students from the Patch are picked up during the winter as a courtesy. Other students that are picked up at those locations actually live further away from the location and are therefore outside the walk zone, even if the bus stop seems to be on the edge of the walk zone.
- Ms. Waryas noted that her primary concern was for the elementary students and the importance of getting the younger children to school.
- Mr. Hanold feels that the bussing policy is a School Committee concern, and they have to balance their various needs. If parents are concerned about this issue, they should take it up with the School Committee.
- Ms. Waryas agrees that it is a School Committee issue, but their budget is set for FY24, and she is asking for space between what we have now and what we could have for FY25. She is asking the town to bridge the gap, but she isn't seeing a lot of support.
- Ms. Wisnewski doesn't want Ms. Waryas to feel shut down.
- Mr. Ellis spoke with staff at the FRCOG about this in general and noted that there is no better time than now to advocate with our legislators for legislation that could ease this problem, especially given their interest in rural schools and environmental justice areas.
- Ms. Waryas was encouraged to continue to work with the School Committee on this issue.

### **Review FY24 capital requests and Capital Improvements Committee Report**

Mr. Garrison provided a quick summary of the attached report. Additional notes are below and with each project.

- The \$400K Montague Center park project was pulled when new estimates came in at about \$1M. This will likely be resubmitted when better information is available.
- The Skatepark Lighting project was pulled because the original quote did not include connection to electricity. This will likely be resubmitted when better information is available.
- The CIC is currently working on a 6-year plan. Mr. Ramsey is assisting with putting all inventoried assets onto a spreadsheet and will be meeting with departments to confirm needs, priorities, and timing of future projects.

**\$25,000 CWF Rough Terrain Vehicle with Plow/Sander**

**MOVED by Mr. Boutwell:** That the Selectboard recommend the sum of \$25,000 to purchase and equip a rough terrain vehicle with plow and sander for the CWF, said sum to be raised from Sewer Retained Earnings. Seconded by **Mr. Lord** and approved.

Boutwell – Aye, Lord – Aye

**MOVED by Mr. Hanold:** That the Finance Committee recommend the sum of \$25,000 to purchase and equip a rough terrain vehicle with plow and sander for the CWF, said sum to be raised from Sewer Retained Earnings. Seconded by **Mr. Bowman** and approved.

Bell-Upp – Aye, Bowman – Aye, Garrison – Aye, Hanold – Aye, Waryas – Abstain, and Wisnewski – Aye

**\$264,000 CWF Septage Receiving Station Upgrades**

- Failures have resulted in lost revenues. Revenues are expected to pay for the cost within 10 years.
- Mr. Lord noted that this project is being considered for ARPA funding, and this decision will be made prior to Annual Town Meeting.

**MOVED by Mr. Boutwell:** That the Selectboard recommend the sum of \$264,000 for the purpose of CWF septage receiving station upgrades, said sum to be raised from Sewer Retained Earnings. Seconded by **Mr. Lord** and approved.

Boutwell – Aye, Kuklewicz – Aye, Lord – Aye

**MOVED by Mr. Hanold:** That the Finance Committee recommend the sum of \$264,000 for the purpose of CWF septage receiving station upgrades, said sum to be raised from Sewer Retained Earnings. Seconded by **Mr. Bowman** and approved.

Bell-Upp – Aye, Bowman – Aye, Garrison – Aye, Hanold – Aye, Waryas – abstain, and Wisnewski – Aye

**\$113,500 CWF Pellet Heat Boiler**

- Mr. Hanold asked if the HVAC should be replaced as the same time as the boiler. Mr. Burbank answered that since separate vendors were involved, there would be no economies of scale by combining the projects.
- Ms. Wisnewski asked about the warranty on the current boiler. It is 40 years old, so there is no warranty remaining.

**MOVED by Mr. Boutwell:** That the Selectboard recommend the sum of \$113,500 to purchase and install a pellet heat boiler for the CWF, with \$63,364 to be raised from Sewer Retained Earnings and \$50,136 to be raised from the CWF Capital Stabilization Fund. Seconded by **Mr. Lord** and approved.

Boutwell – Aye, Kuklewicz – Aye, Lord – Aye

**MOVED by Mr. Hanold:** That the Finance Committee recommend the sum of \$113,500 to purchase and install a pellet heat boiler for the CWF, with \$63,364 to be raised from Sewer Retained Earnings and \$50,136 to be raised from the CWF Capital Stabilization Fund. Seconded by **Mr. Bowman** and approved.

Bell-Upp – Aye, Bowman – Aye, Garrison – Aye, Hanold – Aye, Menegoni – Aye, Waryas – Abstain, and Wisnewski – Aye

#### **\$70,592 DPW Discretionary Account**

**MOVED by Mr. Boutwell:** That the Selectboard recommend the sum of \$70,592 for the DPW Discretionary Account, said sum to be raised from Taxation. Seconded by **Mr. Lord** and approved.

Boutwell – Aye, Kuklewicz – Aye, Lord – Aye

**MOVED by Mr. Hanold:** That the Finance Committee recommend the sum of \$70,592 for the DPW Discretionary Account, said sum to be raised from Taxation. Seconded by **Mr. Bowman** and approved.

Bell-Upp – Aye, Bowman – Aye, Garrison – Aye, Hanold – Aye, Menegoni – Aye, Waryas – Abstain, and Wisnewski – Aye

#### **\$11,585 Add to Unexpected Engineering**

**MOVED by Mr. Boutwell:** That the Selectboard recommend the sum of \$11,585 to increase Article #18B of the May 22, 2021 ATM, said sum to be raised from Taxation. Seconded by **Mr. Lord** and approved.

Boutwell – Aye, Kuklewicz – Aye, Lord – Aye

#### **\$25,000 Town Hall Flooring**

- Ms. Waryas asked the square footage of the area to be replaced. That number was not immediately available, but Mr. Ellis noted that any funds left after replacing the carpet in the main area would be applied to other areas such as stairs.
- Ms. Wisnewski asked if the type of carpet tile planned was ADA compliant. It is.
- Mr. Hanold asked if the project could be deferred to the fall STM. Mr. Ellis noted that a summer project would be best for both the ability to open windows to clear any “new carpet” smell, and the efficiency of replacing carpet as part of moving offices.

**MOVED by Mr. Boutwell:** That the Selectboard recommend the sum of \$25,000 to replace Town Hall flooring, said sum to be raised from Free Cash. Seconded by **Mr. Lord** and approved.

Boutwell – Aye, Kuklewicz – Aye, Lord – Aye

**MOVED by Mr. Hanold:** That the Finance Committee recommend the sum of \$25,000 to replace Town Hall flooring, said sum to be raised from Free Cash. Seconded by **Mr. Bowman** and approved.

Bell-Upp – Aye, Bowman – Aye, Garrison – Aye, Hanold – Aye, Menegoni – Aye, Waryas – Abstain, and Wisnewski – Aye

#### **\$14,000 Repair Windows and Doors at Millers Falls Library**

**MOVED by Mr. Boutwell:** That the Selectboard recommend the sum of \$14,000 to repair windows and doors at the Millers Falls Library, said sum to be raised from Free Cash. Seconded by **Mr. Lord** and approved.

Boutwell – Aye, , Lord – Aye

**MOVED by Mr. Hanold:** That the Finance Committee recommend the sum of \$14,000 to repair windows and doors at the Millers Falls Library, said sum to be raised from Free Cash. Seconded by **Mr. Bowman** and approved.

Bell-Upp – Aye, Bowman – Aye, Garrison – Aye, Hanold – Aye, Menegoni – Aye, Waryas – Abstain, and Wisnewski – Aye

### **\$50,000 Demolish 38 Avenue A**

- Ms. Waryas asked about the lack of interested buyers. Mr. Ramsey clarified that while there have been interested buyers, none have been viable developers with plans that would meet expectations for reuse of the property.
- Mr. Hanold asked why this was being pursued now. Mr. Ramsey responded:
  - The EDIC has spent three years trying to redevelop the property.
  - We currently have demolition contractors in town.
  - The libraries want a feasibility study for potential sites, and this property could be one of them.
  - The building's current deteriorating condition will soon become a blight.
- Ms. Elan noted the potential for the building to become an attractive nuisance.

**MOVED by Mr. Boutwell:** That the Selectboard recommend the sum of \$50,000 to demolish 38 Avenue A, with \$12,099 to be raised from the unexpended balance of Article 1 of the May 5, 2012 STM and \$37,901 to be raised from Free Cash. Seconded by **Mr. Lord** and approved.

Boutwell – Aye, Kuklewicz – Aye, Lord – Aye

**MOVED by Mr. Hanold:** That the Finance Committee recommend the sum of \$50,000 to demolish 38 Avenue A, with \$12,099 to be raised from the unexpended balance of Article 1 of the May 5, 2012 STM and \$37,901 to be raised from Free Cash. Seconded by **Mr. Bowman** and approved.

Bell-Upp – Aye, Bowman – Aye, Garrison – Aye, Hanold – Aye, Menegoni – Aye, Waryas – Abstain, and Wisnewski – Aye

### **\$10,000 Henry Waidlich Conservation Fund**

**MOVED by Mr. Boutwell:** That the Selectboard recommend the sum of \$10,000 to increase the Henry Waidlich Conservation Fund, said sum to be raised from Taxation. Seconded by **Mr. Lord** and approved.

Boutwell – Aye, Kuklewicz – Aye, Lord – Aye

### **\$12,000 Unity Park Community Garden Well**

**MOVED by Mr. Boutwell:** That the Selectboard recommend the sum of \$12,000 purchase and install a garden well and water pump at the Unity Park Community Garden, said sum to be raised from Free Cash. Seconded by **Mr. Lord** and approved.

Boutwell – Aye, Kuklewicz – Aye, Lord – Aye

**MOVED by Mr. Hanold:** That the Finance Committee recommend the sum of \$12,000 purchase and install a garden well and water pump at the Unity Park Community Garden, said sum to be raised from Free Cash. Seconded by **Mr. Bowman** and approved.

Bell-Upp – Aye, Bowman – Aye, Garrison – Aye, Hanold – Aye, Menegoni – Aye, Waryas – Abstain, and Wisnewski – Aye

### **\$12,500 Unity Parking Lot**

**MOVED by Mr. Boutwell:** That the Selectboard recommend the sum of \$12,500 for Unity parking lot improvements, said sum to be raised from Free Cash. Seconded by **Mr. Lord** and approved.

Boutwell – Aye, Kuklewicz – Aye, Lord – Aye

**MOVED by Mr. Hanold:** That the Finance Committee recommend the sum of \$12,500 for Unity parking lot improvements, said sum to be raised from Free Cash. Seconded by **Mr. Bowman** and approved.

Bell-Upp – Aye, Bowman – Aye, Garrison – Aye, Hanold – Aye, Menegoni – Aye, Waryas – Abstain, and Wisnewski – Aye

**\$25,000 Locking, Fire-Proof Cabinets for Town Clerk**

- Ms. Waryas asked about the cost per cabinet, which is budgeted at \$4K. She noted she has found much cheaper fire-resistant cabinets available. It was noted that the requested cabinets are fireproof, not just fire-resistant.
- Ms. Waryas asked why the \$25K project was not considered a capital project. Mr. Ramsey answered that it was because it was expected that the total actual cost would end up under the \$25K threshold for capital projects.

**MOVED by Mr. Boutwell:** That the Selectboard recommend the sum of \$25,000 to purchase locking fireproof cabinets for the Town Clerk, said sum to be Free Cash. Seconded by **Mr. Lord** and approved.

Boutwell – Aye, Kuklewicz – Aye, Lord – Aye

**MOVED by Mr. Hanold:** That the Finance Committee recommend the sum of \$25,000 to purchase locking fireproof cabinets for the Town Clerk, said sum to be Free Cash. Seconded by **Mr. Bowman** and approved.

Bell-Upp – Aye, Bowman – Aye, Garrison – Aye, Hanold – Aye, Menegoni – Aye, Waryas – Abstain, and Wisnewski – Aye

**\$20,000 Sheffield Gym/Auditorium Roof**

**MOVED by Mr. Boutwell:** That the Selectboard recommend the sum of \$20,000 to repair the Sheffield gym/auditorium roof, said sum to be raised from Free Cash. Seconded by **Mr. Lord** and approved.

Boutwell – Aye, Kuklewicz – Aye, Lord – Aye

**MOVED by Mr. Hanold:** That the Finance Committee recommend the sum of \$20,000 to repair the Sheffield gym/auditorium roof, said sum to be raised from Free Cash. Seconded by **Mr. Bowman** and approved.

Bell-Upp – Aye, Bowman – Aye, Garrison – Aye, Hanold – Aye, Menegoni – Aye, Waryas – Abstain, and Wisnewski – Aye

**\$20,000 Sheffield Administration Building Security Door**

**MOVED by Mr. Boutwell:** That the Selectboard recommend the sum of \$20,000 to purchase and install a security door at the Sheffield school, said sum to be raised from Free Cash. Seconded by **Mr. Lord** and approved.

Boutwell – Aye, Kuklewicz – Aye, Lord – Aye

**MOVED by Mr. Hanold:** That the Finance Committee recommend the sum of \$20,000 to purchase and install a security door at the Sheffield school, said sum to be raised from Free Cash. Seconded by **Mr. Bowman** and approved.

Bell-Upp – Aye, Bowman – Aye, Garrison – Aye, Hanold – Aye, Menegoni – Aye, Waryas – Abstain, and Wisnewski – Aye

### **\$100,000 Repair 11<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge**

- This came in after the CIC deadline, so it is not included in their report.
- This needs to be on the ATM warrant because some of the required work can only be done during the week in September that the canal is drained.

**MOVED by Mr. Boutwell:** That the Selectboard recommend the sum of \$100,000 to repair the 11<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge, said sum to be raised from the Town Capital Stabilization Fund. Seconded by **Mr. Lord** and approved.

Boutwell – Aye, Kuklewicz – Aye, Lord – Aye

**MOVED by Mr. Hanold:** That the Finance Committee recommend the sum of \$100,000 to repair the 11<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge, said sum to be raised from the Town Capital Stabilization Fund. Seconded by **Mr. Bowman** and approved.

Bell-Upp – Aye, Bowman – Aye, Garrison – Aye, Hanold – Aye, Menegoni – Aye, Waryas – Abstain, and Wisnewski – Aye

### **Capital Improvements Committee Adjournment**

Mr. Burbank makes the motion to adjourn at 8:00 PM. Seconded by Ms. Elan and approved.

Garrison – Aye, Elan – Aye, Burbank - Aye

### **Selectboard Adjournment**

Mr. Lord makes the motion to adjourn at 8:00 PM. Seconded by Mr. Boutwell and approved.

Boutwell – Aye, Kuklewicz – Aye, Lord – Aye

### **Updates from Town Administrator**

**Future meeting topics** – The debrief on the STM and preparation for the ATM was deferred to next week's meeting.

**Topics not anticipated within 48 hours of posting** - None

### **Finance Committee Adjournment**

Mr. Hanold makes the motion to adjourn at 8:13 PM. Seconded by Mr. Bowman and approved.

Bell-Upp – Aye, Bowman – Aye, Garrison – Aye, Hanold – Aye, Menegoni – Aye, Waryas – Abstain, and Wisnewski – Aye

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn Olsen

Attachment: FY24 CIC Report

*Montague CIC: FY24 Capital Project*



# Montague Capital Improvements Committee

## May 2023 Annual Town Meeting Report

Approved by the CIC 3/8/2023

### **I. Background**

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The Capital Improvements Committee (CIC) received requests and began meeting with Montague department heads and regional school district leaders beginning in November 2022 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 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 nine (9) 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 were reformulated, combined, disaggregated, withdrawn, or otherwise modified. This report presents the final slate of six (6) capital requests and the CIC's recommendations following its investigation into said requests. The final slate of requests reflect ongoing modernization needs at the Clean Water Facility (CWF), workspace upgrades at town hall, addressing a blighted property, in addition to routine capital needs of the Department of Public Works.

The value of capital requests on the final slate of Annual Town Meeting requests is notably less than the previous year, however several larger capital requests from the Parks and Recreation Department can be expected in the upcoming Fall Special Town Meeting.

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## **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 Fiscal Year 24 Submissions and Recommendations

The table below offers a summary view of special article requests and CIC recommendations for FY24 capital project spending. Overall, spending associated with recommended articles equals \$548,092. These recommendations are further explained in section II.

##### Summary of Final Motions/Recommendations

Request	Amount	Approved	Vote
Clean Water Facility- Rough Terrain Vehicle	\$ 25,000	Yes	4-0
Clean Water Facility- Septage Receiving Station Upgrade	\$ 264,000	Yes	4-0
Clean Water Facility- Operations Boiler Replacement	\$ 113,500	Yes	4-0
Public Works- Vehicles and Equipment	\$ 70,592	Yes	4-0
Town Hall Carpeting and Flooring Replacement	\$ 25,000	Yes	4-0
Economic Development and Industrial Corp- Demolish 38 Avenue A	\$ 50,000	Yes	4-0

#### 2. FY24 Articles Recommended for Consideration by Annual Town Meeting

**CWF Rough Terrain Vehicle (\$25,000):** The Clean Water Facility is a campus comprised of two separate buildings with various exterior facilities on the grounds. The Administrative and Operations buildings are separated by over 900 feet. A small utility vehicle is necessary to transport parts/supplies/equipment between the buildings.

The CWF currently uses a golf-cart that has reached the end of its useful life. A rough terrain utility vehicle equipped with a plow and sander would assist in plowing and maintaining the many feet of sidewalks, driveways, walkways at the facility. The CWF is responsible for clearing snow at the facility.

The new vehicle will enable enhanced productivity through greater storage, transport, and snow/ice treatment capabilities.

The CWF anticipates purchasing a John Deer Gator Work Series RTV, a Kubota Diesel RTV or similar.

***Service Interruption, staff safety and productivity:*** The current vehicle is at the end of its useful life and must be replaced. The new vehicle will enable enhanced productivity through greater storage, transport, and snow/ice treatment capabilities.

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

### **CWF Septage Receiving Station Upgrade (\$264,000)**

Septage is waste that is trucked into the plant from septic tank haulers. The CWF generates a large percentage of revenue from septage receiving services. The current station is approaching the end of its useful life and intermittent failures have been reported. The proposed new system is a prefabricated unit that sits over a dry pit.

The current station is not set up to monitor pH levels as required per MGL, nor does the station have an automated system for accurately tracking and monitoring haulers and their discharges. The ability to accurately monitor and sample/test haulers and their loads is important to protect the quality of sludge the facility produces and to protect the town from EPA permit violations. Emerging concerns about PFAS (forever) chemicals and its associated regulations have highlighted the importance of implementing a new station.

***Cost Avoidance:*** Should the system fail, the plant will be unable to maintain revenue which would increase sewer user rates. The CIC understand that the current system did fail temporarily last year which fast tracked the need for the upgrades. Additionally, the modernization is needed to be able to monitor and report what septage the plant is receiving. Non-compliance with NPDES permit could result in unanticipated costs and pollution. Lastly, the new system will allow for more efficient and accurate billing.

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

### **CWF Operations Building Boiler Replacement (\$113,500)**

The boiler from 1980s is approaching the end of its useful life. The operations building houses critical infrastructure for the plant. The burner has repeatedly failed and continues to have issues beyond normal maintenance and repair. There is legitimate cause for concern that the boiler may not make it through another winter.

A 56Kw Vacuum Pellet Boiler pellet system with an external silo for pellet storage is the most suitable heating system for the operations building. The CIC considered several fuel options for the new furnace. Natural Gas is not available. Heat Pumps are not recommended due to the hydrogen sulfide and plant safety requirements. Oil burners would carry a cost premium to re-line the chimney.

The CIC recommends replacing the oil boiler with a pellet fuel system for the following reasons:

- Pellet boiler will be cheaper than in-kind replacement of an oil boiler. (\$113,500 for pellet system vs \$130,000 for oil).

- Pellet fuel cost savings are projected to be \$12,000 per year over oil
- The pellet boiler system carries a 30 year warranty and 30 year life cycle. This equates to a 10 year payback.
- The town may be eligible for a 35% grant from USDA Forest Service Wood Innovation Grant Program (\$39,725)
- Numerous municipal facilities such as the Olver Transit Center in Greenfield use pellet fuel.

The CIC notes that there will still need to be a future ventilation system capital project in the operations building to address air quality due hydrogen sulfides. However, the CIC agrees with the CWF Superintendent that pursuing the boiler at this time as a separate project is prudent.

Service Interruption: Failure of the boiler could present a true emergency at the plant. All pipes that feed into the facility come through the operations building and must be temperature controlled. There are many pieces of delicate equipment, motor controls, etc. By planning ahead, the plant will be able to seamlessly convert to a more sustainable, cost effective fuel source without cause a service interruption.

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

### **DPW Vehicles and Equipment Fund - \$70,592**

This fund provides accessible funding for the DPW superintendent to fund purchases of and/or major repairs to DPW vehicles and equipment. Expenditures from this fund are governed by a new 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 an amount not to exceed \$100,000, based on the amount in the fund as of March 1.

Based on a balance of \$29,408 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 at the end of the current fiscal year.

The DPW vehicle/equipment inventory is current and in good condition. The anticipation of large unexpected expenses is not anticipated—but may still occur. The CIC’s preference is for 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 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 time-sensitive construction project while the Town identifies a method to appropriate funding to repair or replace.

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

### **Town Hall Carpeting and flooring- \$25,000**

The carpeting on the first floor of town hall is at the end of its useful life. It is worn and badly stained, despite many attempts to clean it. The town has tested and confirmed that asbestos containing tile is not present under the existing carpeted areas.

Any funds remaining after the carpet work is performed will be dedicated to replacement of previously abated tile floors in the first floor basement and stairwells, as well as treatment of any painted or unpainted concrete floor surfaces in the basement level building area.

Other: Staff Productivity and Customer Service: The town offices are a primary point of interface between town officials and the public. Sound flooring and tidy appearance are important for customer and employee experience. The CIC advises that the purchase should include specifications for low-VOC adhesives and carpeting so as to protect the indoor air quality for employees and customers.

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

### **38 Avenue A Demolition- \$50,000**

The Property has been owned by the town's economic development agency the Montague Economic Development and Industrial Corporation since 1990. The building has been vacant since 2010 and condemned since 2013. The structure is a 2,200 cinder block on slab building on Avenue A. The rubber membrane roof has failed and the mansard roof is showing significant signs of failure. The building was gutted and abated of asbestos containing material in 2013 using a town meeting appropriation. The building is not historically significant and would not be subject to the demo delay bylaw. The budget includes removing the concrete slab and capping existing utility connections at the curb. The lot will be loamed and seeded.

The CIC understands that the community's long term goal is to redevelop the site with a new building that enhances the downtown, however, based on the current market realities, the site will enjoy an interim use as flat, grassed open space.

Public Safety. The CIC agrees with the EDIC's conclusion that the building is at the tipping point of becoming blight and a public safety hazard. The mansard structure is failing and shingles are falling off. The roof is actively leaking. This is not the impression that the town desires to portray, particularly in such a high visibility location. Absent a plan or partner to revitalize the property, the CIC feels that investing into the rehabilitation of the building would not be a wise use of town funds.

Cost Avoidance The EDIC has tried unsuccessfully over the past 10+ years to pass the cost of demolition onto potential developers of the property. The demolition expense is considered a barrier to productive re-use of the property. Based on the recent history of attempts to redevelop the property, the CIC agrees with the EDIC's conclusion that the market can not currently support new construction. This action will help advance the development continuum for the property.

It is noteworthy that by demolishing the structure, the town will no longer have to carry abandoned building insurance on the property which equates to cost savings of approximately \$900 per year.

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

**FY 24 NON- Capital Special Article Requests**

Non-Capital requests are for purchases valued less than \$25,000 and with a lifespan of less than 25 years. These articles are not as closely vetted as capital articles, however the CIC does typically review and offer recommendations to ensure compliance with the town’s capital planning objectives. The CIC offer the following recommendation on FY24 non-capital article requests, totaling \$113,500 :

Libraries	Window and door repairs at M.F. Branch Library	\$14,000	RECCOMEND
Conservation Commission	Supplement to Waidlich Conservation Fund	\$10,000	RECCOMEND
Parks and Recreation	Unity Park Community Garden Well	\$12,000	RECCOMEND
Parks and Recreation	Unity Park Parking Lot Improvements	\$12,500	RECCOMEND
Town Clerk	Fireproof Locking Storage Cabinets	\$25,000	RECCOMEND
GMRSD	Sheffield Gym/Auditorium Roof Repair	\$20,000	RECCOMEND
GMRSD	Sheffield Admin Security Door	\$20,000	RECCOMEND

**FY23 Request Review**

While not relevant to the development of the FY24 Annual Town Meeting warrant, the CIC wishes to provide a summary of capital article requests that were submitted as part of the FY23 Capital Requests Cycle. Each of these projects received funding as requested in the FY23 budget year, with authorization received at either the October or March Special Town Meeting.

Submitted by	Project Description	Appropriation	CIC
GMRSD	Hillcrest School Floors	\$56,000	RECCOMEND
CWF	Screw Pump Replacement	\$2,500,000	RECCOMEND
CWF	Transit Van to replace pickup	\$68,000	RECCOMEND
DPW	New Pick-up w/ plow and sander	\$80,000	RECCOMEND
DPW	One Ton Dump Truck w/ plow and Sander	\$100,000	RECCOMEND

Building/Assessors/ Health	Inspectional Services Vehicle	\$50,000	RECCOMEND
Selectboard	Colle Building Roof Replacement Project	\$225,789	RECCOMEND
Libraries	Feasibility Study for Main Library in Turners Falls	\$35,250	RECCOMEND
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$3,059,039</b>	

**FY24 Preview**

The CIC discussed several special article requests from the Parks and Recreation Department in great detail. These article were not ultimately ready for the CIC to recommend to Annual Town Meeting, but the CIC expects to receive updated requests for the Fall Special Town Meeting

- Montague Center Park Improvements (To leverage a potential \$500,000 PARC grant)
- Unity Park Lighting

**6 Year Capital Plan**

The initial 6 Year Capital Plan is in the process of being developed. The CIC is currently taking inventory from all existing studies of capital assets (facilities, utilities, roads, vehicles, etc) to develop a central, prioritized capital plan with a 6 year planning horizon. The plan will be developed and adopted in advance of the FY25 budget planning cycle and will prove to be a useful resource moving forward.

Respectfully,

Gregory Garrison, Chairman

Jason Burbank

Ariel Elan

Chris Menegoni