

**Town of Burlington  Capital Budget Committee****Minutes of the Capital Budget Committee
Meeting of March 11, 2021**

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1. Chairman Zabolotny called the March 11, 2021 Capital Budget Meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Webex meeting.

Members Present: Ernest Zabolotny, Adam Senesi, Gary Mercier, and Mark Woods, Gary Kasky, Myrna Saltman and Salvana Shakiab

Other attendees: Bob Cunha, Operations Manager for the School Department.

Review of School Committee capital budget requests for 2021

The Chair began the meeting by asking if there was a plan in hand to compete for a portion of the funds which the State will receive as part of the new federal program to assist schools to reopen safely as a consequence of the Covid crises. Since the funding amounts could be substantial (distributed on a per capita basis the amount could be on the order of \$10MM) and Burlington has two projects currently in planning stages, there could be a significant value to the Town to aggressively explore this potential funding assistance for those projects and other facility upgrades that might fir the funding objectives. Mr. Cunha was asked to convey the question to School Committee members and other school Administration officials and agreed to do so.

Mr. Cunha was asked to review the status of FY 2021 capital projects and he reported that all but one project were either successfully completed or nearing completion with no issues related to either cost or schedule. The project to install two exterior bathrooms at Marshall Simonds School, to be used in conjunction with field activities, has not yet begun but is scheduled for this construction season. At \$25,000, the project does not represent a significant option for postponement for the purpose of revenue loss balancing.

The first proposed Warrant article was for \$725,000 for the purpose of refurbishing the high School Varsity field and associated track. The project was removed from the Warrant requests last year in two steps, first \$225,000 for the Track and then the remainder for the field cover renewal, as a means of dealing with Covid related budget issues at that time. As a result, the field is one year closer to the potential of not meeting State requirements for safe playing field conditions and that condition could soon be met given the rate at which tests show that the field condition is deteriorating. This could result in the loss of the field for any use.

CBC concerns focused on the fact that this amounted to an annual maintenance cost of about \$70,000, assuming both the track and field parts of the project, which is much higher than was anticipated by estimates of service life and maintenance costs prior to the initial installation.

Since this is the likely cost of maintenance for the facility going forward,(that is an expected service life of ten years at a cost of \$725,000 if the project was executed as planned), members determined that it would be useful to compare maintenance costs of similar size “natural grass” field and installation costs in order to establish a basis for approval on economic grounds as well as safety considerations. It was agreed to consult with the Recreation Department for their experience with natural field construction and maintenance costs. It is recognized that the artificial field offers a greater utilization factor than natural fields and that this must be taken into account in the economic evaluation.

It was also considered to be useful to reexamine the potential merits of going forward with the planned project as was proposed last year, that is funding of the field portion only at this time, which CBC will consider before making its recommendation to TM.

CBC briefly discussed the second proposed warrant article for funds in the amount of \$47,464.45 to cover the cost of custodial services required for non- school functions that utilize school facilities and noted that it is usual practice to include the item as an element of CBC review for information purposes. CBC voted to approve this article by roll call, 5 -0-1, with the abstention citing the need for itemized detail expected at TM.

Committee members continued discussion of the merits of providing a general policy position to TM members on which the CBC bases its recommendations to Town Meeting. It is also believed that there is some merit in providing such information as input to the Administration as elements to be considered in overall budget development and prioritization of needs due to the uncertainty in Commercial Sector based tax revenues going forward. General agreement was expressed with the draft statement prepared by Adam Senesi who agreed to refine the language in accordance with comments being made. There was also general agreement that greater use of the Town’s free cash position should be used as a primary means to make up for shortfalls in revenue in order to reduce the level of residential tax increases and to minimize impacts on Town services.

Adjourn

The Capital Budget Meeting adjourned at 8:10 p.m.