

**Town of Burlington**  **Capital Budget Committee****Minutes of the Capital Budget Committee
Meeting of March 16, 2021**

Ernest Zabolotny called the March 16, 2021 Capital Budget Meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Virtual meeting.

Members Present: Ernest Zabolotny, Myrna Saltman, Adam Senesi, Gary Mercier, Gary Kasky, Mark Woods and Salvana Shakaib. Others: Gary Gianino, Treasurer, Dave Norden, Chair Parks and Recreation Commission, Brendan Egan, Director of Parks and Recreation Department, Pat O'Brian, Town Meeting member.

1. The meeting began with a general discussion with Gary Gianino of the Town's financial condition and concerns regarding potential changes in expected revenue sources. Mr. Gianino stated that the current status of State support seemed to be relatively assured but that local receipts, hospitality taxes and construction related fees continue to be affected by the Covid situation in a significant manner. On the merits of greater use of Free cash to make up revenue shortfall, he reported that the Selectmen were considering Free Cash as funding source for some non-recurring expenses but that operating costs should not be so funded. There were widely disparate views on what the impact on commercial operations and likely negative impact on tax revenues from the sector, but there was general agreement that this is the area of greatest concern and whose impact will not be fully understood for a significant period of time.

Mr. Gianino agreed to continuing discussions with the CBC as questions arise and also agreed to determine how the level of Free Cash impacts bond interest rates. This may be a critical element in determining the most cost effective long term level of the Free cash account.

2. Review of Recreation and Parks Department capital budget request for FY 2022

Brendan Egan provided a review of the status of last year's projects and reported no issues of concern regarding cost or schedule. Deployment of purchases was delayed to late in the year in order to provide some flexibility for Management to deal with financial uncertainties but no cancellations were required.

There are three requests proposed for our consideration for FY2022. In order of priority, they include a sun screen installation at Wildwood Park for the Play area, equipment for over seeding

grass cover of playing fields and park grass areas, and a Van, capable of handling two wheel chairs, to support programs designed for disabled participants.

CBC has previously approved the Wildwood project based on concerns that play equipment surfaces get very hot and pose a danger to users. Since there has been an incident of second degree burns that confirms the danger, it seems prudent to confirm approval for the project. General reluctance of CBC members was expressed for support of such an expense because of the obvious nature of the potential problem and solution. Reliance on common sense of users of the facility, however, may not be the most prudent legal defense to guard against inappropriate use. No vote was suggested at this time.

The seeder, designed to inject seed into the soil to encourage efficient new growth, is slated to replace existing 35 year old equipment that is no longer functional and replacement parts are no longer available. The equipment is a necessary tool for maintenance of safe and good quality playing field surfaces and park areas. It was noted that the aesthetic look of the Town's parks and playing fields is a visible asset to the Town and its residents and the Rec. Dept. does a great job of maintaining them at a high level. No reservations were expressed by CBC members regarding approval .

Mr. Egan briefly discussed the need for a Van to support disabled participants in Dept. programs and indicated that a DOT grant may be a source of funding for this proposed vehicle. This effort was considered a year ago but information to support a grant application was not available in a timely fashion at that time but is now available. Because this item may be funded with other resources, it may not be an item in this upcoming Warrant.

Mr. Egan was asked for his opinion on the comparative costs of maintenance for natural grass playing surfaces and artificial turf fields so as to develop an economic basis for support of the School Dept. High school field project. Both Mr. Egan and Mr. Norden expressed strong support for the artificial turf project on the bases of a significantly higher utilization factor. The opinion was expressed that if a natural field were to be used at the high school, there would be a need for another two such fields available in the Town to support the various activities now being supported. Based on the rough maintenance costs of grass playing surfaces suggested by Mr. Egan, and the likely cost of construction for switching from an artificial field it is unlikely that any cost savings, especially based on current utilization practice, could be realized as a result of such a change.

Mr. Egan was asked about any operational impacts of concern arose over the last year due to Covid restrictions and he reported that the Department staff did an excellent job of converting many of the Depart programs to virtual rather than in person, and that their effort gained recognition from the Massachusetts Recreation and Park Association. CBC added its own plaudits. Mr. Egan was asked to send back up material to support our review.

As a result of our discussions member Senesi expressed the opinion that based on the experience demonstrated by Mr. Egan with respect to field management practice, that it would be prudent to explore ways to maintain our artificial fields that would extend the service life beyond the ten

year warranty period and that it would be useful to evaluate the merits of having the Recreation Department be in charge of the maintenance of those two fields. General agreement was expressed by other CBC members that we should make a formal recommendation to that end.

Gary Mercier suggested that this also would be an appropriate time to consider merging the facility maintenance activities of the School Department and DPW, in order to achieve operational efficiency. There was general agreement expressed in support of making this as a formal recommendation to the Administration and the School Committee.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30
