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TOWN OF STONINGTON

SALLY DUPLICE CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT COMMITTEE PUBLIC HEARING MINUTES
TOWN CLERK

BOE District Office
40 Field Street, Pawcatuck
Thursday, October 19, 2023
7:00 PM

Director of Administrative Services Ms. Patti Burmahl, called the meeting to order at 7:01PM.

Ms. Burmahl asked that all in attendance recite the pledge of allegiance.

Ms. Burmahl introduced the rest of the CIP Committee members, who were in attendance, which included;

Alisha Stripling, BOE Finance Director and BOE designee
Peter Anderson, BOE Facilities Director and BOE designee
Jill Senior, Solid Waste Manager
Roger Kizer, IT Manager
Dan Smith, WPCA Director
Lynn Young, Board of Finance CIP Liaison
Jim Sullivan, Director of Finance
Deputy Chief Todd Olson, Police Commission designee
Susan Cullen, Director of Economic and Community Development
Danielle Chesebrough, First Selectman, who was in route to the meeting at this time

Director Burmahl advised those in attendance that the purpose of the meeting is to receive recommendations and input from the public on items to be included in the Town's Capital Improvement Program for the fiscal 2024-2025 CIP budget. She noted that capital projects include items such as major equipment, vehicles, construction of new facilities and/or infrastructure, and major repairs to existing facilities and infrastructure, valued at \$10,000 or greater. She further explained the CIP budgeting process to those in attendance as follows;

Step 1) The CIP Committee holds a public hearing, during the month of October, at which the Town residents, and local non-profits can submit ideas or requests for specific projects.

Step 2) Each department head prepares their respective CIP requests and forwards them to the Director of Finance for compilation into the overall CIP budget. Any requests by the public, received during step 1, are shared with the appropriate department to be considered in their CIP submission.

Step 3) The CIP Committee meets to discuss all requests made by both department heads and the public, to prioritize each request through the CIP Committee's established rating system.

Projects are reviewed and evaluated/rated in the context of the following definitions:

- A. **Committed:**
- B. **Urgent:**
- C. **Needed:**
- D. **Acceptable:**
- E. **Deferrable:**

Step 4) Upon completion of the rating process, the CIP Committee submits its recommended CIP budget to the Board of Selectmen (BOS) for its consideration. The BOS reviews the CIP Committee's recommended CIP budget, and makes additions and/or deletions, as it deems appropriate. The BOS also prioritizes all the projects recommended to it by the CIP Committee, and the BOS's prioritization may or may not agree with the CIP Committee's, it has the authority to increase or decrease the prioritization of any particular request.

Step 5) Upon completion of its review, the BOS's proposed CIP budget is incorporated into the proposed General Fund annual budget document, and submitted to the Board of Finance (BOF) for its consideration.

The Director pointed out that the Board of Selectmen and Board of Finance meetings where the Capital Improvement projects are reviewed, discussed and prioritized are public meetings and encouraged all to attend and provide comments at those meetings. And just to add some context and perspective to requestors' expectations, Ms. Burmahl reviewed the figures from the prior year CIP budget process, noting that departmental requests, including BOE, totaled \$5,173,879 to start, but was then whittled down to \$4,134,931 as follows:

<u>Dept Requests</u>	<u>BOS/BOF Adj.</u>	<u>Final</u>	<u>Other Funding Sources</u>	<u>Net Gen Fund Appr.</u>
\$5,173,879	(\$1,038,948)	\$4,134,931	(470,157)	\$3,664,774

Director Burmahl opened the Public Hearing for input from the public. Director Burmahl reported that she had received one written submission in advance of the meeting from Ms. Susan Hibbard, of 229 Jerry Brown Road. She submitted the following requests:

Ms. Hibbard, referencing the numbering from last year's CIP budget, communicated her support for funding lines 99 and 100, "Climate Change Adaptation & Mitigation Program" and "Electric Vehicle Charging Stations", respectively. She did not indicate a specific dollar amount for either project, but just proffered her opinion that they are both worthwhile and needed projects. Regarding Climate Change, she noted that Mason's Island Causeway and other low-lying parts of Town are in need of infrastructure improvements to mitigate flooding, and regarding EV charging stations, she indicated that EV charging stations are necessary to support the local tourist economy, and provide support to residents who otherwise might not move to an electric vehicle.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Director Burmahl opened the floor for comments and input from the public.

Rick Newton of 32 Meadow Brook Lane, Mystic, who is also a member of the Stonington Climate Change Taskforce (CCT), spoke on behalf of the CCT, and addressed the Committee to express the CCT's request and support for funding of the following two CIP projects;

- 1) Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation Program – Mr. Newton discussed the threats that climate change is imposing on the Town and urged the Town to start funding the CCA&MP so issues like the flooding at the Mason's Island Causeway can be addressed. He emphasized that having funds on hand for such projects would allow the Town to better compete for State and Federal grants, because one of the criteria they look for when evaluating grant applications is whether Town's have committed any funds for the requested projects themselves. He suggested funding of \$500,000.00.
- 2) On-behalf of the CCT, Mr. Newton also expressed the Committee's request and support for Electric Vehicle (EV) charging stations. By making EV charging stations available, it would further encourage people to purchase EV's by them knowing that a convenient nearby EV station is available, and this would help with reducing CO2 in the atmosphere as well, helping to mitigate global warming. A request for \$250,000 of

funding was submitted in the CCT's CIP request.

Rick Newton, on a personal note, not as a representative of the CCT, also expressed his support for three other potential CIP projects.

- 1) He expressed his support for increased funding for Open Space acquisition. He has a concern that the Town is losing too much open space and that forest land has to be preserved, as trees are the biggest mitigator of greenhouse gases. He noted that many beech trees in the area are dying due to a fungus, and that the loss of these trees needs to be mitigated by obtaining more open land and planting forests.
- 2) He requested a drainage project be undertaken to mitigate the flooding issue on Mistuxet Avenue, across from Aquarion Water. That every time there is a heavy rain that section of road floods and becomes impassable.
- 3) He also supports a drainage project for the 4th district hall to mitigate flooding in downtown Mystic.

Julia Perry – of Money Point Road, expressed her support for EV charging stations. She indicated that when she and her husband first bought an EV, they had to drive to Groton to charge it, which was very inconvenient. She thinks that this inconvenience factor is preventing others from going electric, and that if the Town had charging stations located strategically throughout Town, more people would be encouraged to purchase electric vehicles.

Maggie Favretti, - of 19 Whitehall Lane, co-founder of the Alliance for the Mystic River Watershed, seconded all of the comments and suggestions made earlier by Rick Newton. In particular she indicated the importance of EV charging stations, not only for their environmental impact, but Stonington which is a huge tourist destination, and draws tourists from all over the northeast, more and more whom are driving EV's, don't have anywhere to recharge once they get to Town. And that this lack of EV charging stations is an embarrassment to the Town. A second point that Ms. Favretti made during her comments, is that part of the process of choosing which CIP projects to fund, should include evaluating the long-term benefits and costs of projects, not just focusing in the near term. Projects that solve problems well into the future like solarized parking areas and flood prevention projects should be prioritized.

Lynn Young, the BOF representative on the CIP Committee, inquired of Rich Newton his vision or thoughts on how, climate change funding, if or when approved, would be managed. If a pool of money is appropriated with no specific projects in mind, what would be the mechanism for determining which specific projects received funding in the future. Would it fall to the CCT to decide on which projects are prioritized? Who would make that determination? Ms. Young and Mr. Newton had some back and forth about possible scenarios. Ms. Chesebrough, the First Selectman interjected that there are a lot of worthy Climate Change Projects to be addressed, so the important thing is to get some funding in place and the Boards of Selectmen and Finance, along with the CCT and the Director of Finance can work together to determine a responsible and merit-based selection process, to choose from identified projects.

With no further public comments, Ms. Burmahl closed the public hearing and adjourned the meeting at 7:25pm.

Respectfully submitted,

James Sullivan, Director of Finance