

TOWN OF STONINGTON
BOARD OF FINANCE MEETING
Building Dept, WPCA and Planning Dept CIP Presentation
Mystic Middle School Cafe
Tuesday, March 12, 2019
6:00 PM

A meeting of the Board of Finance was held on this date at the Mystic Middle School. Members present were Chairwoman June D. Strunk, Secretary Glenn Frishman, Lynn Young, Tim O'Brien, Michael Fauerbach, Blunt White and Danielle Chesebrough. Also present were First Selectman Rob Simmons and Director of Finance, James Sullivan.

Ms. Strunk called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

CIP Presentations

Chairwoman Strunk started the meeting asking the Ocean Community YMCA to continue the CIP discussion as time constraints did not allow their presentation from the previous evening.

Ocean Community YMCA – Maureen Fitzgerald, President & CEO

Renovation/Expansion/Parking - \$40,000

Ms. Fitzgerald spoke in regards to the pledge that the Town of Stonington had made to the Mystic capital campaign for the YMCA two years ago. The total pledge was \$100,000, of which \$60,000 has been received to date. Ms. Fitzgerald acknowledged the uncertainty that the Board faces with state funding however expressed that she was hopeful the Board would fund the remaining \$40,000 this year. With a mortgage still on the building, the YMCA is counting on the Town's pledge payments to be fulfilled to assist in paying down their debt. Reporting that the YMCA is doing well, the organization has raised \$4.5 million dollars of the project cost of \$7.5 million. Mark Ginsburg, Association Board of Directors member, was in attendance and Ms. Fitzgerald pointed out he was instrumental in raising these funds.

Chairwoman Strunk reaffirmed that the Board is absolutely committed to the \$100,000 pledge, but inquired if payments of \$20,000 this year and \$20,000 next year would be acceptable. Ms. Fitzgerald responded that it would be, hoping it wouldn't get extended past that. Ms. Fitzgerald invited the Board members to view a plaque recognizing the Town of Stonington on the YMCA donor wall.

Building Department – Larry Stannard, Building Official

Assistant Building Official Vehicle - \$32,000

Mr. Stannard is seeking CIP funds to replace a 2006 Standard Cab 4-wheel drive Ford Ranger with 70,000 miles, a vehicle presently driven by the Assistant Building Official. Mr. Stannard reports that the vehicle is experiencing mechanical issues with a noise in the drive train and last year spent \$2,000 in repairs with the mechanic unable to find the cause of the noise. The vehicle has significant rust issues. Mr. Stannard expressed his opinion that the building department cannot have an unreliable vehicle with being as busy as they are.

Mr. White commented on the CIP FY17/18 approved budget and inquired whether the building department had received a new vehicle to which Mr. Stannard replied that each inspector has their own vehicle and that a new vehicle had been purchased and now it was time to replace the other vehicle.

Mr. Fauerbach inquired if it was required that the vehicle be an SUV and Mr. Stannard stated that they had found the Ford Explorer to be a solid and capable vehicle for their requirements and he would like to have another one and presented a copy of the CT Fleet Low Bidder List and Crowley Ford's bid of \$26,000 for the base vehicle. The funds request of \$32,000 would cover the added upgrade for an XLT (4-wheel drive) package. Mr. Stannard stated it was imperative to have the 4-wheel drive upgrade on the vehicle due to project site extremes.

Responding to Mr. Frishman's inquiry of other issues present in the 2006 vehicle Mr. Stannard confirmed that the vehicle has the noise in the drive train, severe rust issues and feels that money is being put into a vehicle just not worth repairing any further.

WPCA - Doug Nettleton, Director

Mr. Nettleton presented two (2) related CIP project requests.

I & I Identification and Removal - \$150,000

Mystic to Borough Transfer Project - \$775,000

The first fund request in FY19/20 is for \$150,000 for an I&I (inflow and infiltration) study. FY20/21 also requests \$150,000. I&I is flow that gets into the sewers that does not belong there, from cracks in the pipes, residential sump pumps, roof gutters and other sources. There is an issue with I&I at the Mystic facility. With this winter and spring as wet as it has been, the flows in January got to a point of .799 and the permit level is .80, therefore very close to violation of the hydraulic levels and the permit restrictions.

Mr. Nettleton reported he had researched the last few years including during dry weather flows and the flows have been inching up year by year. reporting last year's average was .688. Adding that the facility is not far away from hitting the rolling average of six months at .72. This would force a situation where the Town would be required to come up with a plan of how to handle the additional flows and submitting that plan to DEEP.

Mr. Nettleton feels this issue is an immediate need, calling attention to the Perkins Farm development, which is going to add an additional 40,000 gallons more of flow. All three phases of this project have been approved and the developers have recently received approval to put in the overland sewers. Mr. Nettleton feels the development will be coming online much faster than anticipated.

There are also several other development projects in the works that would impact the facilities hydraulic levels. The Stonington Planning & Zoning Department has received applications for two (2) hotels in the Coogan Blvd area. Looking at the kind of development occurring in Mystic, Mr. Nettleton feels it is urgent to prepare for this development and the additional flows so that the Mystic facility would not fall into violation.

The WPCA department's second request is for a total of \$1,640,000; \$775,000 for the FY19/20 and \$865,000 for FY20/21. The first-year funds would be to get the pumps for that system and the downstream assets back in shape to take the flow and actually start to pump some flow. Mr. Nettleton told the board that in 1997 a transfer line from the Mystic plant to the Borough plant was installed and he would like to make that line active again. In year two, Mr. Nettleton would apply the funds to the Borough facility itself to make sure that it can accept the entire 300,000 gallons of flow, in case it is needed. Pointing to a draft report from Wright-Pierce Engineering that WPCA had commissioned to study the feasibility and functionality of the transmission lines between the Mystic and Borough plants Mr. Nettleton felt his estimates were in line with the report.

When questioned about the I&I study, Mr. Nettleton stated that the \$150,000 for the first year is just to get the study started. According to DEEP, there is some grant money available and the Town may be eligible for a matching grant of 50%, which would potentially eliminate the second-year request of \$150,000. However, the Town would have to fund the entire study and then request the 50% reimbursement from DEEP. Mr. Nettleton stated that the study cost was only an estimate.

Danielle Chesebrough asked, if the Town were to approve the Mystic to Borough transfer project would the study and additional funding still be required. Mr. Nettleton feels that the DEEP would not allow the transfer project without the study. His opinion was the Town would need to prove to the DEEP that the Town was working on correcting the issue and not just moving the I&I problem from Mystic over to the Borough.

Mr. Fauerbach asked if there was grant funding available should the I&I study find that there are pipes that need to be replaced or would that be the full responsibility of the Town. Mr. Nettleton believes it would be the Town's responsibility adding if the additional flow is identified to be from residential submersible pumps (sump pumps) there will not be an easy solution to that problem. Mr. Nettleton adds that some of the residential submersible pumps are capable of pumping up to 70 gallons per minute and with the possibility of 10 pumps in any one neighborhood the resulting flows have the possibility of overwhelming some of the smaller pump stations.

Mr. White asked what the anticipated connection charges for the Perkins Farm development would be and Mr. Nettleton stated he expected with all three (3) phases of the development, the medical building, one-hundred twenty (120) apartments, and fifty (50) Townhouses, approximately \$350,000 in connection fees would be generated. Ms. Young noted that the connection fees would be paid in three (3)

installments as each phase is developed. The WPCA is allowing the developer to do overland sewer without payment of any fees, but won't allow connection of any buildings without payment. The Maritime pump station which is 30 years old, will be maxed out with these anticipated flows. Mr. Nettleton estimates approximately \$150,000 of the collected connection fees will need to be put right back into the system. The equipment at this station needs to be ready to handle maximum flow which will occur when the project is fully developed.

Mr. White pointed out that the audited financial statements for the Town shows that the WPCA has a cash position as of June 30, 2018, of \$1,000,008 in four different accounts and inquired whether any of these funds could be used for the two (2) FY19/20 CIP requests totaling \$925,000.

Mr. Nettleton expressed concern that if that were to happen there would be the potential of no funding available for emergencies. With three (3) treatment plants, sixteen (16) pumping stations, four (4) order control facilities and many miles of pipe in the ground, funds need to be available for emergencies.

Pointing out that the emergency work performed on Holmes Street cost \$100,000 for 300 feet of pipe, Mr. Nettleton feels at this point the department should have a \$1.2 million reserved for emergency capital improvements.

Mr. White inquired about the project bidding process, as the WPCA as a separate entity, operates outside of the charter requirements on bidding. Mr. Nettleton confirmed that the project will go out for bid, and once he has had a chance to fully review the aforementioned draft report in its final form, it will be used to develop the bid specifications for the project.

Planning & Zoning – Jason Vincent, Director

Enterprise Technology Plan - \$75,000

Permit Tracking - \$50,000

Pawcatuck Hurricane Barrier Study - \$40,000

Sea Level/Coastal Adaptation Program - \$100,000

Enterprise Technology: Mr. Vincent started the discussion noting that the need for an enterprise technology plan is not just a Department of Planning issue but a Town Hall wide issued with the need for better integration of technology, noting that Stonington is behind what other communities are doing in terms of digitization and linking of departments. Mr. Vincent points out that the GIS system for one, performed better ten years ago than it does today, and if he doesn't point out these deficiencies, he doesn't feel like he has validated his work of helping define where gaps exist.

Providing a bit of history during his previous employment period with the Town, Mr. Vincent told the Board there was a time when each department purchased their own computers. Through director level discussions, a plan was devised to consolidate purchasing to a single source and this plan was presented to the Board of Finance, and the Town gained an IT Director and an IT Department. Mr. Vincent states that Groton has created a good model plan and whether the technology funds come from general operation CIP requests or his departmental requests, a strategic plan for enterprise technology is a necessity.

Mr. Fauerbach asked Mr. Vincent if he had a vendor in mind for this study and Mr. Vincent stated that a qualification-based selection process would be completed. A scope of work similar to what Groton has done has been developed and a Request for Qualifications would be submitted to get the best outcome for the Town.

Mr. Vincent said he needed to raise the idea of an enterprise technology master plan with the Board of Finance so a discussion could take place. Through these discussions, via the CIP process, if permit tracking were to also be implemented, determination of the best tools to go forward, working with the Town's other technology requirements and being overly cautious while trying to save money would be the forefront of those discussions. The enterprise technology plan is a five- or ten-year vision of strategically managing department needs and resources.

Ms. Young asked if Mr. Vincent saw this project as a town wide project or limited to the Town Hall. Mr. Vincent would love for the project to be beyond the Town Hall but for right now the framework presents itself under the leadership of the First Selectman within the Town Hall. Further down the road Mr. Vincent adds he would encourage conversations with the Police Commission and the Board of Education and by having available funding to move forward it would provide the opportunity to have those conversations.

Permit Tracking: With regards to the permit tracking, Mr. Vincent would be willing to delay this request, if an enterprise plan were to be implemented. However, Mr. Vincent wants to make sure that the right approach for the enterprise technology implementation takes place and that the Planning & Zoning system links up to the Assessors Department and all the other departments, and that the right tools are in place for those other departments.

Coastal Adaptation Program: Danielle Chesebrough asked Mr. Vincent for additional information on the program. Mr. Vincent explained that coastal resiliency is an emerging issue for communities. The Town of Stonington has a coastal resiliency plan that was adopted in 2018. That plan sets a vision level framework rather than a project-based framework, and Mr. Vincent would like to be able to convert this vision into actual projects. This would entail starting to develop conceptual ideas that could be implemented with the plan, and this would require engineering and analysis.

The Town has been leveraging very low-cost solutions whenever possible, for example tonight there is a coastal resiliency idea workshop at the Fire Station in Mystic. The Town is using graduate level college students to help ideate programs and potential projects that build upon the overall strategy and vision of the coastal resiliency plan that could then become individual projects that are grant worthy once design work is completed.

Mr. Vincent added one of the barriers to securing grants is that plans are not designed on these projects and people are looking for shovel ready grants. Mr. Vincent understands the public does not want to fund studies and plans that sit on shelves, however; he informed the Board he was aware of a \$1.18 million sidewalk grant opportunity with a 20% match. The catch was the design had to be submitted within one month. Mr. Vincent states securing grants has become very competitive and the Town is not prepared to compete with the 23 other towns that are more prepared.

Chairwoman Strunk asked Mr. Vincent if any nearby towns were models of coastal resiliency plans. And Mr. Vincent felt that Branford had a good plan, believing Branford has put aside \$1 million dollars for coastal resiliency work in a reserve account, to be able to leverage opportunities when they arise. Mr. Vincent suggests this is a climate change risk management strategy to protect some of the Town's most valuable assets.

Mr. Vincent stated he has several letters of support submitted by the Climate Change Task Force and there is no doubt that the damage from coastal storms has increased thus increasing the need for more talk about coastal adaptation and preparation for these storms. Protecting infrastructure assets in vulnerable areas, such as the sewage treatment plants, roads and other infrastructure, as well as other private sector assets requires that the Town be proactive in planning for coastal changes. These assets contribute to the Grand List which the Town relies upon to fund its budget.

Pawcatuck Waterline Loop - Chairwoman Strunk asked Mr. Vincent to briefly speak with regards to the Pawcatuck Waterline Loop. According to Mr. Vincent, the initial assessment has been completed and the finding is a \$1.2 million plus range to implement that project. An alternative analysis was developed based on the engineering work it's in a draft format, ready to report to the Board of Selectmen. Currently Mr. Vincent is not prepared to come to the Board of Finance and ask for that funding.

Mr. Vincent informed the Board that what wasn't tested was an idea where a supplemental water supply was put into a building so that it could provide the emergency water supply needed to keep the sprinkler system going, this was particularly important for buildings such as the police station, keeping it operational during an emergency of this nature.

Lynn Young asked if it was just the water supply to hydrants that was the issue and Mr. Vincent explained that there are two (2) dead end lines in the Pawcatuck water supply in the south of Route 1, one goes down to Greenhaven/Mary Hall Road in that area and the other one comes down Greenhaven Road to the dump.

The Planning department was reviewing what would happen if these dead-end lines were to be connected, creating a loop system with the water approaching the system from two directions which would increase pressure. A great concern is that this system is tied in with Westerly's water system, an aging system from the 1900's. Mr. Vincent states it is important there is an alternate source of water as this line supplies the elderly housing, the high school, which is an emergency shelter, and the police station which also operates as the Town's emergency operation center. Monies are still available from the previous allocation; some funds were spent for the study and the target alternatives assessment.

First Selectman Rob Simmons added to the discussion, informing the Board there is a state law that requires a dead-end system that is out of commission for four (4) hours, that all sprinkler buildings being serviced on that dead-end system have to be evacuated. If it was a loop system, you could run the water back and around eliminating the need for evacuation. Should the section of the line that goes down is the Route 1 line, the Police Station would need to be evacuated, Brookside, Stonington Arms and the Stonington High School would all require to be evacuated. Selectman Simmons states unfortunately discussion with Westerly Water Department as well as Pawcatuck Fire Department urging participation in addressing and correcting the issue has had no response. Mr. Simmons said at this point you have to assess the situation and at this point he would argue that the risk of having problems with the Mystic sewer treatment plant is greater, to which Mr. Vincent agrees, adding this is not Stonington's asset and it requires Westerly to participate.

Pawcatuck Streetscape – Route 1 and Sidewalk Discussion

Mr. Vincent states that this area is from Spellman Drive towards downtown. As private sector developments have occurred, the Planning and Zoning commission has forced them to put in sidewalks, which is an incremental approach. The Planning department would like to close the gaps in sidewalks along that stretch. A State grant was applied for and awarded, but was never funded by the State.

Mr. Vincent informed the Board that this project shows up in two ways in the CIP request. The first request (reflected in Line #105) would apply to a whole streetscape project. CIP request Lines #124, #125 and #126 pertain to just sidewalk infill. This would allow completion of one section per year, over three years, instead of completing it as one large project.

Mr. Vincent states Line #105 would include improving other sidewalks more of a streetscape project, and Lines #124, #125 and #126 are more of a close the gap sidewalk project. They are not equal projects and therefore the numbers will not add up. Mr. Vincent tells the Board his objective with this CIP request was to present to the Board projects that were more palatable within what may be able to be funded.

Streetlight Upgrades

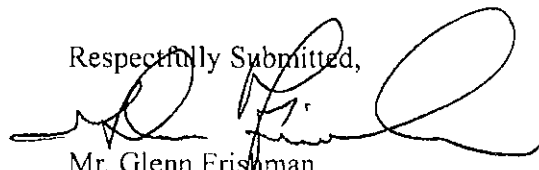
Mr. Vincent took a moment to inform the Board on the status of the ongoing Streetlight project, funded at \$30,000 FY18/19. The projected savings from the Streetlight purchase plan have changed due to Eversource changing the lighting fixtures to LED, which will save the Town money, but as Mr. Vincent acknowledged, Towns that own their own lights versus renting the lights save even more. There are three different options for the streetlight project and Mr. Vincent is hoping to have funds left over to apply towards the hurricane barrier project. The project was designed if the Town chooses to purchase the street lights, the previously funded \$30,000 would be amortized into the acquisition and with a line item transfer the funds could be moved into the hurricane project.

Mr. Vincent acknowledged that he presented the Board with many projects to consider. The reason for so many projects is the Planning Department works with many different community leaders and those community leaders have projects they'd like to see implemented. Currently there are 116 ideas in the Plan of Conservation Development and 52 of those ideas are presented in this year's CIP request.

Mr. Frishman inquired about the details of the Hurricane Barrier study. Mr. Vincent states the intention of the study is to verify that a barrier would qualify that neighborhood as a FEMA exempt area, so that any businesses that are located behind the barrier would not require flood insurance. A building complex in that area is a great space for small businesses, but the burden placed on them requiring additional flood insurance is a deterrent. Mr. Vincent believes without this additional expense the area will be more attractive to smaller businesses.

Mr. White had a question on the Pawcatuck Streetscape and Sidewalk projects. Mr. Vincent defined the projects through the CIP request form as follows: Streetscape improvements are needed in various neighborhoods in the Pawcatuck Village area. Many of the roads in the village have inadequate pedestrian facilities and improvements would include ADA accessible sidewalks, attractive landscaping, lighting and additional crosswalks where practical. Total request for the project is \$580,000. Mr. Vincent noted that the project may have been articulated a bit differently in the Planning & Zoning project conceptualization document.

The meeting broke at 7:05 pm

Respectfully Submitted,

Mr. Glenn Frishman
Secretary

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