



TOWN OF NORWELL
Norwell Town Offices, Room 112
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Norwell Capital Budget Committee Meeting Minutes March 11, 2024

The meeting was called to order by Chair Tim Greene at 7:00 PM. Also present were Town Administrator Darleen Sullivan, Town Accountant Christine McCarthy, and Committee Members Meaghan James, Kimberley Dall, Susan Powell, Tucker Matheson, and Dane Hutchison.

AGENDA

Ms. Sullivan advised that discussion of the Police and Fire Department requests would be moved to the next meeting.

Motion by Ms. Powell to approve the agenda as amended. Seconded by Mr. Hutchison and unanimously voted.

FY 2025 CAPITAL REQUESTS

Chair Greene suggested that the Committee listen to all the presentations first, and then take the approval votes.

Highway/Trees and Grounds

Assistant Director Shane Gokey present.

Lawnmower/blower \$30K

Mr. Gokey advised that the mower to be replaced was 21 years old; replacement parts were getting hard to find and are very expensive. The old mower will be auctioned off on Unibid, with the proceeds going back to the General Fund. Mr. Gokey anticipates it will bring between \$2K-3K at auction; a dealer may offer \$500 for it as a trade-in.

Mr. Greene asked how many mowers the Department owned; there are three mowers, and the other two are under 10 years old. Ms. Powell asked if the Department could manage with the two mowers; Mr. Gokey advised "definitely not," as all three were in near constant use, one at the cemeteries, one for roadsides, and one for the school grounds.

Ms. James asked if many of the items being requested were priced under a municipal contract; the mower and most of the vehicles were; the contracts hold dealers to strict guidelines.

F350 Pickup Trees & Grounds - \$85K

These funds will replace a 10 year old vehicle with 133K miles that sees daily use. Mr. Gokey noted that they try to make as many repairs in house as possible. He expects the new Highway Barn will reduce vehicle maintenance costs, as it includes a cleaning bay and inside storage space for all vehicles. Ms. Powell would like Highways to track these costs for future reference.

Ms. Sullivan advised that the pickup to be replaced may be transferred to Facilities instead of being traded in.

F550 Dump Truck - \$110,000

These funds will replace Truck 23, from 2015, which is used daily in Trees & Grounds for chip and log pickup. It also acts as a sander / plow in the winter, and covered 15 roads on a plow and sanding route. This diesel truck required a total emissions system replacement at a \$14K cost. The new 550 will run on regular gasoline, as the gas trucks have fewer emissions systems issues. The old truck will be sold on Unibid.

Ms. Dall asked if 79K miles was the typical end of life for these vehicles. Mr. Gokey noted that the body tends to deteriorate more quickly due to its hauling salt and sand, to the point that they no longer pass state inspection.

F350 Dump Truck Highways - \$85K

These funds will replace a 12 year old vehicle with 150K miles; this is used daily to transport tools, the roller, and work crews.

Paving Roller \$35K

This roller, which is used for road and athletic field maintenance, is about 20 years old; it has been rebuilt twice in house but parts are getting harder to find. Ms. Powell asked if hiring an in-house maintenance specialist would save on the Department's maintenance costs. Mr. Gokey noted this was hard to say because their facility isn't set up for in-depth repairs; modern vehicles are increasingly computerized and repairs require specialized technicians.

Ms. Dall asked Mr. Gokey to rank the Department's asks; from highest to lowest priority they are the F550, mower, roller, F350 for Highways, and F350 for Trees & Grounds.

School Department

Director of Finance, Operations, and Technology Warren MacCallum present.

Elementary School Bleachers - \$100K

Mr. McCallum advised that the bleachers in both schools had been condemned in state-mandated inspections and must be replaced. The replacements will be collapsable and are expected to last 20-30 years. If the price does not include disposal of the old bleachers, the custodians will handle the job at no extra cost.

Ms. Dall asked if the Department could replace the bleachers one at a time; Mr. McCallum pointed out this would mean one school would have to do without seating for presentations, assemblies, and sporting events. There was no discount for buying both at the same time. Mr. Hutchison asked if installing non-retractable bleachers would be cheaper; there was not much cost difference, and this would result in a loss of space.

Mr. Matheson asked if they had received multiple bids for the work; this was required given the cost, and Mr. MacCallum believes \$100K is a fair price.

Blinds - Cafeteria/Classroom - \$100K

Police and security consultants have recommended the installation of blinds in order to reduce sight lines into school windows; these need to be custom-made due to the size of the windows. The original cost was \$200K, but they have worked with the police to cut down the request size.

Mr. Hutchison advised if grant funding could cover this expense; Mr. MacCallum advised they were using grants for cameras and door access. Ms. Dall asked about tinting the windows to restrict visibility; this would permanently darken the rooms. Committee members also asked if blinds were enough of a solution, and if they would have stopped any previous security issue. Mr. MacCallum suggested they were a part of the solution, and Mr. Hutchison noted that shutting blinds was the first step in a lockdown situation.

Roof Repair - Vinal - \$25K

This funding is to fix an area of the roof so it will last to the 5-10 year point, at which time the Department can ask the Massachusetts School Building Authority to cover the \$2 million cost for a full roof replacement; work will be done over the summertime.

Van - \$20K

This request will replace a van used to move cleaning equipment between buildings; currently, department staff is using their own vehicles and putting in reimbursement requests. Town meeting had previously approved \$25K for this purpose but Ford was unable to deliver one at the time and asked the Department to rebid. Ms. Powell asked if they could purchase a used van for less money; Mr. MacCallum advised this would still cost up to \$30K and most vans available for bid were in poor condition. He is willing to ask if the van could be stored inside the highway barn.

MS / Cole Projectors \$40K/\$60K

These funds are requested to purchase a projector for the Middle School and projector, screen, and sound system for the Cole School. The existing screen and sound system at the Middle School can be used with the new projector, but the screen and sound system at the Cole School must be replaced.

Ms. Powell noted that these prices seemed exorbitant and Mr. Hutchison questioned whether this was a need or a want. Mr. MacCallum noted that they got these estimates from a company on the state bid list, who identified which equipment could be carried over to the new system and which needed to be replaced. Cheaper equipment is usually less reliable. Mr. Matheson asked if TVs or smart screens could be used instead; Mr. MacCallum pointed out these probably were not big enough for the large presentations that are held in the cafeteria.

Mr. MacCallum advised that the company that was to perform the previously approved Vinal and Cole school heating upgrades now wanted \$320K per building to do the work; they are using the \$160K previously approved to repair both buildings, using another company and in-house staff, which will save money but take longer to complete. They were continuing to maintain the existing elevator and generator in the Sparrell building for now, but upgrades were still in the capital plan. All briefly discussed future plans for the Sparrell building, which is not fully utilized and has an aging HVAC system. Assistant Town Administrator Kim Roy indicated there was probably not enough space at 93 Longwater to accommodate the school administrative offices. The food pantry and Recreation may move to the lower level of the building.

Ms. Dall asked why there were no kitchen asks this year; Mr. MacCallum advised that state reimbursement for universal free lunch has made funds available for kitchen maintenance, and they are able to purchase Department of Defense surplus at very low cost.

Ms. Dall asked Mr. MacCallum to rank the Department's asks; from highest to lowest priority they are the blinds, roof, van, projector, and bleachers.

MISCELLANEOUS

Ms. Sullivan will add a committee reorganization discussion to an upcoming agenda.

Mr. Hutchison would like to see additional information regarding all requests, including estimated maintenance cost and procurement schedules. Ms. Dall would also like the Committee to have a 10 year capital budget plan so it has some idea of the annual expenditures to expect. Ms. Sullivan advised that the updated plan was still a draft but she would send it out, along with a vehicle inventory, for discussion at a future workshop. She generally expects expenditures between \$2 to \$3 million over the next 10 years split to some degree between "wants" and "needs," but many of the bigger asks are needs. Assistant Town Administrator Kim Roy is working to even out the spend as much as possible.

Ms. Powell suggests that the committee hold a kickoff meeting each year, possibly in the fall, to discuss the review process before it starts.

FUTURE MEETINGS

March 18, 2024, 7 PM

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, a motion was made by Mr. Hutchison to adjourn at 8:56 PM. Seconded by Ms. Powell and unanimously voted.
