

MINUTES
**CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS/
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEETING**
Meeting of Thursday, January 14, 2021 – 6:30 p.m.
On-line Zoom Meeting

Present: Council Chairman Lee Pratt; Council Vice Chairperson - Suzie Phillips, Committee Chair;
Councilors Ben Hartwell and Janet Kuech.

Also Present: Town Manager, Ephrem Paraschak; Public Works Director/Town Engineer Robert Burns.

1. Consideration of the minutes of the August 27, 2019 meeting.

A motion was MADE by Councilor Kuech, SECONDED by Councilor Phillips, and VOTED to accept the minutes of the August 27, 2019 Economic Development/Capital Improvements Committee Meeting. Unanimous vote.

2. Current Business

A. Update regarding Capital Projects.

Town Manager Ephrem Paraschak shared that the Town has many capital projects in progress from the current fiscal year and past fiscal years, as well as capital projects on hold until next fiscal year. Less complicated capital projects are completed quickly such as vehicle purchases. Road capital projects typically never end and revolve year to year.

B. Review of Fiscal Year 2020-2021 expenditures.

Mr. Paraschak then reviewed the list of Capital Part II items from the current fiscal year and explained that specific amounts are budgeted at the Council-level for specific roads. The budgeted amount is then allocated to a fund from which Public Works draws on as they move forward with road projects. Mr. Paraschak shared his screen and reviewed the remaining items on the Capital Part II budget list.

Mr. Paraschak noted that the Town signed the revaluation agreement with Vision Government Services, so funds budgeted from the current and last fiscal years, as well as reserve funds will go into an account and be drawn down, and the work will begin in the next six months.

Mr. Parschak reported that the budget amounts for technology infrastructure improvements, as well as copier and printer replacements have been expended.

Regarding matching funds for two propane buses through the VW grant, Mr. Paraschak said that the budgeted amount has been expended and staff are working with a vendor to correct a lettering/logo mistake.

Mr. Paraschak reported that additional voting booths have been purchased and he will check on the remaining balance.

Mr. Paraschak reported that the installation of a sewer pump overflow alarm has not yet been done and staff are working on it.

Regarding PD cruisers, Mr. Paraschak reported that they have been ordered and the department just received vehicles ordered last fiscal year.

Mr. Paraschak reported that the work to the heating system at Central Fire Station has been done, so the budget amount has been spent.

Regarding the electric vehicle (EV) for the Code Office, Mr. Paraschak reported that staff will be able to purchase two vehicles for the amount budgeted, as well as with Efficiency Maine grant funds.

Regarding the joint Town/School Facilities Study, Mr. Parashcak said that the contract was recently executed with CHA Architecture, so the formal work will begin next week.

Mr. Paraschak commented that the Town is holding steady on expenditures related to COVID-19 Capital Preparedness; however, the need for a temporary employee to verify appointments, allow building access and record visitor information for contact tracing purposes was not taken into account with the budgeted amount. Some portion of the temporary employee's placement may be reimburseable, but that expense has been drawn from this fund.

Mr. Paraschak noted that the remaining Capital Part II items beyond item 12 were to be done if revenues were stable, which he said they were, so he has authorized respective department managers to proceed with purchases with the exception of the dump truck; he advised Mr. Burns to go out to bid on that item.

Councilor Hartwell said that he sponsored an item at the last Regular Town Council meeting to have the police cruiser design revert back to a traditional design. He asked if it is not too late for the police cruisers on order to have the traditional design with exterior light bars, to which Mr. Paraschak said that he would find out.

Regarding the radio system replacement, Mr. Paraschak said that the budget amount was a stop-gap measure to fix or replace failing parts with the radio system used by the Fire, Police and Public Works Departments.

Mr. Paraschak reported that the Portland Area Comprehensive Transportation System (PACTS) is collecting a list of shovel-ready projects that could be funded if there is government money coming down the pipeline for roads, so the Town will proceed with funding item 19 on the Capital Part II list – Traffic Calming/ Pedestrian Improvements in the Gorham Village.

Regarding the EV charging stations for Gorham Village, Community Development Director Tom Poirier said that that Economic Development Director Kevin Jensen has

worked with Hannaford to help them apply for Efficiency Maine grant funds to have a charging station installed in their parking lot, as well as helped the First Parish Church submit a grant application for the installation of a charging station in their parking lot. Mr. Poirier also said that staff are requesting a quote for two more charging stations to be installed on Town property – one possibly in front of Robie Gym, and another at the Municipal Center. Mr. Paraschak asked staff to look at charging stations that have the ability to charge the user's credit card.

Mr. Paraschak reported that the Town has not had to use any of the remaining balance of the Capital Part II budget as a revenue shortfall from the fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic. He noted that the budgeted amount will either roll back into the Capital Part II budget, or the Town Council could designate for emergency funds.

Councilor Phillips commented the Capital Part II list matches up with the list of expenditures, and that she supports the Town Manager authorizing departments to proceed with the outstanding Capital Part II projects that were being held off to verify that revenues were stable.

Councilor Kuech asked if the radio system project that the School department has in progress has been coordinated with public safety, to which Mr. Parascak said yes – partially. He said that the Town's radio system is currently analog, which runs on a VHF frequency. The School department has never had a true radio system, except for the bus garage, so they will be purchasing a new system that will be digital, which means that the School department can hear the Town's analog radio, but the Town cannot hear the School department's digital radio. The School department then were able to purchase all new radios for the Police department. The Fire department received a grant last year from which they bought new digital radios. Fire, Police and Public Works departments are requesting \$55,000 to upgrade the Town's radio system.

Mr. Paraschak shared that a leak was discovered in a diesel fuel tank at the Public Works fuel depot. The tanks have since been pumped and are scheduled for replacement. Mr. Burns has received bids for tank replacement and the Town is dispensing fuel from a portable skid unit in the interim. The defective tank will be pressure-tested, and if it passes, the Town will subrogate with the fuel company for the costs incurred due to the leak. Funds have been allocated to this project. A property insurance claim has also been filed to recover costs from the leak.

Council Chairman Lee Pratt asked if the fuel tanks were access by a key card system, to which Mr. Burns said that the Town will have a new fuel management system installed that will be accessed by a swipe card, key fob, or a tone ring that is assigned to vehicles. In the interim, he said that employees have to remember the amount pumped from the skid unit. He said that employees previously accessed the fuel system with a key. He noted that USM is an offsite user of the fuel depot – they have had an agreement with the Town for at least six years and pay a management fee/premium that helps offset the overhead costs of the fuel depot.

C. Status of finished and outstanding road projects.

Mr. Burns referred to page 78 of the current fiscal year budget document referencing that Public Works received an allocation of \$900,000 for road projects, which would have allowed Public Works to complete road work on Hurricane Road, Plummer Road Culvert, Narragansett Street sidewalk and drainage, Sebago Lake Road/Route 237, Day Road and the Brackett Road/Saco Street intersection. Of those projects, the Sebago Lake Road/Route 237 overlay was completed. All funding for the Hurricane Road project, which spans into the previous fiscal year, was utilized, which included an allocation of \$40,000 from the previous 2019-2020 fiscal year budget. Mr. Burns explained that the Public Works crew discovered that there was an inadequate base layer of gravel, so more time and effort to rebuild sections of the road beyond a shim and overlay project were needed to substantiate the project. Mr. Burns will request additional funding in the upcoming budget cycle for the final surface overlay on Hurricane Road.

Mr. Burns reported that the Narragansett Street sidewalk and drainage work are in the design stage.

Regarding the Main Street project funding from the 2019-2020 fiscal year budget, Mr. Burns reported that the work is near completion. Outstanding work on the LED traffic signal lights and training for staff needs to take place. He will recommend that the Town utilize a vendor-specific cloud-based program for the manipulation of the traffic signals. A significant improvement gained from the new system will be automatic notifications when there are malfunctions as opposed to the traveling public, public safety and Public Works staff making reports. Mr. Burns noted that the work is under budget on this project as the Town was able to save money on curb replacement.

With regard to the Mosher Road/Route 237 sidewalks, Mr. Burns reported that the work is progressing, which is being done in conjunction with a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and PACTS funding; a sidewalk and flashers still needs to be installed on Acorn Street. Mr. Paraschak noted that additional CDBG funding has been allocated toward this project to install pedestrian crossing signals in the 2021-2022 fiscal year budget.

Mr. Burns reported that the Deering Road project has been completed.

An outstanding road to be improved is College Avenue, reported Mr. Burns, which was postponed when the Town became aware that the Portland Water District (PWD) would be replacing the 100-year old water line. A change to the Streets and Sidewalks ordinance was made and parking on the south side of College Avenue, which changed the scope of work. Bids received were significantly higher than budgeted. Mr. Burns said that he now needs to work with the contractor and engineer to try to perform the work within budget. He also noted that the PWD is intending to move forward with their budgeted work for a redundancy system for feeding the Village Center with domestic-use water and for use by the Fire department.

Mr. Paraschak said that the market is very competitive with pricing now, but it is difficult to justify spending Town dollars during a down economy. He suggested that the Town consider a road bond in the future. He also noted that Public Works budgeted funds for a road management software, which helps the department prioritize work. He further

said that although the Town needs to rebuild roads, he recommends paving roads every year.

Councilor Hartwell asked if every road has an estimated date of when some work will be done, and if so, does that change when priorities change. Mr. Burns said that roads get assessed via a windshield survey performed each year by the Deputy Public Works Director, at which time all roads are rated. Since the road budget varies each year and all roads age differently based on traffic, the list does not change when priorities change. The system does provide reporting on the road conditions and how to maximize funding. He noted that the preventative maintenance budget is short and estimated that it would take 1.5 to 2 million dollars each year to reach a sustainable paving program. Councilor Hartwell asked if Mr. Burns recommended that the end of the Great Falls Road near North Gorham Road return to gravel, to which Mr. Burns said that the section in question should be reconstructed, which far exceeds an overlay. The road is on a reconstruction list, but it may need to be graded and have gravel laid until it could be reconstructed.

Council Chairman Lee Pratt asked if half of Line Road is in Gorham and the other half is in Buxton. Mr. Burns said that there is a stretch of Line Road that is in Buxton. Mr. Burns recalls that it was discussed at a Council meeting some years ago, but he is not certain that the delineation is exact or mathematical. He said that it is a long road and to reconstruct it will be costly; pieces might be able to be overlaid. Mr. Paraschak said that he and Mr. Burns met with Town of Buxton elected officials last year as they wanted to rebuild the road. Mr. Paraschak explained that the Town of Gorham's budget was already committed, and Mr. Burns estimated that it would cost roughly two million dollars to rebuild. Mr. Paraschak said that the Town would need to take a bond to rebuild it, or rebuild sections at a time.

Councilor Kuech asked if the University of Southern Maine in Gorham have approached the Town with any suggested less costly paving alternatives. Mr. Burns shared that some rural towns have tried tar and chip surface treatments, which have been effective to a degree, but do not do well with frost conditions; other towns have used cold-mix asphalt; the Maine Department of Transportation (MDOT) had advocated that towns use warm-mix asphalt, which would save energy and ultimately reduce the cost of the pavement, although Pike Industries was the only company that used that product. He commented that paving alternatives may be less costly, but they will not last like hot-mix asphalt. If an alternative paving treatment is applied at the right time, it might extend the life of the existing hot-mix asphalt. A drawback of using tar and chip surface treatment is that vehicle noise is loud in residential neighborhoods, and it can be expensive since it extends the life of the road by a couple of years, whereas hot-mix asphalt surface treatment can extend a road by four to five years. Mr. Burns said that Public Works' road management system software gives recommendations and staff try to apply the right treatments for the right roads; however, the list of recommended roads exceeds what the department can feasibly work on with available funding.

Mr. Parsaschak commented that from his experience, when a road returns to gravel, the dust factor and uneven terrain are not typically considered, so it may be a less costly alternative to hot-mix asphalt paving; however, Public Works will then spend more time

fixing issues. Mr. Burns said that Gorham is in close proximity to paving contractors, so the Town benefits from competitive prices on road work. Councilor Hartwell commented that he read an article regarding a study conducted by the Town of Richmond that compared costs between gravel roads and hot-mix asphalt. The costs varied depending on traffic volume, but a significant factor that drove the cost up on gravel roads was the ditching cost, which happens more frequently due to erosion. Mr. Burns said that since the Town is a regulated MS4 community, the Town needs to comply with storm water and erosion requirements, so there would be more work involved with maintaining gravel roads. Mr. Burns also noted that the Town has a number of gravel roads to which funds are committed and Public Works maintains.

Mr. Parashcak reported that the LED streetlight project seems to be paying off as the Town is paying less on the electric bill and the lights are functioning correctly. The only drawback was that the Town had to purchase all the lights in order to proceed with the project with Central Maine Power (CMP).

Two outstanding large projects that the Council approved impact fee funding for is the Little Falls storage facility/ snack shack and Chick property baseball field, reported Mr. Parsaschak. He said that the work has not commenced since pricing quoted from contractors exceeded the budget. The Recreation Director is pursuing CDBG funding for the Little Falls snack shack, but the projects will remain on hold until the work can be done within budget.

3. Other Business

No other business was discussed.

4. Schedule next meeting and discuss agenda items for next meeting.

Council Vice Chairperson Phillips suggested that the committee meet again in February to hear an economic development update from Economic Development Director Kevin Jensen and Mr. Poirier. She also suggested inviting Gorham Economic Development Corporation (GEDC) Chairman Christopher Kelley to talk about the GEDC's work, or Mr. Poirier can provide that update.

Councilor Vice Chairperson Phillips asked if would be helpful for the committee to meet again to discuss capital projects in March when Mr. Paraschak will be preparing the proposed fiscal year 2021-2022 budget, to which he said yes. He said that the committee could also have a discussion on the status of the facilities study in March. Council Vice Chairperson Phillips said that the committee will need to meet again with the School Facilities committee once the facilities study is complete.

Mr. Paraschak shared that he and Mr. Poirier met with the commercial property broker regarding the lot approved to be sold from the new Industrial Park, so that will be listed soon.

5. Adjourn.

There being no further business, a motion was MADE by Councilor Kuech, SECONDED by Councilor Hartwell and unanimously VOTED to adjourn at 7:43 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Jessica Hughes, Executive Assistant