

Selectboard/Capital Planning Meeting November 22, 2024

The Capital Planning Meeting was called to order at 11:10 AM by Curt Robie, member of the Selectboard, as the Chair was late in arriving. Tamarin Laurel-Paine, member was also in attendance. Other people in attendance were: Mark Doane, Administrative Assistant, Adair Laurel-Cafarella, Finance Board Chair, Ira Bresinsky from PVPC, Diane Thome, Skip Savery, and Doreen Black.

Ira began with explaining his relationships with towns in the Capital Planning process. Ira stated that he met with the Finance Board of Middlefield, and he reported that The Finance Board feels they should be the lead group of a Capital Planning Commission. Ira did explain that a Capital Plan is different than an Annual Budget. Ira stated when it comes to Capital Plans, it involves more options of payment such as grants. The Finance chair pointed out it is hard to fill committees in small towns, and Ira would recommend that, if Middlefield choose to have a Capital Planning Committee, to keep it small. He recommended representatives from the Selectboard, Finance Committee, Planning Board, Recreation, and School Committee. He also felt if any town person with particular trades or special knowledge might be good for a Capital Plan Committee. The Highway Superintendent should also be considered as a member. Ira did recommend against referring to a Capital Plan as a 'Wish List". Ira also felt, that at this early of a planning phase, the Town does not need a By-law, yet, but establish an ad hoc Capital Planning Committee. Ira stated we need to have an objective, realistic, organized plan that could be put out to the public in black and white.

Curt reported that the grant picture is changing on both the federal and state levels. Ira reported that Anne Gobi, Director of Rural Development, has a zoom every Wednesday at 10 AM. Ira also reported that you could begin planning with estimates, until free cash is certified. Curt reported that the Rural Development Grant is also tied to economic development. Ira stressed not to let lack of funds stop you from trying to get grants. Ira reported that we had a once in a generation event that opened up money for grants, however, it won't be available forever.

Following this portion of the discussion, it was determined that PVPC would put together a comprehensive list of grant opportunities, the Town of Middlefield will supply PVPC a list of the grants applied for and received over the past 3-5 years. Ira then asked if the Town if they would be setting up a Capital Planning Committee. The proposed committee was only to set up the process.

Curt then read the 3 year Finance Committee plan, and Ira asked the Finance Chair's opinion. Adair reported that they are working on what does each department really want. Adair asked who is going to manage the list. Ira reported it is not him, that the content he provided was for information purposes only and illustrative of how the process is going to work. Ira also stated it is important to have respect for the elected boards, and any recommendations of spending for Capital Projects need to be voted on by the townspeople at a town meeting. He recommends that the town be transparent with the townspeople on how grant money will be utilized.

Ann Marie would like to see a variety of people representing the Town. Ira feels the Selectboard needs to trial an ad hoc committee, that the process is now in the hands of the Town. PVPC has given the Town the tools necessary to begin the initial phase. Ira did put \$65,000.00 in the plan for a consultant to make a comprehensive plan, the Town could look into the Community Compact Grant, One-Stop Grant, or an Earmark our State Representative could put in for.

Ann Marie asked what the next step would be. Ira stated that it's not helpful to have 2 different boards, but now need an understanding how to work in collaboration. Ann Marie stated the Selectboard and Finance Board need to meet to decide what they are doing now. Tamarin asked the Highway Superintendent if he would come with things to say. Skip stated that they have put in for grants, but not received them. The Highway Department does most of their equipment out of Chapter 90 money. Curt stated that the Town has been getting complaints about the condition of the roads, and using Chapter money for Capital expense is taking away from road maintenance. Skip reported that projects the Highway Department is working on can be up to 2-3 years long due to funding. Curt reported that the DOER gave \$62,000.00 for an engineering study on Cone Road, went to bid with no takers.

The next Capital Planning meeting will be held Wednesday, December 18, 2024 at 6:00 PM.

No further business to be discussed, the meeting was closed at 12:15 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mark W. Doane,
Administrative Assistant

Ann Marie Visconti, Chair: _____

Curt Robie, Member: _____

Tamarin Laurel-Paine, Member: _____