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Town of Burlington  Capital Budget Committee

**Minutes of the Capital Budget Committee
Meeting of May 3, 2022**

Chairman Adam Senesi called the meeting to order at 6:58 p.m.

Members Present – Mark Woods, Myrna Saltman, Gary Mercier, Gary Kasky and Ernie Zabolotny (via teleconferencing).

Other Attendees – Town Administrator Paul Sagarino, Economic Development Director Melissa Tintocalis, Historical Commissioner Peter Coppola, Sculpture Park Committee Chair Barbara L’Heaureux, School Committee Member Melissa Massardo, Burlington Public School Superintendent Dr. Eric Conti and BPS Director of Operations Bob Cunha.

Article #7-09 Transportation Study Route 3A – Select Board - \$35,000 – (Passed 6-0)

Notes: Economic Development Director Melissa Tintocalis explained that Burlington will become increasingly eligible for state aide via the Massachusetts Department of Transportation by enrolling in this study. This study will partially focus on improving safety and traffic flow through the Route 3A corridor. Modernizing the Route 3A overlay has been a priority of the town, and this is the next step towards identifying implications for the future of this corridor of passage.

Ernie Zabolotny highlighted that this study is an opportunity to determine whether Route 3A is a single or double lane.

Administrator Sagarino highlighted that this study has potential to further the possibility of Burlington buying a section of 3A or at least evaluating the pros versus cons of such an acquisition.

Gary Mercier encouraged both Sagarino and Tintocalis to research how Billerica managed improvements related to 3A extending through their town center.

Article #7-12 Francis Wyman Playground – School Committee - \$290,000 – (Defeated 1-4-1)

Notes: BPS Director of Operations Bob Cunha highlighted the scope and needs of the Francis Wyman Playground renovation. Cunha highlighted that the playground’s equipment hasn’t been replaced in roughly twenty years since it had been repurposed from Simonds Park.

Chairman Senesi noted that that the standards of perceived safety around some of the equipment changed since installation.

CBC determined that the justification with relation to need didn’t equate to the project’s cost.

Article #7-13 Computer Science for All – School Committee - \$150,000 – (Passed 5-0-1)

Notes: Dr. Conti and Cunha highlighted that this is an upgrade to BPS accessing next generation curriculum consistent with the district’s commitment to leading in the realm of technology.

Senesi recognized and acknowledged that curriculum is the most important thing Burlington does for our students.

Article #7-14 HVAC Controller Upgrade – School Committee - \$108,000 – (Passed 5-0-1)

Notes: Cunha explained that this is the next step of a phased plan to replace critical infrastructure related to Marshall Simonds Middle School that is surpassing its useful lifespan. He provided a brief summary on previous steps in the replacement plan CBC and Town Meeting have supported in previous fiscal years.

Article #7-15 Pine Glen Bathroom Repairs – School Committee - \$65,000 – (Split 3-3)

Notes: Conti and Cunha explained that the town needs to maintain the functionality of all existing school buildings for another five to six years regardless of plans for new elementary schools. Money related to this article would fund a series of improvements to bathrooms throughout the Pine Glen building

Senesi highlighted his understanding of the importance of keeping all buildings maintained throughout the development process for new schools. However, discomfort was expressed with expanding renovation relative to Pine Glen as the Massachusetts School Building Authority has recommended a merger with the Fox Hill Elementary School that leaves financial terms with relation to the town unsettled. He asked if any projects related to Pine Glen could wait.

Conti acknowledged that the projects relative to Pine Glen could be addressed in future years, but the School Committee has prioritized preserving the four elementary school model. Money was allocated for capital improvements within the budget guidelines, and he’s working within the parameters given by the School Committee to maintain the existing buildings while planning for the existing four-school elementary model to remain intact.

Zabolotny highlighted CBC’s history of support for funding critical infrastructure while surmising that maintaining the functionality of school bathrooms is an important function of CBC’s role.

Article #7-16 PG-HVAC – School Committee - \$500,000 – (Defeated 0-6)

Notes: Conti and Cunha provided this as another example of planning taking place to keep Pine Glen open for the indefinite future.

Senesi highlighted prior to the vote that the financial picture related to cashflow and state aide remains too unsettled to double-down on plans to maintain Pine Glen until the MSBA is prepared to issue the town with sturdier guidelines related to aide and financials.

Article #7-17 Burlington Sports Field Master Plan – School Committee - \$70,000 –
(Defeated 1-5)

Notes: Conti explained this as an opportunity to review the conditions of the fields along with their levels of usage to plan forward while factoring the needs of the school district as well as local sports at the club level.

Kasky questioned the cost versus our ability to source information from within town in favor of hiring a consultant.

Article #7-18 BHS Music Floor Reconstruction – School Committee - \$450,000 – (Defeated 0-6)

Notes: Cunha explained that this is a critical infrastructure improvement for reasons of disability access. The room is currently configured similar to an amphitheater with tiered levels that prevent mobility for some students. The plan will be to level the floor by pouring additional concrete into the floor's pit.

Senesi noted that his primary reservation in supporting is that the request has never appeared in previous versions of the 10-year capital plan and asked how this initiative surpassed additional upgrades related to the high school's renovation like science laboratories that have been discussed prior during School Committee meetings.

Cunha countered by explaining that the costs of infrastructure upgrades related to the high school will trigger a mandate to bring the remainder of the building to code along with the most recent updates relative to disability access requirements. This is an opportunity to begin addressing some of the access and code issues that will need attention as other issues with the high school buildings are managed.

Senesi acknowledged an understanding of their position, but mentioned watching previous School Committee Meetings where the possibility of building an entirely new high school had been mentioned by a member based on a hypothetical from a cost comparison perspective against renovating.

Conti assured that construction of an entirely new high school building is mostly infeasible from both cost and land use perspectives.

Zabolotny cited concerns relative to filling in the floor as we look towards making new heating and ventilation systems for the building a priority in the near future.

Saltman expressed disappointment again towards this item not appearing in a 10-year plan and that the capital requests were revealed during a School Committee meeting less than two weeks prior to Town Meeting.

CBC was mostly united in opposition with the exception to Senesi citing the disability access component.

Mercier reminded him that there has to be a less costly way to allow disability access than one equating to \$450,000.

Senesi agreed to vote with the majority in opposition.

Article #7-19 Fox Hill Portables Repairs – School Committee - \$160,000 – (Passed 5-1)

Notes: Conti and Cunha reemphasized that Fox Hill will need to endure another five to six years of usage before a new building will be completed. The existing portables were purchased used and have required maintenance previously. The roofs are leaking and the heating system needs upgrading for the good of the students and building employees. Heating units for the portables are included with costs.

CBC generally agreed with the need for this request and approved with limited discussion.

Article #7-20 Scoreboards for Sports Fields – School Committee - \$110,000 – (Defeated 1-5)

Notes: Cunha explained that this initiative covers the replacement of the scoreboard at Varsity Field in addition two additional fields. Cunha emphasized that he's open to working with youth leagues and community groups to allow access for usage.

Mercier asked whether the town has solicited sponsorship opportunities from local businesses to assist with costs and emphasized that other communities have done similar with success.

Conti noted that the School Committee has been reluctant to employ this approach in the past.

Senesi noted that School Committee member Melissa Massardo had asked a similar question at a recent meeting, and asked if there was openness to adding discussion on the matter to an upcoming School Committee meeting agenda.

Massardo indicated she'd be open to discussing again if added to an agenda, and Conti agreed to add.

Senesi suggested that solicitation of donors shouldn't fall directly under Cunha's umbrella of responsibility and should be outsourced where capable to local athletic booster clubs.

CBC remained reluctant to support without the business sponsorship solidified.

Senesi agreed in favor of the article citing Conti agreed adding to a School Committee agenda.

Article #7-21 Activity Bus and Utility Vehicles – School Committee - \$145,000 – (Defeated 2-4)

Notes: BPS presented a vehicle request that includes two minibuses capable of transporting roughly 14 students to sports, field trips and activities in addition to a maintenance vehicle. The minibuses don't require commercial driver's licenses.

Mercier cited liability concerns.

Article #7-22 MSMS-Field Bleachers – School Committee - \$220,000 – (Defeated 1-5)

Notes: BPS wants to encourage community usage for track and turf fields at MSMS. Improved access to seating will reduce wear and tear on the turf. Dispersing youth sports teams across the district's turf fields reduces wear and tear on Varsity Field.

Mercier had questions about access to bathrooms from the field and permitting issues.

Zabolotny stated his opinion that this request doesn't meet any litmus related to safety or critical infrastructure need.

Senesi argued that residents place stock in the upkeep of fields and providing access to outdoor activities. This improves resident quality of life.

CBC agreed with Zabolotny, and approval to endorse was defeated.

Article #7-23 Visitor Control Access System – School Committee - \$25,000 – (Passed 5-1)

Notes: Cunha likened it as the industry standard for next generation entry and tracking for school building visitors. He explained that visitors can scan their driver's licenses to generate their visitor pass. The system is designed as scalable with add-on capability if desired.

Zabolotny noted that this next generation security upgrade fits with the upgrades requested by the police and fire departments.

Consensus for this among CBC was near unanimous

Article #27 Historical Commission Storage Shed – Select Board/Historical Commission - \$33,000 – (Passed 3-2-1)

Notes: Historical Commissioner Peter Coppola explained a storage shed is needed to store town property being kept in temporary places. The shed is designed as a replica of a blacksmith shop formerly adjacent to the town common.

Mercier asked Coppola when the cost estimate had been done most recently.

Coppola cited he's priced material costs in addition to sourcing labor from Shawsheen Regional High School within the last month.

Review Article #29 Burlington Sculpture Park – Select Board/Sculpture Park - \$20,000 – (Defeated 1-4-1)

Note: Chairman Senesi opened the discussion saying that he read the warrant previous and wasn't sure if this article qualifies as a budget or a capital request. He encouraged CBC to hear Sculpture Park Committee Chair Barbara L'Heureux's presentation and consider whether this falls into the category of a capital request.

L'Heureux presented an itemized breakdown of the Sculpture Committee's expenses related to the improvement of their parcel. She highlighted expenses related to the purchase of physical equipment for the park as well as costs for improving accessibility near the entrance. L'Heureux provided added details relative to a crumbling wall on town property with debris presenting a hazard near the entrance.

CBC conversed generally around whether to consider it a budget or a capital request.

Senesi highlighted his position that the project in total exceeds the minimum requirement of a capital request and should be considered as any other park renovation.

CBC agreed to take a position.

Zabolotny opined that the situation relative to accessibility made it a safety issue consistent with a priority of CBC and worthy of passage.

Senesi acknowledged the Sculpture Park as a pleasing addition to the community, but taxpayers shouldn't be accountable to it on a regular basis.

CBC was disinclined to endorse the warrant, but recommend it critical to the town department responsible for managing the parcel to fix the crumbling wall and improve entrance access within their department's budget for reasons of safety.

Adjourn

The Capital Budget Committee meeting adjourned at 9:15 p.m.