

CITY OF GREENFIELD

PLANNING AND CONSTRUCTION COMMITTEE
ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2018-2019

Committee Members

Jean Wall, Chair
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City Advisors

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Approved on July 16, 2019

The Planning and Construction Committee schedules its meetings on the third Tuesday of the month and as needed.

Introduction

Greenfield's Planning and Construction Committee (hereinafter referred to as "the Committee") is an advisory committee to the Mayor, with specific powers and duties outlined in the Greenfield City Charter. The Committee considers proposed, ongoing, and new public facility construction and renovation needs and major maintenance projects.

Keeping all the city's facilities, parks, water, sewer lines, and infrastructure current and safe for residents and employees will be ongoing for as long as the city exists. A hundred years from now Greenfield will have city employees, schooling, fire and police protection, waste removal, etc.

"Planning" responsibilities for a city includes strategic scheduling as well as monitoring these ongoing needs over the decades. Scheduling includes how these ongoing impressive needs fit into city financial planning--keeping city debt within city budgeting guidelines.

"Construction" responsibilities involve knowing all the capital assets and monitoring needs, requests, costs, scope of projects, and related issues.

Greenfield City Charter (excerpt):

SECTION 6-7: PLANNING AND CONSTRUCTION OF MUNICIPAL BUILDINGS AND OTHER FACILITIES

(b) Powers and Duties - The Planning and Construction Committee shall be responsible for monitoring the physical condition of all municipal buildings and other facilities.

The committee shall meet from time to time with representatives of municipal agencies to evaluate the need for additions, renovations, or remodeling of any existing building or facility or for the construction of new buildings or other facilities.

The committee shall file written reports, at least annually, with the Mayor in which, it shall make recommendations as to the need for any project or projects

Capital planning and related debt budgeting for cities involves dozens of projects. Monitoring and updating never ends. There are many buildings, roads, sidewalks, sewer lines, and utility service considerations that must be updated and addressed. Capital planning for a city must consider scheduling so the different, needed updates start and end in different years to keep the borrowing debt costs as steady as possible for city budgeting purposes.

The work of the Planning and Construction Committee fits into the policy framework of city planning for capital expenses. Greenfield's Fiscal Year 2020 Budget Book, Section 6: CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT, cites Greenfield's capital borrowing policies at page 150:

- *The City will make all capital improvements in accordance with an adopted capital improvement program.*

- *The City will develop a multi-year plan for capital improvements and update it annually.*
- *The City will enact an annual capital budget based on the multi-year capital improvement plan.*
- *The City will coordinate development of the capital improvement budget with development of the operating budget.*
- *The City will maintain all its assets at a level adequate to protect the City's capital investment and to minimize future maintenance and replacement costs.*
- *The City will determine the least costly financing method for all new projects.*

Excerpt from Section 4: Debt Overview (page 138)

Capital investment in maintaining and improving city property is extremely important to protect our assets ...In order to manage the impact of capital projects on future budgets, we develop a debt plan ...aiming to maintain debt between 8% and 10 % of the operating budget.

“Scheduling” for major construction allows one project with annual debt repayment to end and then another construction project with debt repayment to be added. This keeps the never-ending city debt repayment costs relatively constant from year to year. According to city budget data, capital borrowing projects started in the years 2000 and 2005 are ending in years 2020 and 2022. These concluding projects will decrease budgeted debt expense by more than \$1,000,000. Accordingly, in 2020 Greenfield is in a position to consider and act on construction projects on hold. The Committee’s recommendations take multi-year planning and scheduling into consideration.

Mission and Focus: 2018-2019

During the 2018-2019 fiscal year, the Committee focused on the following mission topics:

- review and advisement on new Dashboard data for each city building, supporting much-improved, data-based system for informed, long-range capital planning,
- review of ongoing and new capital planning projects,
- discussion of how reports can best explain scheduled funding for capital borrowing debt,
- review role of the Committee within the framework of Greenfield’s government structure and suggested procedural and charter recommendations going forward,
- assist and support the Mayor’s office and city departments.

New Data Effort: Dashboard Data System

As proposals are reviewed, the Committee often has questions about buildings and capital assets that are not on the discussion list. If one chimney or roof is brought forward for repair, we likely ask the status of other chimneys and roofs. Soon complete information on each city building will be readily available.

The Department of Energy and Sustainability is creating a Dashboard (one-pager for each city building) that includes: date built, details of maintenance and energy upgrades (date, what has been done, when next maintenance/upgrade likely needed) as well as data on energy use (by fuel type, total energy use, and energy use per square foot).

Several times we have reviewed and advised on this new Dashboard data system. We congratulate Carole Collins, Director of the Department of Energy and Sustainability, and other city personnel for developing this comprehensive data system and for incorporating all Committee suggestions.

The Committee looks forward to using these Dashboards to help forecast future expenses, and review proposals. For example, if a roof is brought forward as being in need of repair, we will be able to review when it was last re-roofed, as well as review the status of roofs on other Town-owned buildings.

Project Monitoring: 2018-2019

The Planning and Construction Committee spent the last year monitoring current, proposed, and under-discussion building projects in Greenfield.

Fire Station / Public Safety Complex

Our Committee met with the Public Safety Commission to discuss all options for a new fire station/public safety complex for the City.

It was determined that the money to build a public safety complex does not fit into the debt structure at this time. Therefore, since the Fire and Emergency Response Station is the first priority, it needs to be designed with the ability to add the police station at a later date. The design can encompass a future addition and include any common usage areas in the new Fire and Emergency Response Station. This will enable the police station to be quickly added when debt reduction enables planned borrowing for a police addition.

The next issue was the site to use for the future public safety complex. All city-owned property was discussed, along with some private property, as choices for the site. The conclusion was that the city-owned property located on Beacon and Riddell Street was the best of the location options. It is centrally located; provides access to existing traffic lights on Federal Street; can use Beacon Street, which has few residential properties, for most traffic created by the complex; and the nearby hospital is on a special power grid making rapid power restoration available.

Drainage problems on the Beacon/Riddell Street site must be addressed.

A retention pond put in to handle overflow from the Maple Brook Culvert is not working, and nearby homes flood when there is excessive ground water. The suggestion was made by Christy Moore, Greenfield's Recreation Director, that a skate park that acts as a retention basin be part of the design for the property. Our Committee reviewed several municipalities where this design was in place and their different underground water retention designs. In Greenfield, this system is used under the parking lot at Walgreens, the Community Center, and Transit Center. Our Committee has requested additional research on other skate parks that have utilized this design approach. Park grants may be available. How a skate park might be included in the water retention solution at this site is still in the beginning stages of discussion.

It should be noted that during a site visit additional information was shared--that an underground retention system has to be above the ground's water level. The purpose of underground retention basins is keeping storm water runoff off site (from buildings). This system will likely not be workable at the Beacon/Riddell site.

There is a 2.5 million dollar grant (Chapter 28, Economic Development) that goes with this property (previously applied for and awarded when this site was first considered for a skate park). These funds can be used to begin making this site shovel ready as soon as the City Council indicates its support for a city project at this site. Site preparation for this project could begin before November. Site readiness now would likely result in significant savings for the taxpayers. Acting to make this site ready for a city purpose would lessen the possibility of disruptions to the public's safety if the site became the site for Greenfield's fire station.

After considerable discussion, the Committee supports that a new public safety complex is necessary for Greenfield--that the site readiness at Beacon/Riddell Street and the fire station portion of the project should be started as soon as possible.

Anaerobic Digester

This capital project, related to human sewer sludge disposal and treatment, was first discussed in terms of the high budget impact and rising costs for transporting human sludge to a sludge disposal facility. The financial data on need for a local solution and net savings over time was highly persuasive.

The Committee toured Greenfield's current waste water treatment plant on Deerfield Street with Mark Holly, Director of Water and Sewer, to better understand how our current sewage treatment plant works, its deficiencies such as EPA non-compliance when overwhelmed with storm water runoff during many storms, and the challenges of the cost of sewage sludge disposal. Marlo Warner, Greenfield's Director of Department of Public Works, also met with us and discussed the pros and cons of the project (financial implications of building to increase local capacity or continuing to truck our sewage out of the area) as well as the need to repair aging pipes throughout Greenfield to reduce Inflow and Infiltration (I &I).

Greenfield is hauling four to six loads of sludge a week at 9,000 gallons per load. This is becoming extremely costly with significant year-to-year budget increases and no guarantees that other communities will continue accepting our deliveries. There have been discussions with area towns about a regional digester built in Greenfield; however, the complexity of different towns agreeing on an initial cost and plan made it apparent that Greenfield should build its own facility, expandable to allow other towns to participate if they are willing to pay Greenfield. This could produce a city revenue stream.

At its May 2019 meeting, Greenfield's City Council voted to proceed with the capital project of building an anaerobic digester, sized for Greenfield's capacity needs.

City Hall

Our Committee has discussed the state of City Hall, the leaking roof, and brickwork erosion. The concerning details are well-articulated in the Mayor's current status description in the FY2020 capital budget:

City Hall Brick Repairs \$40,000

During replacement of the flat roof on Town Hall it was discovered that the brick and mortar marking up the parapet wall had disintegrated to the point of eventual collapse if not corrected. This is a major safety concern to the public as well as potential damage to the building. The scope of this project is to completely rebuild the parapet wall on three sides of the flat roof and repoint the brick approximately 5 feet below this wall as needed.

Failure of this wall could pose a serious safety risk to anyone who may be walking near the building at the time of collapse. Water damage to the interior of the building has also been experienced during heavy rains due to the absence of mortar between the bricks. These repairs would eliminate this safety risk and make the building watertight in that area. The Town would also be in violation of section 304.1 of the International Building Code as adopted by the State of Massachusetts if this issue is not corrected.

The Mayor recommends that the \$40,000 to repair this come from the Building Stabilization Fund.

City Hall Chimney Repairs - \$50,000

The current clay pipe liner in the Town Hall chimney has partially collapsed, exposing the chimney brick and mortar to mildly acidic hot gases from the boiler. The current state of the chimney is a major concern for two reasons: 1) if the chimney brick is allowed to continue being exposed to the hot boiler gases this could compromise the structural integrity of the brick and mortar resulting in a major collapse of the entire chimney, and 2) there is a possibility of a complete blockage of the chimney from the remaining liner collapsing. If this occurs, harmful gases could back up into the building posing a safety threat to personnel. The objective is to remove the remaining portions of the old liner and install a stainless steel flue pipe that would extend through the existing chimney and connect to the boiler.

The Mayor recommends that the \$50,000 to repair this come from the Building Stabilization Fund.

The Committee would urge the Council to start these repairs as soon as possible. With erosion continuing each year, the ongoing damage only increases the cost and liability for the City.

School Buildings

Topics brought to the Committee's attention by Carol Collins, Director of Energy and Sustainability, had to do with solar installations on several school roofs. Our committee wanted to assure the school committee had knowledge of any planning involving school buildings. Collins subsequently met with the school committee; this line of communication is now in place.

Another topic brought the Committee's attention by Collins is the heating system repair for the Green River School, what is involved, and how and when this is being addressed.

The Committee learns of school building capital requests when brought forward to our Committee by city personnel involved in school building energy or maintenance or by the Superintendent representing school department at the Capital Improvements Committee. Our Committee has not had the opportunity to schedule discussions on school department requests at our meetings as with other city departments, inspect the school properties where capital improvement needs are considered urgent, or verify project scope and related detailed budget estimates.

As presented, all school requests are extremely urgent and need immediate attention for the safety of the students and the upkeep of the buildings.

Library

The Committee has been monitoring Greenfield's library project since it was introduced to the City. Based on needs and financial data indicating that a renovation to code of the current building will cost almost as much as building new facility, the Committee totally supports building a new library. Also, renovation of the current facility would result in a building totally inadequate to serve the needs of the community. The City Council voted in favor of the library project. A library question for voters will be on the November 2019 ballot.

Other

Other Planning and Construction topics raised, monitored, discussed to a lesser extent, and/or anticipated for discussion in 2019-2020 include:

- sewer main replacement and repair
- Leyden Woods pumping station
- parking garage
- First National Bank project
- Department of Public Works offices
- Middle School playground equipment
- emergency dispatch
- water retention/solution systems for Beacon/Riddell location
- Green River School
- water meter replacement program
- punch list for the Zon Community Center

- policy and procedural recommendations for Committee work

Capital Borrowing & Municipal Finance

During 2018-2019, the Committee discussed how it could help articulate capital borrowing, municipal finance, city budget, and stabilization planning for better community understanding.

A. The City Budget, Debt Repayment in Budget

There is a section of the city budget to pay the cost of borrowing money for various projects (debt repayment). Cities participate in the Municipal Bond Market and at the time of borrowing, pursue a municipal rate for borrowing. Quite often a city can locate a borrowing rate more favorable than borrowing rates for the general public.

Each capital project is unique in terms of 1) total project cost, 2) required amount to borrow, 3) whether short-term or long-term borrowing, 4) the percentage rate for borrowing, and 5) a start and end date for the borrowing, just like any mortgage or loan. All have a fixed debt repayment schedule--fixed amount to pay a year (principal and interest).

Debt limit for a city is set by law; Greenfield's debt limit is approximately 70-75 million dollars. The amount our city chooses to borrow annually is set by city policy which is keeping our debt repayment borrowing at 8%-10% of the city's general fund budget. The total amount of debt repayment each year is the yearly repayment cost of each capital borrowing project, totaled. This debt repayment amount is in the city budget each year.

Why is the city's debt repayment policy and payment schedule information in our report? In considering recommendations, our Committee spends time talking about Greenfield's debt limit, city policy for capital borrowing, and the city's debt repayment schedule. Our discussions and recommendations take into account both emergency needs and how new projects fit into the whole scheme of city planning and budgeting.

B. Capital Planning:

Our Committee has discussed the city's practices of municipal finance and reviews projects and proposals with Greenfield's guidelines in mind. As mentioned previously, there is a city policy for keeping the annual debt repayment within eight to ten percent (8%-10%) of the city budget. Keeping the total of all outstanding capital borrowing projects at 8%-10% keeps Greenfield's budget (the capital improvement section) relatively constant from year to year. Unforeseen emergency expenses prevent absolute consistency. Keeping this portion of the city budget relatively consistent represents stabilization in financial planning.

When the borrowing program and debt repayment schedule for one project ends, another capital borrowing needed project can be added. This requires thinking ahead and planning over a 20+-year period, which is one of our recommendations.

C. Dashboard Data System

Carole Collins, Greenfield's Energy and Sustainability Director, has enabled the Committee to begin working with data from a new computer program (Dashboard) that has a one-page fact sheet for every building that is city-owned in Greenfield. This includes a list of all improvements that have been made to each property and all anticipated future projects/expenses. The year of each significant capital improvement is included, e.g. roofs, heating systems.

Currently our Committee receives a list of capital improvement requests with no ability to determine 1) if there are other capital improvement items that should begin to be reviewed but are not on a list, or 2) whether the need and scope of items are reasonable. New Dashboard information will assure all information on all buildings is available to our Committee and the public on the City website. With the Dashboard data system recurring capital improvements (e.g. roof replacement) can be anticipated.

Dashboard information will enable Planning and Construction Committee to develop longer-term planning for major facility expenses which will help inform scheduling decisions. In some cases more advanced planning may allow the city to save for known future expenses, lessen borrowing, and reduce the need for borrowing debt.

Summary and Recommendations from Planning and Construction Committee

Referring to current charter duties of monitoring and evaluating need, the Planning and Construction Committee has considered, evaluated, and reached consensus on general recommendations as well as specific project recommendations, including those we feel need immediate attention. We have discussed how clarification of our Committee's charge and work with city departments could enable improved project research, planning, and budgeting.

General Recommendations

1. Use Professional Opinions, as needed

Unresolved questions could be improved and work completed more readily by including an inspection by an engineer or other professional. This would help inform priorities and emergency repairs in a consistent way. If notice of capital needs is not received until late in the capital budgeting calendar, there is no time to review details. In particular, this could be beneficial to the school department because often requests are received late in the capital planning/review calendar and do not have project data backup.

2. Clarify Role with Departments

The Committee sees its role as the primary bridge to the Mayor (and, through the Mayor, the City Council) to report on city-wide planning and construction projects. Currently the charter is clear about meeting with representatives of municipal "agencies" but less clear about meeting with municipal "departments." We believe that at any time a Mayor (and, through the Mayor, the City Council) should be able to request and receive full, city-wide, accurate feedback from Planning and Construction. We believe that important, complex, and expensive

city building projects should be reviewed on a year-round schedule, not just during a few weeks before the budget amounts must be submitted.

3. Streamline Duplicative Committees

Since the city has ceased most capital borrowing except for major building projects (has moved to leasing or purchasing), it seems that the Capital Improvement Committee is somewhat redundant to the Planning and Construction Committee.

Our vision for more efficient city planning is that department heads bring future capital facility project requests to this Planning and Construction Committee so one committee can review need, inspect the property, evaluate the scope of the project, and frame the capital borrowing recommendation well before these budgeting decisions need to be addressed. The Committee could then work with the Mayor and the Mayor's project/budget planning personnel in a more complete and timely way. Capital borrowing requests, submitted at the last minute in the budgeting cycle without back-up data and/or time for careful review, consistently cause havoc with information-sharing and funding decisions.

4. Strengthen Relationships and Communications

Given the importance of the Planning and Construction Committee's assignment--having an overall picture and monitoring/advising on the status and capital project needs for all the public buildings and grounds in Greenfield--a Committee goal is strengthening communication and relationship linkages to departments, committees, and leadership in Greenfield.

Committee consensus is to explore and expand scheduled discussions, facility tours, and communications regarding the Committee's work. Also, the Committee intends to work on policy and procedural recommendations that create a clearer process for our Committee's work fitting into city planning and budgeting. This first annual report summarizing a year's work is an example of better defining what this Committee does, its detail work and advisement to city officials.

Specific Project Recommendations:

1. prioritize and support brick and chimney work for City Hall to prevent further erosion and prevent leakage of water and poisonous carbon monoxide,
2. prioritize and support site work for a city project at Beacon & Riddell location,
3. continue planning a new Fire and Emergency Response Station; allow for adding Police at a later time, when the budget can accommodate additional borrowing,
4. move forward to build the library,
5. rework charter regarding the Planning and Construction Committee to:
 - consolidate duplication of Capital Improvement Planning committee,
 - charge Planning and Construction Committee to look at capital planning over a twenty (20) year timeline using new Dashboard data information,
6. when professional information is unavailable or unclear, include a professional opinion in department-presented capital planning requests for facility renovation.

This report is respectfully submitted to the Mayor on behalf of the Planning and Construction Committee representing the 2018-2019 work of the Committee. The Planning and Construction Committee appreciates the consistent support from members of the Mayor's office without whose assistance our meetings would be difficult to hold.