



CITY OF FITCHBURG
CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT
COMMISSION

Fitchburg Municipal Offices
166 Boulder Drive
Fitchburg, Massachusetts 01420

Meeting Minutes

The meeting of the Capital Improvement Commission was called to order on Tuesday, October 30, 2018 at 5:20 PM in the Room 314, Hammond Hall, Fitchburg State University, 160 Pearl Street, Fitchburg, MA.

Commission Members present: Appointed Members David Descoteaux, Stephen Descoteaux, and Richard Sarasin, *ex-officio* Member City Auditor Calvin Brooks, and Council President Michael Kushmerek. Appointed Member Keith Butler and Councilor Anthony Zarrella arrived late. Others present: Mayor Stephen DiNatale, Mayor's Chief of Staff A.J. Tourigny, Police Chief Ernest Martineau, Fire Chief Kevin Roy, and Interim School Superintendent Robert Jokela. Public Works Commissioner Lenny Laakso and Superintendent of Streets Gary Withington arrived late.

The meeting was not recorded.

The first item on the agenda was the election of a chairman. Richard Sarasin nominated David Descoteaux. Nominations were closed and David Descoteaux was unanimously elected chairman.

Because there is no mention of a Vice-chairman in the ordinance for the Capital Improvement Commission, no action was taken on this agenda item.

D. Descoteaux then nominated Calvin Brooks for secretary. Nominations were closed and Calvin Brooks was unanimously elected secretary.

Brooks briefly explained the agenda. Various department heads would be briefly presenting their capital needs, and then the commission would review and act on the Five Year Capital List proposed by the mayor. The commission had been sent via email on Monday a draft copy of the list to give members a chance to study it before the meeting. The only difference between the draft and final list was the elimination of a Capital Facilities Manager, which was deemed to be an operating item and not a capital item.

The first presentation was from Fire Chief Kevin Roy. He expressed his appreciation for the two new pumpers his department has received this year. He would like to continue to replace one support vehicle each year. Otherwise, the department is in decent shape for the next few years in terms of equipment. The boilers at the North Street Station are 19 years old and will need work or replacement in the next few years. The Oak Hill Station has a good interior, but the exterior brick needs to be staged, repointed, and sealed. The department also has many vehicles and trailers that it has to keep

outside and in the garage across the street. He would like to build additional garage space in the back of the North Street Station. They are currently crack sealing the parking lot, but will need to make a project of replacing it in three or four years. The SCBA system is thirteen years old, and tanks that have a fifteen year life will have to be replaced in two years. The department is applying for grants for some of this work.

The biggest project the Fire Department has on the list is the rebuilding or relocation of new stations. The intention is that one would be located near South Street and Romano Avenue and the other on River Street near S&S Lobster. They will probably cost between \$5-6 million. If that were done, it would lessen the need for doing some of the building projects mentioned earlier. The new stations could also possibly have space for use by the police department.

The commission wondered why the station replacement was on the Capital List, since it is unlikely the projects would be funded in the next five years. AJ Tourigny responded by saying to look at the list as a list and not necessarily a plan. It is a living document that will evolve and guide the city as it moves forward. Mayor DiNatale suggested using the list for triage—Here are our needs, what do we want to tackle? The chairman commented that some of the items on the list should be funded in the annual budget, such as vehicles. Butler noted that the Fire Department can get at least another five years with the two stations, provided they are kept up, but that the list identifies the need and will prompt a discussion if certain parcels become available.

Police Chief Ernest Martineau presented next and thanked the commission for its support last year. His list is split between equipment and facilities. Last year the department replaced six vehicles, of which the detective vehicles should last ten years. Although the station is 32 years old, it is acting like a 50 year old building. Last year the second floor was completely renovated, which made a really important difference in the workspace for the detective bureau. Carpeting was replaced and walls painted. New storage equipment was purchased using grant funds.

The Police Department has a fleet of 53 vehicles, of which 26 are traditional police cars. The department has been replacing about two per year and feel a sharp looking cruiser makes a good impression on the public. While the chief does ask for cruisers in his budget request, they have been funded with free cash. Ford has announced it is dropping the Taurus, but the chief does not think it will affect his department. This year he is asking for three vehicles, because he would like to add a canine unit. New vehicles have been purchased with an extended warranty for about \$3,000 each, which has greatly reduced maintenance costs. The department also did not replace its mechanic, instead contracting out the work and saving money. He would also like to acquire a new transport van to replace a 2000 vehicle on which the body is ready to give out. It is not a high priority and he is hoping to use federal drug money for the purchase. The prisoner transport vehicle has been out of service for several years, so the department has been using cruisers to transport prisoners to court. They have been getting by, but would like to replace it for a cost of about \$75,000.

The police station is a 32 year old building requiring constant maintenance. The HVAC system is antiquated, not efficient, and has already cost the city \$15,000 in maintenance this fiscal year. Three units, one large and two small, run the HVAC system, and the chief has been looking at replacing the large unit. Unfortunately, one of the small units caught fire this weekend and needs to be replaced. The cost of replacing one unit is \$11,500, but the vendor is suggesting replacing both units at a cost of \$22,000. Replacement of the large unit and accompanying equipment is estimated to cost \$115,000. The building has a new roof good for fifty years. The city has a \$50,000 earmark in the state budget to update the surveillance system in the station. Cost estimates are coming in at \$75,000, so the chief

may use federal drug money for the balance. This project is a high priority and the chief would like to expand the system to some downtown areas.

The chief next spoke about improving accessibility for people with handicaps or wheelchairs. The station needs to be more inviting to the disabled community. He currently has a grant application for \$250,000 to offset part of the costs.

There has been some issues with crumbling concrete and falling bricks. There is a concern for public safety, but there are currently no estimates or scopes of work.

The cell blocks have stand-alone toilet/lavatories that are 32 years old. They are beginning to corrode and leak and will have to be replaced soon. Each new one costs \$6,500; doing all ten cellblocks will cost \$65,000.

The female locker room is at capacity and needs to be expanded. It is designed for eight officers and the department currently has eight with another three appointments likely in the next few years. There is space to expand the current locker room into the garage, where the custodian is. This work is necessary for the morale of the female officers.

At this point, Kushmerek expressed his concern that department heads are having to deal with a lot of deferred maintenance and questioned whether the city needs to look at adding some kind of capital/maintenance/facilities position. The mayor answered that there has been discussion about a facilities manager for the city, but that need has to be balanced with other city needs.

Interim School Superintendent Robert Jokela stated that the School Department has been annually sending capital needs lists to the city during the budget process. The newest school building is the high school and it is eighteen years old. The list he is presenting are the current high priorities for building maintenance and for school security. Camera systems are needed across the school department. Using the school wireless network, the cost of a system is \$750,000. After the water damage losses this past year, the school is looking at things differently and trying to avoid future losses. The pipes and repairs at South Street School are critical in this regard. There have been scans done of the roofs at South Street School and Fitchburg High School to check on their condition.

Zarella asked how long new doors at Crocker School would be used and was told about five years. Brooks commented that part of the need for doors involves school security. Kushmerek asked if \$60 million is enough for the Crocker School project and the superintendent said it will depend on the results of the feasibility study. D. Descoteaux asked what will MSBA participate in. The superintendent said that Crocker is a core project, which is a whole new building. MSBA also offers accelerated repair programs for roofs, windows, and boilers (20 year life span).

DPW Commissioner Lenny Laakso started his presentation talking about bridges. The state generally funds the project, hires the contractors, and pays the bills. The city will do small projects to keep them open until the major work can be done. The city has also received funds under the state Small Bridge Program for the Ashburnham Street bridge repairs.

The state has given money for McTaggart's Pond Dam and the city's consultant is waiting for the rain to stop to begin exploratory work. No decision has been made about what will happen to the dam, pending the results of a comparative analysis.

There are a couple of retaining walls that need to be rebuilt. In both cases, the top rows were removed or damaged, thereby affecting the rest of the wall. Locations are on Arbor Way and Arn-How Farm Road.

The capital list reflects the annual paving work for Chapter 90 that the city does. The commissioner would like the city to contribute more to paving. He is looking for TIP list funding for the reconstruction of Water Street and Lunenburg Street. Those projects are a long way down the road.

The city has hired a contractor to maintain the traffic signals, work previously done by the Building Department. They have been replacing lights with LED's as they go out, and are gradually replacing road loops at intersections with cameras.

As the EPA increases its requirements for stormwater oversight, the department will be looking for funding to meet those requirements.

Superintendent of Streets Gary Withington reported that the department got some new vehicles over the summer, including a vac truck and a dump truck. They still need a new pickup truck, three dump trucks, a hot mix truck (current vehicle is 1995 with 225,000 miles), a backhoe (current vehicle is 1997 with 10,000 hours and is wearing out), a dump trailer, and a front end loader (current vehicle is 1998). To meet stormwater regulations, the department needs a new sweeper. The oldest sweeper in the department is a 2002 Elgin that is breaking down constantly. To meet EPA regulations, the sweepers will generally run sixteen hours a day in the spring and eight hours in the fall.

Superintendent Laakso next spoke about DPW facilities. The DPW building was built in the 1920's and was renovated in the 1980's, at which time the garages were built. The roofs are beginning to leak on all the buildings. The office does not meet handicap accessibility rules. No major work has been done to the heating system and there is no central air. The department needs to plan for work and to begin to think about security at the DPW yard.

As for the cemeteries, some of the roads need repairing and the capacity of Forest Hill Cemetery is a concern. There is a need to plan for an expansion. The department is in the process of a feasibility study to look at using land across the street to expand the cemetery. Phase I of the plan will cost about \$5 million. There is a need for a permanent office for the cemetery and garage space for the vehicles, which are currently parked outside.

The Water Department is self-sufficient through the enterprise fund. The city is currently replacing all water meters. The water storage tank on Oak Hill needs replacement, because there are some leaks which are unrepairable. The plan is to put off some water main work for one year and use personnel to assist with the water meter project. Not doing the mains will free up funds to replace the Oak Hill tank. There are still other tanks needing attention and vehicle replacement. The debt for the water treatment plant will be paid in a few years, which will free up funds for other projects.

The Wastewater Department is operating under a consent decree which dictates what projects need to be done. A recent rate increase will fund some of these additional projects. There has been discussion about using the West Plant as an anaerobic digestion facility. Several projects are underway at the East Plant, and down the road there will be upgrades to address phosphorus levels in the Nashua River. There is also a need to address the excess flow coming to the treatment plant, especially during rainstorms, which leads to a discussion about sewer separation and stormwater. While the city can't avoid the consequences of the consent decree, there is still the ability to stretch it out a little.

Kushmerek asked about doing a debt exclusion for road repairs. The commissioner indicated that they are trying to extend the life of new paving by using microsurfacing and crack sealing as they age. The mayor noted that support for a debt exclusion for road repairs would often depend on which roads are being paved.

The commission next discussed the Five Year Capital List and requested it be updated to indicate which projects are currently underway and which may be subject to alternate funding, such as grants or state funds.

On a motion by Kushmerek seconded by Zarrella, the commission unanimously voted to acknowledge receipt of the Five Year Capital List, recognize that it is a working document, and await the requested annotations and prioritizations.

On a motion by Zarrella seconded by Butler, the board unanimously voted to adjourn.

Meeting adjourned at 7:50 PM.

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Calvin D. Brooks". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'C'.

By: Calvin D. Brooks, Member *ex-officio*

Reviewed by: David Descoteaux