

**SOMERSWORTH PLANNING BOARD
MINUTES OF WORKSHOP MEETING
October 20, 2021**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Ron LeHoullier, Chair, Jason Barry, Bob Belmore-City Manager, David Witham, City Council Representative and Mark Richardson, & Keith Perkins – Alternate, Jeremy Rhodes, Paul Robidas and Chris Horton

Excused Members: Harold Guptill- Vice Chair and Paul Goodwin, Alternate

STAFF PRESENT: Michelle Mears, Director Development Services, Dana Crossley Planning Secretary

The Meeting was called to order at 5:34 PM.

1. **Review and Discuss Proposed 2023-2028 Capital Improvement Plan:**

City Manager Belmore, Finance Director Scott Smith, Superintendent of Schools Lori Lane, Fire Chief George Kramlinger, Director of Public Works Michael Bobinsky, City Engineer Amber Hall were in attendance to present the CIP and answer Board questions.

Belmore reviewed the CIP procedure and process. He noted that he has been reviewing surrounding communities minimum project cost with the consideration of increasing Somersworth's to \$20,000 from the current \$10,000. He reviewed the City priority I, priority II, priority III and multi/year projects. He reviewed previous projects that had been completed. This included purchase of equipment and ongoing projects.

Belmore noted in the priority I projects a new item is the Sidewalk Improvement Program. The City has recently hired BETA, who completed the pavement assessment, to assess City Sidewalks so that the City can evaluate how many sidewalks can realistically be address within a fiscal year. The Public Works and Environments Committee has been focusing on the sidewalks the students utilize to get to school and sidewalk plow routes.

Belmore noted in the priority II projects the Noble Pines Water Tank Project, Wright Pierce will be providing a presentation at the Monday Council Meeting in regard s to the assessment of the roof.

Lane reviewed the School CIP projects. She reviewed the completed projects, including the HVAC at the Middle and High School and paving behind the Middle School thanks to the Cemetery Road project. Reviewed the added projects. She stated the received additional funding from the State this year and hope to be able to address more items on the list.

Board Questions/Discussion:

Richardson stated he appreciated the efforts behind working away at the number of projects that had been on the CIP for many years. He stated that last year he had mentioned it would be good to attach the year a project was added to the CIP so that they can have an idea of how long it is has been put off.

Belmore stated that was asked and he had forgotten but would address for the next CIP.

Richardson stated if the City is going to re-use the National Guard property, suggested the Blackwater Rd. basketball courts be moved to that area. For the School projects, the Middle School bathrooms need to meet ADA standards and currently do not. For that reason he would like to see them have a higher consideration for those students that need ADA. The walls and windows of the Middle School has been on the list for a long time, at least the early 2000s. Would like to see the Middle School given priority.

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Belmore added that there currently is an RFP issued for a solar array to be on the land fill lot. He stated with help from the SRPC grant funds the City has been working with Economic Developers to put together proposals on how to re-use the National Guard.

Robidas inquired if the City uses reserve accounts and if it would make sense to utilize those.

Belmore stated they have utilized Capital Reserve funds in the past and still have some.

Smith stated there are a couple ways to address funding, cash payment which is a large impact on the tax fund, capital reserve fund or bond/lease which is how the City addresses projects it is just borrowing when the money is needed. The issue is if the rates get to a point that capital reserves are the better choice. It is difficult to do both a capital reserve and bond/lease.

Belmore added that if not for money could do a lot of things, peeled back on the capital reserve funds to have more active cash.

Horton thanked all staff for putting together a great presentation. Stated he believes the project date should be included as well and the direct link each project has to the Master Plan. He stated he is looking forward to seeing the sidewalk improvement plan put into effect. He suggested that with the number of roofing projects in the CIP that those be bulked together if possible to receive a lower rate. Inquired if the ongoing work and studies with the old Police Station if that should be a CIP project.

Belmore stated the City has received a grant and moving forward in the process for the clean up at that the old Police Station site, but does not think there will be an issue in selling the site. He stated some sidewalks are being addressed as part of the Complete Streets projects.

Horton stated he thinks the pavement management program should be increased back to the 1.3 million so that the City can start staying ahead rather than barely keeping up. He stated he would like to see the replacement of the stairs connecting from the SAU to Noble Pines as it was a big connector between the hilltop community and schools.

Barry stated he enjoyed reading the plan and thinks it was very well done. He stated it was mentioned that there would potentially be an increase in the minimum project cost for CIP to \$20,000, are there any safe guards in place that would go into effect to prevent rapid spending since it currently goes through an approval process.

Belmore stated the projects would still have to be part of the budget that goes through the approval process with City Council. Some projects are plugged into the capital outlay portion of the budget for projects that are a real need for some projects that are a real need. This is approved by the City Council.

Witham noted for example a cross country mower for the skid steer was purchased through the capital outlay portion of the budget.

Barry stated he has no heard prior about the roof condition of the standpipe and would be interested in hearing more about this project.

Bobinsky stated the Hamilton St. tank had a condition assessment done of it, the overall tank may need to be replaced sooner than later, but the results were more favorable than anticipated. He stated will need to replace it in a five-year period and the roof was identified to be replaced to reach the longevity expected. He stated the reasons identified were associated from the drone inspection and came to that recommendation. At some point expect to be before the Board to seek a replacement of the full tank through the CIP.

Horton inquired how often the vac truck was needed for PW.

Bobinsky stated about 3-4 times a year. He stated overall they plan to do an assessment of the sewer collection system to identify issue spots. Use those kinds of tools for cleaning catch basins and storm drains but also outsource.

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Horton asked for more information on the hot box and how that will impact the process.

Bobinsky stated they currently do not have a hot box, when they pick up the patch material from the plant they haul it in an open truck, by the time it gets to Somersworth to repair streets it is not as effective to fill pot holes, think the hot box would be an improvement for those repairs.

Horton stated he would recommend that the hot box would be a critical piece of equipment for operations.

Witham stated he would echo the comments that the CIP report was well put together and that it is a road map without necessarily funding source at the moment. He stated he would be on board with the idea of abandoning the Blackwater Road basketball courts, does not think it makes sense to put hot top on a surface that heaves and there are no amenities there. But on the other hand the basketball courts at Noble Pines and Jules Bisson very well utilized, if not at the National Guard site it might make sense to have another court added to either Noble Pines or Jules Bisson because there is demand. He asked that the Fire Chief provide an update of the Fire Station.

Kramlinger reported that the Fire Station construction is moving along at a good pace, the demo company finished the first demo half a few days ago. The next step is to prepare the site for the first half of construction. They intend to be in the first half to occupy it by May 1, 2022. He stated they are seeking a federal grant to construct a tower on the building that would be used for training and be consistent with architect. This would also provide access to the attic and free up other space that was dedicated to stairs to the attic. He stated they are also seeking a grant that would help pay for equipment for the facility such as an emergency generator. This comes from the conference room being able to be utilized as an emergency operation center for the City.

Rhodes stated he was glad to see the sidewalk improvement plan, thinks the sidewalks are at the state the roads were 5-8 years ago and the roads have made a remarkable improvement. If there is the data to do so, to prioritize areas where there are people in wheel chairs. There has been a huge pavement improvement with the pavement improvement plan and strongly encourage Council to fund that more than a maintenance level. For the potential for a Riverwalk, does hope that Chinburg is able to purchase the Alcara building. Would agree with de-commissioning the Blackwater Road basketball courts, not heavily utilized and not a great location being next to the super fund site. Would fully support the addition of the library. He inquired why there is a school only plow vehicle.

Belmore asked that Rhodes share the sidewalks he sees the wheelchair users utilizing.

Lane stated Public Works handles most of the plowing, looking for a plow to be able to do some of the during the day plowing of walkways.

Bobinsky stated DPW through Highway is assigned to do all of the school parking lots. Works closely with School staff, their vehicle on the list is for the special areas. Areas that the larger trucks would potentially damage the lighter duty areas that the School needs.

Belmore noted that the Water, Fire and Wastewater Divisions also have small plow trucks.

Horton asked if it was safe to assume the priority one projects would be funded.

Belmore stated they would make every attempt to.

LeHoullier appointed Perkins as a full voting member for the workshop.

MOTION: Witham stated, I move the Somersworth Planning Board accepts the 2023-2028 CIP as presented to be passed onto the City Council with the following recommendations:

1. Council consider the abandonment of the Blackwater Road Basketball Court;
2. Council consider increasing the pavement road resurfacing line above 1 million dollars

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3. Council consider constructing an additional basketball court within the City.

The MOTION is SECONDED by Rhodes;

Discussion: Rhodes inquired if the 3rd item was a study for an additional basketball court. Witham stated yes and to add that to the considerations.

The MOTION CARRIES 8-0-1 (Belmore abstained)

Witham stated I MOTION to end the workshop.

Rhodes SECONDS the motion.

The MOTION CARRIES 8-0-1 (Belmore abstained) at 6:25PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dana Crossley, Planning Secretary