

TOWN OF PRINCETON
Capital Improvement Planning Committee
Capital Plan
FY 2002 to 2006

Introduction

The Capital Improvement Planning Committee (CIP) is a newly created committee, appointed this year by the Board of Selectmen. The committee was appointed to review capital expenditures, which are defined as acquisitions of equipment or projects costing more than \$2000.00 and having a useful life of at least five years. These expenditures have generally been presented to the town's citizens in the form of Special Articles at the Annual Town Meeting.

The committee's objectives are: 1) to gather information on the capital needs of the town in terms of equipment or projects for the next five years, 2) review and prioritize the requests, 3) determine the potential resources available to fund capital improvements, and 4) make recommendations to the Selectboard, and the town, as to what capital investments to undertake.

It is the hope of the committee members to assist the Selectboard and the town in developing a capital plan, which results in consistent expenditure levels from year-to-year for capital needs, and which anticipates replacing and maintaining the town's assets so as to benefit all citizens of Princeton.

Process

The CIP began its process by gathering all capital projects and equipment acquisitions anticipated to occur in the next five years. This information was gathered from department heads, committees, and other involved persons whom we contacted. Anticipated expenditures were then reviewed and rated as to the degree they benefited the town and its on-going services. The committee also looked at historical expenditures for special articles, as well as current debt stemming from previous acquisitions, which were financed over several years. On average, the town expends \$500,000 each year on capital needs, although this varies a great deal from year-to-year. After reviewing and ranking the many requests, a potential budget figure for capital needs was determined in conjunction with the Advisory Board. The final step in the process, was to look at what could be purchased given the budget and make a recommendation to the Selectboard and the town. What follows are our recommendations for capital expenditures given the budget available for FY 2002. We have included expenditures we anticipate for FY 2003 through 2006 although the same review process will surely have to occur for each of those years as well. Our recommendations are advisory in nature and all expenditure must be approved or rejected through the special article process at our Annual Town Meeting.

Looking Ahead

After reviewing the capital needs for the Town of Princeton for the next several years, we have learned a great deal and would offer the following comments. It is clear that as a town, we have not consistently invested in maintaining our infrastructure. Our roads, buildings, and equipment have often gone many years without maintenance or replacement. It is not important to determine why this occurred, rather it is more important to commit to maintaining the assets of the town, and to develop an annual expenditure level which we can maintain consistently into the future. It is our belief that the town should invest \$500,000 each year in capital needs as a minimum, to maintain the assets of the town, and to save money in the long-run. We would also note that we will soon be undertaking a major high school building project which will impact our ability to fund other capital projects, but the on-going needs of the town itself must be addressed. This year's budget for capital acquisitions is far smaller than we would like to see. However, we agree with, and support, the desire not implement a tax increase this year. While limiting tax impacts is an important goal, we should all realize that not expending money on capital needs this year only postpones those expenditures, but does not eliminate them.

Thank you for the opportunity to assist the town in its annual budget process.

Robert Ford Jerry Gannelli Terry Hart Ed Lenard Dennis Rindone (Staff)