




Town of Winchester

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TO: Winchester Select Board
FROM: Beth Rudolph, PE –Town Manager 
DATE: October 2, 2023
RE: Town Manager’s Report – October 5th Select Board Meeting

Please find below an update on various topics for discussion at the Select Board’s October 5th meeting:

AGENDA ITEMS:

Bond Anticipation Note (BAN) Sale

The Town has awarded \$1,481,080 General Obligation Bond Anticipation Notes (BANs) for two projects which were previously authorized by Town Meeting – Lake Street bridge supplemental funding (\$880,580) and purchase of a new vactor truck (\$600,500). On Thursday night, the Board will approve the sale and sign the associated paperwork. Treasurer/Collector Ann Gill will be in attendance.

Retiree Health Insurance

Town staff has been working with our health insurance consultant Ken Lombardi and MIIA over the past several months to evaluate various ways to reduce our health insurance costs in FY25. Two items relate specifically to retiree health insurance, as noted below:

- Addition of a new Medicare retiree plan called “FreedomRx PPO Medicare Advantage”; and
- Implementation of a Medicare Buy-In program for approximately 25 existing retirees over age 65 that are now on the Town’s HMO and PPO plans. This program would move these members into Medicare plans and remove their health care claims from the Town’s experience. The change would provide a beneficial financial impact for both the Town and the retirees.

MIIA has offered a 2% reduction in the Town’s FY25 renewal rates if these changes are implemented. The Town’s estimated premium cost savings is \$240,000, compared to increased costs of approximately \$120,000 related to payment of Medicare related penalties. The Medicare buy-in will also result in \$3 to 4 million in savings related to our OPEB liability. The Town’s Insurance Advisory Committee (IAC) met last week and voted in favor of the proposed changes. Mr. Lombardi will be in attendance at that meeting.



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Employee Healthcare and Health Insurance Stabilization Fund

In Spring 2022, Town Meeting approved the creation of an Employee Healthcare and Health Insurance Stabilization Fund and appropriated \$275,000 into the fund (current balance is \$283,514.62). Staff has developed a set of draft guidelines for consideration by the Board for when funds would be considered for transfer into and out of the fund, and recommended upper and lower fund limits.

In FY23, the health insurance budget had a turnback of \$1,212,230.42 due to the change in health insurance providers from Harvard Pilgrim to MIIA – Blue Cross Blue Shield. One of the articles the Board is sponsoring this fall relates appropriating all or a portion of this turnback (now part of Free Cash) into the stabilization fund. Staff is recommending that the upper limit of the fund balance not exceed 10% of the current health insurance budget. The FY24 budget is \$12,916,000, so 10% would be \$1,291,600. Given the existing fund balance of \$283,514.62, the recommended Free Cash appropriation is **\$1,008,085**. Below is a summary of previous annual turnbacks from the health insurance budget for informational purposes.

Fiscal Year	Annual Turnback
FY14	\$429,055.09
FY15	\$392,393.56
FY16	\$72,589.86
FY17	\$227,642.04
FY18	\$10,391.87
FY19	\$223,940.63
FY20	\$404,367.09
FY21	\$390,822.72
FY22	\$274,093.42 (Free Cash vote to transfer \$275k to Stab Fund)
FY23	\$1,212,230.42

Capital Project List/ARPA Funding

Attached is a list of funded, outstanding, and future capital project needs compiled by staff. This list includes those projects that have been submitted to the Capital Planning Committee (CPC) during the FY25 cycle as either a current year request, on a department's 5-year plan, or projects that staff are aware of as future needs. Note that the out-year needs will likely increase after the VFA update is complete. For FY25, the CPC received 13 project requests for the Building Stabilization Fund totaling \$10,750,000, and the Committee has recommended funding for eight in the amount of \$1,785,000. Similarly, 23 requests were received for projects (\$4,067,000 total requests) to be funded out of the Capital Stabilization Fund, and CPC is recommending funding for 16 of them, totaling \$3,242,000.



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We have worked with Town Counsel to review items for eligibility related to CPA and ARPA funds. The spreadsheet also includes the date that each project was first submitted as a request to CPC (if appropriate), and indicates whether prior funding either through the stabilization funds, grants, or ARPA funds has been used for engineering work.

The summary indicates that there are significant capital needs in FY25, FY26, and beyond that cannot be supported by the existing stabilization funds or the remaining ARPA funds alone. Below is a summary of projects where CPC has either already funded the design, or will be funding the design in the FY25 cycle. These projects would ideally go to construction in FY26, and currently have no identified source of funding, though some are likely able to be funded through existing stabilization funds.

NOTE – All costs are high level estimates, that will be refined as additional design work is completed.

Project	FY26 Need (ESTIMATED)
Town Hall slate roof repairs – Construction	\$560,000
Town Hall window repairs – Phase I construction	\$360,000 ¹
Town Hall auditorium floor replacement	\$150,000
Town Hall bell tower structural repairs – Construction	???
Town Hall HVAC + ADA improvements – Construction	\$7.5 million
Library slate roof replacement – Construction	\$3,034,129
Library window replacement (original building, Phase I) – Construction	\$960,000 ²
Ambrose School roof – Phase I construction	\$800,000
McCall School roof – Phase I construction	\$3,000,000
Lincoln School Chiller replacement – Construction	\$1,200,000
Lincoln School flatwork/sitework – Construction	\$1,500,000
Packer Ellis Tennis Courts – Construction	???
TOTAL	\$19,064,129 (ESTIMATED COSTS)

¹Full replacement recommended in FY29

²Replacement of windows in building addition recommended in FY28



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Lynch Solar

As discussed at the Select Board meeting last week, Solect did not include the cost of underground conduit and earthwork in their original analysis. The Town has asked Solect to increase their costs by \$800,000 to match the cost estimate developed by the project team for the EFPBC. Once that information is received, Beth Greenblatt will revise her analysis comparing the PPA and direct ownership options. Staff has asked her to evaluate three direct purchase options that include capital costs of \$3.1 million, \$2.6 million and \$2.1 million, assuming the potential use of \$500,000 and \$1 million from Free Cash or other available funds.

During their discussions last week, Solect informed Ms. Greenblatt that it is generally their policy not to work on a construction job site, so they would likely want to mobilize after the school project was completed. If we move forward with Solect under a PPA, we will need to coordinate how the underground work would be completed.

ADDITIONAL UPDATES:

Public Flu Clinics

The Winchester Health Department is offering public flu clinics on the following dates:

- Oct 10th will be a High-Dose only clinic for those 65 years and older.
- Oct 19th, 23rd and Nov 8th will offer: Seasonal flu shot (6mos and older), FluMist (2-49yrs).

All clinics will be held at the Jenks Center, 109 Skillings Road. Registration is required.

<https://home.color.com/vaccine/register/winchester-vaccine?site=winchester-public-flu-clinics>

Please contact the Health Department (781-721-7121) with any questions.

Water Main Flushing

Beginning Monday, October 2nd 2023 water main flushing of the Town's west-side water system will be taking place during the day from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. over the next two weeks. The west-side system consists of all streets west of Cambridge Street plus Pond Street, Chesterford Road, Chesterford Terrace, Chesterford East, Woodside Road, Ardley Road, Ardley Place, and Parker Road. Water main flushing signs will be posted each day in the areas to be flushed.

During flushing, residents should refrain from using water for drinking, dishwashing, and laundry as some discoloration of water may occur. If you experience discolored water, let the cold water run until it clears. If the problem continues, please call the Water and Sewer Department at 781-721-7109.



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MBTA – Winchester Center Station Public Meeting

The MBTA will be holding a virtual public meeting on Wednesday, October 4th at 6pm. Instructions for joining the meeting are provided on the project website under “Upcoming Events” at www.MBTA.com/WinchesterStation.

Construction/Capital Project Updates

- **On-going Construction projects:**
 - *Eversource 345kV Project* – Work will be continuing on Cross Street for the remainder of the fall construction season.
 - *Transfer Station Renovation* – Final paving is scheduled for Monday, October 9th, weather pending.
 - *Lake Street Bridge* – The contractor has indicated that there will be a delay in delivery of the pre-cast, which will push back the overall bridge open date. The current anticipated road opening date is mid-November.
 - *Town Hall Fire Alarm* – Work started in Town Hall last week, and is expected to be completed in spring 2024.
 - *Parkhurst Swing Space & Lynch School* – All work was completed in time for school opening on September 7th. The bid opening for the Lynch School project is scheduled for November 17th.
 - *Muraco School Electrical* – Phase I of the work was completed at the end of August, the contractor will come back over April vacation next spring to finish the remaining work, which was delayed due to supply chain issues.
 - *McCall Masonry Project* – Work at the front entry was completed before school started, additional work will proceed after the start of school in collaboration with the School Department.
- **Projects currently out to bid:**
 - *Woodside Road/Winter Pond improvements* – Project is currently out to bid and the bid opening is scheduled for October 5th.
- **Upcoming Design and Construction projects:**
 - *Washington and Cross Street bridge repairs* – We have secured Chapter 90 funding to complete the work at Cross Street and work will begin in the next few weeks. The Capital Planning Committee has submitted an article at Fall Town Meeting for supplemental funding to complete the Washington Street bridge project. If approved, work would begin there in the spring.
 - *Winchester High School Drainage* – The second bid opening was held on July 13th (there were no bidders the first time around), and both bidders were over the Town’s



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budget. CPC has sponsored an article at Fall Town Meeting for supplemental funding. The contractor has indicated that they will hold their price until spring.

- *McDonald Field Pump Station* – The bid opening was held on August 30th. The low bidder came in below the remaining appropriation, but additional funds are needed for construction admin services and contingency. The Select Board is sponsoring an article at Fall Town Meeting to amend the borrowing authorization to cover the additional costs.

Upcoming Select Board + Fall Town Meeting schedule

The schedule for upcoming Select Board meeting is as follows:

- Monday, October 16th – *SB vote Fall TM warrant for publication*
- Monday, October 30th (*regular meeting*)
- Fall Town Meeting – November 6th, 9th, and 13th
- Monday, November 27th (*regular meeting*)

Community News and Events

- **“Sober October” Living Alcohol Free** – October 3, 2023 at noon, Town Hall Winchester Room. Please RSVP to winchestercoalition@gmail.com
- **Safe Disposal Day** – Scheduled for Saturday, October 28th from 9am to 1pm outside of the Transfer Station