

**Capital Improvements Committee (CIC) meeting  
Meeting Held Remotely**

**MINUTES  
November 30, 2022**

Meeting called to order 3:03pm by Greg Garrison, chair

*Other committee members present:* Ariel Elan, Chris Menegoni  
Jason Burbank joined at 3:20pm

*Other attendees:*

Walter Ramsey, Assistant Town Administrator (ATA), staff to the CIC

Jon Dobosz, Director of Parks & Recreation

Alice Armen, Eileen Mariani, and Jon Bray, members of the Montague Center Park Planning Committee (MCPPC)

Al Cummings, member of the MCPPC and Secretary of the Parks & Recreation Commission

**Meeting Minutes from 11.9.22 and 11.16.22:**

Chris M. moved to approve; Greg seconds.

Approved unanimously.

**Parks & Recreation capital requests:**

*--Jon Dobosz updates CIC on current projects.*

Unity Park basketball court -- just repainted court surface, playground, & walkways. No other outstanding or ongoing projects.

*--1<sup>st</sup> and largest pending request: Montague Center Park Improvement Project:*

Potential cost +/- \$400,000

Dept. and committee have been working on this since 2017. Conway School of Landscape Design created a Master Plan for this upgrade, including an inventory of current resources and the functionality of the park.

Jon and the MCPPC originally Intended to do an internal design process. They found over time that a professional is needed to evaluate and design improvements. MANY facets of park need improvement: playground; accessibility, especially create a parking lot and secure ways to use the park for anyone with disabilities. Also need formal design to deal with stormwater management. Playground area(s) flood considerably. The planning group has decided that professional design and construction are needed to honor the time committee members have contributed, as well as the needs of the Village.

FEW financing options: The best possibility is a Federal Parkland Acquisition and Renovations for Communities (PARC) grant. A PARC grant helped fund the Turners Falls Skatepark. This is a reimbursement grant, that can reimburse a community for up to 68% of a total expenditure up to \$400,000. -- up to 68% of up to \$400,000 expenditure. Walter adds that this COULD easily be a \$400-K or higher-cost park project, based on data from the Rutters Park project and the elementary-school

park being planned now.

Annual Town Meeting (ATM) would need to approve the full cost of the project, *after which* Montague can apply for this grant.

Greg clarifies we'll be going to ATM with *no* design specifications, because part of the expenditure will be to develop those.

The fact that a bus stop is within a mile away helps our eligibility.

Typically, a PARC grant covers design and construction grant in two phases, over two years. The Skatepark construction phase was partially funded by a PARC grant, but not the design & engineering (which were covered by community fundraising and discretionary funds)

We have no estimate yet of how much money for would go for design/engineering for the Montague Center Park, and how much for construction.

Eileen Mariani reports the MCPPC has gone through various issues, including the historical potential of the "Old Blacksmith Shop", wetlands, etc. Their research expanded from the original reason the committee formed: "*Let's get more and better play equipment for the children in the area.*" On that point, the committee considered options, and is recommending replacing all of the old equipment with new equipment.

Eileen asks Jon: "What construction is needed?" He says: Walking paths, parking lot, changes to meet accessibility requirements. If wetlands are present, there may be specific construction needs.

Jon says a later item on this Agenda will ask for funds to evaluate the "Old Blacksmith Shop" building.

Greg reminds everyone that CIC, Finance Committee, Selectboard (SB) and Town Meeting will want as specific as possible a list of what this Article will pay for. Greg speaks enthusiastically and at length about the Unity Park improvements over the years; how much out-of-town visitors enjoy the park and are impressed. He wants attendees at this meeting to know he strongly supports investment in green spaces and recreation throughout Montague. He believes these support the community and positive growth in many ways.

--*More lighting, to expand use of the Skatepark.* A member of Friends of the Skatepark approached Jon about possibility of installing permanent lighting. Past couple of years, they have had lighting supplied by Franklin County Sheriff's Office for special events, about 3 times a year. Daylight limits the use of the Skatepark significantly 6 months of the year. We have months of mild enough weather (like recently) when people could use the park, but it is too dark after 4pm. Current use time is generally dawn to dusk.

Jon says the Skatepark is *the* most used recreational facility Montague has. It gets even more use, and in colder weather, than the Unity Park playground.

Greg: How late would the lights be used?

Jon: NOT 24/7. We would have control by Smartphone, and also have pre-set times. He is not 100% sure if times can be modified if the light fixtures are solar-powered. He received a quote for "solar lighting" of \$8000, but was told the types of controls available would be far more limited than with "conventional" lights. Conventional includes LED lighting.

Jason recommends we explore costs of various types of lighting and controls prior to presenting this Article formally. He cautions that solar lights are problematic for this purpose, because each light needs to have enough power available, regardless of amount of sunshine available prior to use.

Walter adds that any fixtures chosen will be dark-sky compliant, which is important. Estimate from Musco is in our packet. They do a lot of sports-related outdoor lighting.

Placeholder cost for this Article: \$66,000.

--*NON-capital TM Articles Jon wishes to review with us*; the Finance Cttee. will determine the funding source for each one:

--*Montague Center Park, study of "Old Blacksmith Shop": \$2000*

The Parks & Recreation Dept. seeks to demolish this building and use the space for a parking lot. The building is comprised of two buildings of different ages, joined together. At least one informal inspection revealed no evidence that the structure was ever used for blacksmithing. The Montague Historical Commission (MHC) has requested an evaluation, to document the condition so the Town can make an informed decision as to whether this building is worth preserving. They report that this building is designated as part of the Montague Center Historic District. Jon also received a call from a Montague Center resident urging preservation of the building.

--*Sealing & repairs to the concrete surface of the Skatepark: \$2500* (subsequently reduced by the dept. to \$1500). This request will recur every couple of years, as needed.

--*Unity Park Community Garden well: \$12,000*

Watering this Community Garden currently requires 250 feet of hose. According to Annie Levine of the Community Garden group, 25 gardeners use the garden, each using a 3' x 8' or 4' x 8' raised-bed plot; plus the gardeners maintain 6 beds open for community picking.

Greg asks whether installing a larger well could later supply water to the Field House bathroom; etc. Would it be prudent to invest in a larger well that could supply more than the garden's needs? Annie says that a dedicated well for the garden will access purer and more nutritious water, direct from the aquifer, than "town water" that has been treated, chlorinated, etc. 8 feet down, they found water "*just as clean -- maybe cleaner -- than the river*".

Jon says the well water would likely NOT be designated as potable. There are mechanisms on the market that can keep passersby, skate-park users, etc. from drinking water from a well like this.

--*Unity Park Parking Lot improvements: \$12,500*

Seal cracks in the pavement; repaint original lines that were painted 10 to 12 years ago; and add concrete-block parking stops, especially to protect tree roots. Park visitors have been driving through

tree lines for years, likely damaging roots. We can protect the trees, possibly add planters. We need to stop driving on tree belts.

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*In response to a question, Greg explains the purpose of discussing non-capital Articles [i.e., Articles requesting less than \$25,000]: Historically, one-time maintenance and improvement requests regarding infrastructure that are under the cost threshold for a capital project come to CIC for potential input. CIC then lets the Finance Committee know our perspective, and are prepared to comment on the usefulness of Article if asked.*

This communication can also help CIC to anticipate future capital needs.

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Additional Capital Article requests [not Parks & Recreation] introduced today

**Economic Development & Industrial Corporation (EDIC)**

Walter presented:

--*Demolish the former Cumberland Farms building @ 38 Avenue A: \$50,000*

EDIC took this property by eminent domain in the 1990s, to be part of the overall development of the Discovery Center and surrounding resources, but there was no money for this part of what was then envisioned. The Town has been trying to market the property for development ever since. No prospective buyers have followed through so far.

Demolition of this structure is needed for the property to be more marketable, and because the old building shell is becoming a visible blight on the area. The building *has been abated* of all asbestos and other hazardous materials. There is nothing left inside to even become moldy -- just a concrete foundation, walls and roof.

This request has gone to Town Meeting 3 times before -- last time 8 years ago. TM has always refused. The hope is to leave a 1/3 acre green lawn, which will be more attractive to potential purchasers and reduce their upfront costs.

Received a demolition estimate several years ago of \$40,000. Since then, Walter has discussed with Tom Bergeron the potential for the Dept. of Public Works (DPW) to do at least part of the work. We can use a similar strategy to the one for the cemetery retaining wall the Town replaced. For now, Walter is estimating as if an outside contractor will be doing the whole job.

**DPW introduces a new request (explained by Walter):**

--*10-wheel dump truck w/plow & sander: \$368,500*

This is coming up now for Annual Town Meeting (ATM) this May, because a USDA Community Facilities Fund grant is opening up, which can include vehicles. Like the PARC grant mentioned earlier, this is a reimbursement grant, and could cover up to 55% of our cost. Also as with the PARC grant, the Town would need to appropriate the full cost of this equipment before the grant can be awarded.

The Community Facilities Fund program has not opened yet for the coming fiscal year, so we know no other particulars. Will be announced in the Spring.

**DISCRETIONARY FUND POLICY**

This is the last Financial Policy pertaining to the work of the Capital Improvements Committee that needed our tweaking, then recommendation, to move on to the Finance Committee. This will include a March 1 annual deadline for review of discretionary purchases by the DPW between Town Meetings. [*See Finance Committee's final copy of the Financial Policies for exact wording.*]

Chris moves to recommend the CIC's edit of this policy, including the March 1 deadline. Ariel seconds. **Motion passes:** unanimous.

**For Our Information:**

Tom Bergeron stopped by today to discuss Town Hall boilers. Natural-gas hydronic systems. The Town Hall has two, one just failed. However, their operation is somewhat dependent on each other. Siemens wall-mounted units, installed 12 years ago. Jamrog is the HVAC contractor; has been there attempting to repair this system multiple times. Staff has come to work and found "no heat" condition in the building at least two or three times this winter. Essential part(s) would need to be shipped from Germany; would take at least several weeks from order date.

*Jason Burbank:* "Condensing boilers are a relatively new technology; some of them are lemons." He will confer w/Jamrog, and take a look at the boilers himself.

**Adjournment:**

Jason moved to adjourn; Chris M. seconded. **Motion passes:** unanimous