

Town of Harvard Capital Planning and Investment Committee Minutes March 13, 2014, Town Hall

Members present: Keith Cheveralls, Debbie Ricci, Alan Frazer, David Kassel, Tim Bragan, and Lorraine Leonard

The meeting was called to order at 8:25 a.m.

Tim presented a detailed spreadsheet to the CPIC with 20-year debt projections for major capital projects that have been proposed for the town in coming years. The projections show, among other things, that proposed projects to rehab the Central Fire Station, Hildreth House, and Public Works garage would boost town debt payments over the 20-year period from \$14.9 million to \$24 million.

Keith noted that Tim's analysis does not include proposed school projects, including the renovation of the Bromfield House, Bromfield High School science labs, and the elementary school K-wing. He suggested that the chances of moving forward on all of these projects are "slim to none unless we begin to think differently as a town. The town has a debt problem."

There was discussion about bringing Tim's analysis to the attention of the Board of Selectmen and the Finance Committee. Keith asked for a general consensus among CPIC members of the value of Tim's analysis, and the consensus was that the analysis is on the right track and very valuable in advancing the debate over future capital spending.

Debbie left the meeting due to a prior commitment.

The CPIC then heard from Joe Connelly, interim superintendent of schools, who reported that the town will realize a one-time savings totaling \$291,720 due to a change in the methodology of the CASE Collaborative, which manages special education services for Harvard and several other towns. In addition, Joe said there is a projected reduction in the number of special education students in the Harvard school system next year from 8.6 to 4.5.

Joe said that as a result, the town is projected to have \$332,707 available in unspent special education funds next year. Both Joe and Keith said they have proposed that the unspent fund be used to pay for the School Department's six capital warrant articles, totaling \$289,600, which the CPIC has recommended for Fiscal Year 2015. Five of the warrant articles have been recommended for funding from the Capital Investment Fund. One article – for the replacement of spalling concrete at the high school – has been recommended for financing under a Capital Exclusion totaling \$115,000.

Joe and Keith said they agreed that the one-time windfall in special education savings should be directed toward the capital warrant articles, which are each one-time expenditures. After spending the \$289,600, the School Department's CASE budget will still contain \$75,107, which can be available for new special education costs.

Keith said he will make a motion at Town Meeting to take no action on the School Department capital warrant articles as a result of the agreement to use the special education windfall savings to fund the articles.

A motion was made and seconded to adjourn the CPIC meeting at 9:40 a.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted by David Kassel