

TOWN COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING- WEDNESDAY, MARCH 5, 2025

PRESENT: Council Chairman, Nathan Calouro
Vice-Chairwoman, Mary Parella
Councilman, Antonio "Tony" Teixeira
Councilman, Timothy Sweeney (arrived at 7:20pm)
Councilman, Aaron Ley

ALSO PRESENT: Town Administrator, Steven Contente,
Town Treasurer, Carl Carulli

The council met on Wednesday, March 5, 2025, and called to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Town Hall, Council Chambers, Council Chairman Calouro presiding:

1. Five-Year Capital Plan

It is hereby noted for the record that no action was taken on this agenda item

Town Administrator Contente provided a brief overview of the town's initiatives and a status update for fiscal year 2025. He emphasized the importance of carefully managing capital project spending and minimizing reliance on additional bonds. His goal is to transition from borrowing to utilizing town funds for capital investments, thereby reducing interest payments. He noted that the capital project budget remains largely consistent with previous years, with an increase of approximately \$218,000, primarily due to a costly year for road projects. Priority projects were included in this year's capital plan, though some intended projects had to be deferred. He commended department heads for their efforts and gave special recognition to the Town Treasurer Carilli, highlighting his outstanding work in preparing the capital project budget and contributing to the town's overall budget planning.

Members of the council reviewed the various departmental Capital Projects status reports as presented in table chart 2 and the Fiscal year proposed capital projects for FY 2026-2030 of the Capital Projects report.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Director Diane Williamson and Town Administrator Contente provided an overview of the Community Development capital projects report and status report for the following projects:

- Leahy Pond implementation- Annawamscutt/Sowams area (status report)
- Varnum watershed project construction (status report)
- Burnside Street usability Construction (status report)

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- End of road public Access- Gibson Construction (status report)
- Tree Planting Grant (status report)
- Independence Park access improvements (status report)
- Burnside Street usability construction (FY-2026 capital project)
- End of Road Public Access- Gibson Construction (FY -2026 capital project)
- Low Lane Shoreline Access Improvements (FY-2026 Capital Projects)
- Comprehensive Plan Update (FY-2026 Capital Projects)

The council members deliberated and assessed the progress of these projects.

PUBLIC WORKS

Director Chris Parella and Town Administrator Contente provided an overview of the Community Development capital projects report and status report for the following projects:

- Road Reconstruction & Repaving (status report)
- Sidewalk repairs (status report)
- Automated trash truck replacement(status report)
- Mack heavy-duty dump truck(status report)
- Salt shed repairs (status report)
- Medium duty utility body (status report)
- Two one-ton regular cab pickups (status report)
- Replacement Unit #10 & 16 (status report)
- Road Reconstruction and repaving (FY-2026 Capital Project)
- DPW Facility Building (FY-2026 Capital Project)
- Holiday Lighting infrastructure (FY-2026 Capital Project)

Town Administrator Contente and the DPW Director Parella emphasized that road reconstruction costs were higher this year compared to previous and upcoming years, primarily due to the total reconstruction of approximately 8-10 roads. They noted that factors contributing to the increased costs included drainage improvements, DEM and CRMC permitting expenses, Best Management Practice requirements, and necessary environmental enhancements. Additionally, they discussed plans to eventually expand holiday lighting to Franklin and Constitution Streets, though the immediate priority remains rebuilding the infrastructure needed to support the lighting.

The council members deliberated and assessed the progress of these projects.

Alan Spen of 133 Ferry Road addressed the council, inquiring about the criteria used to prioritize projects as urgent or at different priority levels. The Town Administrator and council explained that the process is

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not exact science, as various factors influence decisions. Safety concerns are a primary consideration, while grant opportunities and unforeseen circumstances can also impact prioritization. They emphasized that the town strives to make the best possible predictions based on necessity.

POLICE DEPARTMENT

Police Chief Lynch provided an overview of the department's capital projects report and status report of the following projects:

- Mobile Command Center (Status Report)
- Site repeater (status report)
- Greenhouse Property Environment Site Plan (status report)
- Mobil Vehicle Impact Barrier System (FY-2026 Capital Project)
- Service Weapon Replacement (FY-2026 Capital Project)

The council members deliberated and assessed the progress of these projects.

Councilman Ley inquired about the potential benefits of moving the police station feasibility study from FY-2027 to FY-2026, questioning whether accelerating the timeline could result in cost savings. The council discussed the financial impact of the planned new high school on the town and taxpayers. It was suggested that the matter be referred to the Town Administrator, the Community Development Office, and the Police Department for further analysis to determine if advancing the study would be beneficial.

Town Administrator Contente respectfully disagreed with the recommendation, explaining that with two other town buildings currently under construction and the new high school project underway, it would not be feasible to take on another major initiative at this time. He emphasized that the DPW building was a higher priority than a new police station and should be addressed first, stating that the town should focus on fixing existing needs before starting a new project.

Animal Control

Animal Control Officer Heather Simmons provided an overview of the department's capital project for the canine grass area, emphasizing safety concerns with the current setup. She highlighted the importance of addressing these issues as a priority and explained the durability and benefits of the proposed improvements. The new canine area would enhance safety for the animals, improve working conditions for staff, and provide long-term benefits to the town.

The council members deliberated and assessed the proposed project.

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Harbor Department

Town Administrator Contente noted that no capital projects were being considered for the Harbor Department in FY-2026. He also mentioned that the Harbormaster was unable to attend the meeting as he was at a meeting at the State House. Town Administrator Contente then provided an overview of the Harbor Department's status report for the following projects:

- Independence Boat Ramp (status Report)
- Fire suppression improvements on Church Street Dock (status Report)
- Pump Out Boat (status Report)

It was highlighted that the fire suppression improvements were required to extend further than anticipated due to state fire code regulations.

The council members deliberated and discussed the project status update.

Fire Department

Fire Chief DeMello provided an overview of the department's capital projects report and status report of the following projects:

- EKG monitor (status report)
- Mechanical CPR Device (status Report)
- Roof repairs at Fire Department headquarters (status Report)
- Personal Protective Equipment (status Report)
- Radio Communication Equipment (status report)
- EKG Monitor (FY-2026 Capital Project)
- Ventilators (FY- 2026 Capital Project)
- Radio Communication Equipment (FY-2026 Capital Project)
- Jaws of life (FY-2026 Capital Project)
- Breathing Apparatus (FY-2026 Capital Project)

The council members deliberated and assessed the progress of these projects.

Fire Chief DeMello clarified that the difference between the EKG listed in the status report and the capital project report was that the capital project accounted for EKG unit #4 of 4. He also explained that the radio communication requirements for the Fire Department differ from those of the Police Department, as they operate on different frequency standards and are required to maintain statewide response capabilities.

Rogers Free Library

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Library Director Dyer provided an overview of the department's capital projects report and status report for the following projects:

- Generator for Building (status report and FY-2026 Capital Project)
- Community facilities grant (status report & FY-2026 Capital Project)
- Carpeting (FY-2026 Capital Project)

Library Director Dyer and Planner Nick Toth highlighted the maintenance and improvement projects at the public library.

The council members deliberated and assessed the progress of these projects.

Parks & Recreation

Director of Parks and Recreation Warren Renshausen provided an overview of the department's capital projects report and status report of the following projects:

- Town Beach & Sports Complex Court repairs
- Asylum Road Street Lights
- Flooring for QG Fitness Room

The council members deliberated and assessed the progress of these projects.

Director Renshausen emphasized the critical need for repairs at Coelho Park, noting that the park, now approximately 30 years old, has significant safety concerns that must be addressed. He stressed that ensuring the park remains safe and accessible for the community should be a priority.

The Town Administrator, Parks Director, and council members echoed these concerns, stating that it would not be in the town's best interest to simply close the park and surround it with caution tape. Instead, they emphasized the importance of proactive planning and securing necessary funding to rehabilitate the park, ensuring it remains a safe and enjoyable space for residents. They underscored the town's commitment to maintaining public recreational areas and making strategic investments that prioritize both safety and community well-being.

Discussions took place regarding the ongoing issue of animal waste along the bike path near the Colt State Park area. It was noted that while the bike path falls under the jurisdiction of the Department of Environmental Management (DEM), the Parks Director would take the initiative to notify DEM about the concerns and explore potential improvements to address the issue.

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Chairman Calouro expressed his sincere gratitude to the department heads and those involved for their dedication and hard work in securing grants that help fund essential town improvements. He acknowledged that these grants play a crucial role in alleviating the financial burden on taxpayers while allowing the town to move forward with important projects. He also extended his appreciation to the Town Treasurer, Town Administrator, and Town Clerk for their efforts in managing the town's financial planning and ensuring fiscal responsibility.

Chairman Calouro emphasized that the town remains mindful of keeping costs down and is committed to maintaining the capital project budget in line with previous years. He recognized the collective efforts of all involved in making strategic financial decisions that balance necessary infrastructure investments with responsible budgeting. He congratulated everyone on this significant success and expressed confidence in their continued efforts to prioritize the town's financial stability and growth.

There being no further business, upon a motion by Councilman Sweeney, seconded by Councilman Teixeira and voted unanimously, the Chairman declared this meeting to be adjourned at 8:53 pm.

Melissa Cordeiro, Town Clerk
Council Clerk