

Town of Hancock

Capital Improvements Program

Supplement

December 2011

Introduction

In December 2004, this Committee submitted a Capital Improvements Program report. Among other things, it made the following recommendation:

We urge our successors to update the CIP frequently. Each year, all town departments and committees should submit information for the new sixth year, along with any recommendations for revisions to prior years projects if necessary. Every few years, Hancock's demographic, financial and statistical data should be updated by the Planning Board or CIP Committee, and the trends should be studied in light of the long term planning goals of the town.

This brief report implements that recommendation for the current year.

Population Trends and Projections

The committee has received census returns for 2010 but has not, to date, made a detailed analysis of their implications. We can nevertheless report the following headlines:

During the period 2000 to 2010, the population of Hancock declined from 1,739 to 1,654, a fall of 85 or nearly 5%:

This decline was particularly striking among the younger population where the absolute number of younger children has declined by 137 (38%) and their proportion relative to the general population has also fallen:

Age	2000	2000 % of total	2010	2010 % of total	Change
Under 5	81	4.7	55	3.3	-26
5-9	128	7.4	85	5.1	-43
9-14	147	8.5	79	4.8	-68
	356	20.6	219	13.2	-137

We also note that, since 2000, the median age of the population has risen from 42.8 to 50.8 years. Hancock is rapidly aging.

During the same period, the *housing stock* has increased from 814 to 864, or by 50 units (or 6%). Of the 864 total houses, 140 were vacant on census day in 2010 and the balance, we assume, either seasonal homes or truly unoccupied.

Municipal Financial Projections

During 2011, Hancock's municipal departments continued to experience unusual financial strains, largely due to the aftermath of the near collapse of the financial markets and a resulting virtual recession. State funding of municipalities has been seriously curtailed. At the same time, generous federal stimulus packages available in 2010 dried up. Simply stated, the town – like all local governments - is tightening its belt.

In late 2011, the Committee re-canvassed other contributors to this report to update their financial projections for capital expenses expected over the next six years. In November, all contributors were asked by telephone call, visit or e-mail to provide updated information. Notes of these contacts are appended to the archive copies of this report.

The information collected is summarized in the table appended to this report which supersedes Exhibit #8 in the 2004 Report and by the following notes which supplement the 2004 through 2010 Reports.

Direct but Presently Non-Quantifiable Capital Requirement:

Village Planning Committee: As we reported last year, this committee finished its program in 2010. It has now disbanded and has no plans which involve capital expenditures by the Town¹.

Conservation Commission: No capital expenditures are anticipated at this time.²

Police Department: Apart from the replacement of police patrol vehicles, the Police Department suggests the following as priority capital items. It is uncertain when they will be brought forward as part of a town budget:

- An all terrain vehicle (“ATV”) for use on trails where other police vehicles cannot be used without risk of damage or injury. Chief Wood suggests that the cost would be in the range of \$10,000 to \$11,000 and that it might be possible to share this item with the Fire Department;
- Additional space in the police station, possibly at the back of the existing police building, to provide additional office space for confidential interviews and report writing upstairs and additional garage space below. No costings have been prepared but might be in the range of \$40,000;
- A radar trailer or mobile unit used to warn drivers of their speed by flashing MPH at oncoming vehicles. These cost about \$10,000 to \$15,000; and

¹ Interviews by Hunt Dowse with Howard Mansfield and Kurt Grassett (November 2009).

² Interview by Alison Rossiter with Eric Masterson, Chairman (November 2011).

- New office computers to replace outdated units now 7 years old. These would be budgeted at approximately \$3,000 to \$4,000.

Fire Department: Apart from replacement or refurbishment of emergency vehicles as shown in Exhibit # 8, the Fire Department does not have plans for capital expenditures which would call on taxpayer funds.³ In 2012, the department intends to refurbish an older tanker truck, 14T2, at a cost of \$40,000 which will extend the life of this truck by about 20 years.

Commons Commissioners: The Commons Commission plans to move forward with restoration of the bandstand on the Commons but – although it is shown as a town expenditure in Exhibit 8 – the Commission says that it will not ask for funding from the town taxpayers.⁴ Some monies remain from the fund to rehabilitate Main Street and may be available with the balance to be raised via an appeal. Based on recent additional engineering consultations, the estimated costs are now approximately \$20,000. Work could be done in phases, making coverage of the costs more manageable over time.

The Commission plans to continue to develop its Master Plan for the Commons. Projects may include installation of a sprinkler system, seating areas and other landscaping. No costs or revenue options have been identified for any of these future projects at this time.

Library: The Library Trustees intend to replace carpeting in two phases. In the current year, they intend to carpet the Daniels Room. The stacks and front desk areas will be done in 2014. They do not have reliable estimates at this time.⁵

Recreation Department: This department has no plans for expenditures funded by the town.⁶

Recycling Center: In addition to items identified in Exhibit 8, the recycling center may require a storage building at a cost of approximately \$30,000.⁷

Housing Authority: This group is no longer active.

Selectboard: The board plans to carry out a physical property revaluation as required by RSA 21-J in stages over the next five years. This should cost about \$80,000 and is shown, for this purpose, at \$16,000 per year.⁸

³ Interview by Hunt Dowse with Nevin Cassidy (November 2011).

⁴ Interview by Alison Rossiter with Dick Warner, Chairman (November 2011).

⁵ Interview by Hunt Dowse with Amy Markus (November 2011).

⁶ Interview by Alison Rossiter with Jeff Wilder (November 2011).

⁷ Interview by Rich Lefebvre with John Jordan (November 2011).

⁸ Interview by Rich Lefebvre with John Jordan (November 2011).

Other Matters not directly affecting the town Capital Budget

Post Office: The Post Office reports⁹:

- 1 The town and the postal service have just completed a substantial refurbishment of the Post Office with the town, as landlord, taking care of a new roof, insulation and painting and the PO, as tenant, taking care of a new furnace and a water heater. The latter two items were replaced as a result of a breakdown and not as a planned replacement. As a result of these works, the Postmaster does not anticipate that the physical plant will require any further upgrades in the foreseeable future;
- 2 At the same time, the local post office is participating in a nationwide reorganization. In the case of Hancock, the sorting and delivery function has been transferred to Antrim. This takes substantial pressure off the office's space requirements. As a result, the Postmaster does not anticipate any expansion of the physical plant in the foreseeable future.

Cemetery Trustees: The Cemetery Trustees expect to carry out engineering studies (\$3,000) in 2013 and further works in 2015 (\$30,000).¹⁰

Water Department: The water department will install a secondary disinfection back-up system by 2014, as required by the state. Engineering consultations have been obtained, and the permitting and approval process is currently ongoing. The system will cost approximately \$100,000. Funds will be obtained via a bond raised and paid by water users, not taxpayers.¹¹

Residents may wish to note that Hancock has the last "open water" supply system in the State which requires only disinfection with chlorine and treatment for turbidity. A UV light disinfection system will also be used in the future.

School District: Our report last year referred to two reports outlining the capital plans of the School District which remain in effect:

The Conval Strategic Plan 2010-2015 revised to November 2009 prepared by the Superintendent and others and

The Conval Educational Specification prepared by SAU #1 (undated and unsigned.)

⁹ Interview with Elaine Merritt, Postmaster, (November 2011).

¹⁰ Interview by Larry Schwartz with Kurt Grasset (November 2011)

¹¹ Interview by Alison Rossiter with Jeff Wilder (November 2011).

The School District plans to put forward a bonding proposal as part of the March 2012 ballot which would raise funds necessary to bring the Con Val Gymnasium into compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. While passage of this proposal would have an impact on the voters in Hancock, it has no direct impact on the town's finances.

It is also worthy of note that the elementary school population in Hancock has fallen to about 77 (spread over four grades) a figure which is less than ideal from a financial or educational perspective. The School District is studying possible solutions.¹²

¹² Interview by Stephen Froling with George Kidd, School Board Member (November 2011).