

EXETER FACILITIES ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Town Offices, 10 Front Street, Exeter NH 03833

August 24, 2021

Exeter Planning Board
Town Offices
10 Front Street
Exeter, NH 03833

Dear Chairman Plumer and Members of the Exeter Planning Board:

Pursuant to its Charge* from the Select Board to assist Town leadership in setting facilities priorities and budgets, the Facilities Advisory Committee (FAC) respectfully submits its recommendations regarding four proposed projects for the Fiscal Years (FY) 2022-2027 Capital Improvement Program (CIP). These recommendations were adopted by a 4-0 vote. The FAC asks that these recommendations be considered at the final Planning Board session on the new CIP, and that this letter and attachments be placed in the record for that meeting.

These projects, as described in the Draft CIP, are Department of Public Works (DPW) Complex (\$75,000 in FY 22), Facilities Condition Assessment (FCA) (\$45,000 in FY 22), Town Office Geotechnical Evaluation (\$50,000 in FY 22), and Raynes Barn Improvements (\$100,000 in FY 22).

At this time, the FAC is unable to provide any recommendations with respect to the DPW Complex and Town Office Geotechnical Evaluation projects. We have several questions about each project, but the Town Staff has not yet had the opportunity to answer any of these questions and to provide additional information. We intend to make specific recommendations on these two projects based on this information later during the FY 22 Town budget process. For your information, we have attached to this letter the questions we are submitting to the Town Staff.

With respect to the third project, the Facilities Condition Assessment, we believe strongly that this project is essential to the successful oversight, management, and investment for existing and future Town facilities.

Exeter is facing several multi-million-dollar decisions now and in the near-future whether to repair, renovate, or replace facilities that are critical to protecting our citizens and to providing them with the municipal services they demand and deserve. The FCA will be critical to providing valuable information to assist in making these decisions, especially with respect to prioritizing among these projects and to ensuring they both meet the needs of the community and that the information needed is transparent to the voters in regard to cost benefits.

The FCA will do this by identifying and prioritizing current and long-term capital renewal needs for the Town's physical assets. Along with identifying the needs, a system will be provided that will aid in capital planning, budgeting, and prioritization of capital needs. In order to be effective, this system, including a software and data baseline about the condition of Town facilities, will be updated regularly so that Town leadership and the taxpayers fully understand the basis for difficult facilities choices. It is expected that, among others, the Select Board, Planning Board, Budget Recommendations Committee, the FAC, the Town Manager and DPW all will benefit greatly from its use.

The FCA will be a unique asset that differs significantly in currency, scope, and level of detail from previous Town facilities studies although it will use these studies as a starting point. These studies now are outdated "snapshots in time" that lack sufficient data and flexibility to serve as a "living" facilities management mechanism, and most are more limited in focus and perspective.

For these many reasons, we urge the Planning Board to endorse the Facilities Condition Assessment as part of the FY 22-27 CIP.

Lastly, the FAC fully supports the proposed Raynes Barn Improvements as described in the FY 22-26 draft CIP. Attached for your information is a copy of the letter we sent to the Select Board outlining our perspectives on this project.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of these views. A FAC representative will attend the Planning Board's final CIP meeting to answer any questions you might have about this letter.

Cordially,

Kris Weeks, Chair
Peter Lennon, Vice Chair
Rob Corson
Mark Leighton

Attachments: FAC FY 22 Project Questions
FAC Raynes Barn Improvements Letter to Select Board

* As approved by the Select Board (SB) on May 20, 2019, part of the FAC's Charge is to: (1) assess and analyze municipally owned facilities in order to prioritize physical plant needs and budgets, and (2) advise it, the Town Manager, Planning Board, Budget Recommendations Committee, and DPW on facilities priorities, including construction, replacement, renovation, and maintenance.

Attachment: FY 22 FAC Project Questions

Department of Public Works (DPW) Complex – FY 22 Funding: \$75,000

- (1) When during the last year did the construction of a new fuel island and associated equipment become such an urgent issue that it requires construction separately and before undertaking the rest of the new/renovated DPW complex?
- (2) Has the condition of the fuel island been reviewed by an independent 3rd party?
- (3) How was the \$75,000 budget request for FY 22 calculated in detail? Is it based on comparisons with other similar projects in Exeter or other comparable municipalities? Is it based on any parametric analysis that would show a “Best,” “Worst,” and “Most Likely” or “Mid-Range” project cost?
- (4) Will the work projected for FY 22 be based on a 15,000 square foot garage facility on the existing complex footprint, or a 40,000 square foot garage on an expanded complex footprint including the Town of Exeter-owned 4.5-acre parcel of land, or some new iteration of the garage and site footprint?
- (5) In crafting its concept or plan for a new DPW complex, has the DPW leadership consulted in detail with the heads of the Town departments that have significant-enough vehicle and storage needs to see whether it makes budget and operational sense to meet some of these other needs at a new DPW complex?
- (6) Is the current DPW concept for its complex based on meeting Town needs for the next 30-50 years or the next 20-25 years?
- (7) Has a comprehensive study of the DPW operations been completed or been discussed in order to fully understand current and future operational and staffing needs?
- (8) Until Town leadership decides to expand the existing DPW complex footprint and change facility locations, isn't it premature to conduct any work in FY 22 based on the assumption that such a new complex will be the best or only alternative?
- (9) Is DPW going to engage in a master planning activity for the entire site? Will this master plan be conducted in a manner that addresses specific community needs? Will the master plan be transparent to the voters in regard to the cost benefits of any proposed plan?

Town Office Geotechnical Evaluation – FY 22 Funding: \$50,000

- (1) When were the differential settlement and visible wall cracks first identified?
- (2) Specifically, what caused the settlement that caused the cracks? Was it in any way caused by the construction of the new building behind the Town Offices?
- (3) Have Town Offices structural issues been included on any recent annual maintenance lists?
- (4) Has any structural maintenance work been done on the Town Offices structure in the past 5-10 years?
- (5) Are there current safety issues due to the wall cracks? If so, what is being done to minimize these safety issues while the Town pursues resolving them? If not, when is it expected that safety issues will occur if remedial structural work is not done in 2021 or 2022?

- (6) How was the \$50,000 budget request for FY 22 calculated in detail? Is it based on comparisons with other similar projects in Exeter or other comparable municipalities? Is it based on any parametric analysis that would show a "Best," "Worst," and "Most Likely" or "Mid-Range" project cost?
- (7) Is there any informed estimate as to how many years and at what total cost fixing the structural issues might take? If such an estimate is unavailable until the geotechnical/structural evaluation is accomplished, when in FY 22 might it be available so that Town leadership knows what might face the voters before any remediation work begins?
- (8) Is there a detailed breakdown between the geotechnical/structural evaluation component of the project and any remediation work possible in FY 22?
- (9) Is there any longer-range thinking associated with replacing the Town Offices building within the next 5-15 years?
- (10) Was a structural forensic engineer consulted? If so, is there an associated report? Has the crack been tracked in regard to its size over time? Who has recommended a geotechnical engineer? Has there been an identification of where borings are to be made?

Attachment: FAC Raynes Barn Improvements Letter to Select Board

June 3, 2021

To the Select Board, Town of Exeter, NH:

We the members of the Exeter Facilities Advisory Committee, write today 5-0 in support of the Raynes Farm Stewardship Committee's request for a matching funds warrant article for in conjunction with their grant application to the State's Land & Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP) to restore the Raynes Farm Barn.

We have met with Committee members several times in the past 6 months, including a site visit this spring to become familiar with the Barn's restoration needs and agree with the work proposed.

The Raynes Farm Barn, built in 1860, is listed in the State Register of Historic Places. An Historic Structure Report first commissioned in 2012 and since updated in 2018 found that the property appears to be the site of the original Town landing on early maps, as well as the center of the Exeter Cattle Market established by Chase Wiggin. The property was acquired by the Town in 2002. Since acquisition, the vision of the Raynes Farm Stewardship Committee, under the Exeter Conservation Commission, has been to continue agricultural use as well as create a conservation center highlighting the historic and natural features of the property through public events and recreation. Past events thus far have included open air painting, full moon snowshoeing, pop-up disc golf, historic tours, birding tours, scavenger hunts, winter solstice celebrations, pumpkin smashes, hiking, guided star gazing, sledding and cocoa, and more, all held as field-centric events due to safety concerns about the Barn. The Committee has also had to turn away events due to the same concerns: folk music concerts, Shakespearian performances, story walks, elementary school field trips, and more.

Repairs have been ongoing (some with previous LCHIP support). The Committee has further visions for public events but is limited due to Barn condition. The Town funding we support, along with the LCHIP grant, will further preserve and protect the Barn as well as improve conditions to enable larger Barn-focused events for year-round public use. Proposed repairs include ameliorating the bowing of the north east wall, repair/replacement of various clapboards, doors, and windows, accessibility improvements, floor repairs, and more.

As the Facilities Advisory Committee, we appreciate the need for such repairs of this unique Town-owned property and agree that we should pursue maintenance now to prevent further decline and expense later as well as to support the Stewardship Committee's vision for an increase in public events held at the Barn.

Thank you for your consideration,
The Exeter Facilities Advisory Committee

Kris Weeks, Chair
Peter Lennon, Vice Chair
Rob Corson
Amanda Kelly
Mark Leighton