

Capital Planning Committee

Town of Longmeadow, Massachusetts

September 27, 2005

Selectboard
Town of Longmeadow Massachusetts
20 Williams Street
Longmeadow, MA 01106

To the Honorable Selectboard of the Town of Longmeadow, Massachusetts;

Thank you for forwarding to the Capital Planning Committee the capital expenditures being proposed for the Special Town Meeting. At our September 27th meeting the Capital Planning Committee reviewed the list of school related capital items that total \$186,000 with the objective of acting in our role of advising town leadership on capital expenditures.

In that role of advisor, we have chosen to restrict our comments to those items on the fall, 2005 capital list that would normally fall under the purview of our committee. Therefore, our comments have been restricted to capital items (excludes boiler inspections) costing more than \$10,000. However, we have noted that the proposed list of expenditures is very heavily weighted to heating, ventilation, and air conditioning items. Had this list been first proposed to our committee we would have questioned the origin of this list, as well as the justification (payback calculation) of each project. Our fear is that a single consultant or vendor has overly influenced this list. The focus of this list on HVAC items excludes other school department needs that were previously identified to our committee as high priorities for capital that also might be considered the result of deferred maintenance, including those items highlighted by the MIAA accreditation process.

There are six proposed expenditures that would normally come under the review of the Capital Planning Committee. These six projects that total \$106,000 are:

1	Center School: Update energy management system web based DDC -	\$24,920
2	Center School: Update four blower motor controllers -	\$23,130
3	Williams School: Replace 30 year old exterior doors -	\$15,000
4	High School: Repair exterior walls to room 240 -	\$15,000
5	High School: Repair and replace Tech Infrastructure -	\$15,200
6	High School: Repair and replace interior corridor doors -	\$13,000
	Total:	\$106,250

Project 1: Energy management system – Center School: This project has twice previously been proposed for funding to the Capital Planning Committee. Over the past two planning cycles in which this has been proposed, our committee has been able to discern from the building superintendent that this project is not an energy reducing justified project, but was repeatedly proposed to standardize the only non-conforming school energy management system into the same system used by the rest of the school facilities. This integration of systems for convenience of oversight rather than true energy savings was not scored high in our prior evaluations, and we are surprised that this request has reached the top of what is clearly a highly prioritized list. Absent an updated payback justification, our committee cannot endorse this recommended expenditure.

Project 2: Update four blower motor controls – Center School: This is a newly identified need to our committee. Unaware of the prior need for this upgrade, our committee would again ask for the payback justification of energy savings for this project but otherwise cannot comment on this project.

Project 3: Replacing 30 year old exterior doors – Williams Middle School: Two years ago (Fiscal Year 2005), the town appropriated \$25,000 for the replacement of exterior doors to Williams School. Although a report was never issued by the school department, we assume that the appropriated money was spent as designated. With the confirmation that this project represents the replacement of ADDITIONAL doors to those replaced in FY05, the Capital Planning Committee would support the expenditure of funds to complete the replacement of the Williams School exterior doors. Such confirmation should be sought by the Select Board.

Project 4: Repair exterior walls to room 240 – High School: Last year the School department proposed the expenditure of \$15,000 for an engineering study (structural evaluation) of the wall. The committee determined that we could not fund “studies”, and therefore declined to recommend funding of this proposal. If an engineering review has indeed been completed and a formal proposal for repairs has been received, the capital planning committee endorses such an expense. However, we urge the Select Board to assure that this appropriation will complete the required repairs.

Project 5: Repair and replace Tech Infrastructure – High School: In 2003 the town appropriated \$45,000 for the High School for improvements to the technology infrastructure – specifically for installing broadband communications systems. A report on that appropriation was never issued. Prior to endorsing this request for \$15,200 the capital planning committee would request more information on what would be purchased for this money, as well as a report on the prior expenditures.

Project 6: Repair and replace interior corridor doors – High School: This is the first time this request for interior doors in the high school has come before the capital planning committee. We are surprised that this project is now considered among the highest priority projects within the school department given this lack of prior identification. Therefore, given this lack of prior identification, and the list of higher priority safety, and non-energy related school department projects, the committee cannot endorse this project for appropriation.

Finally, the committee has observed that this list of items being proposed for appropriation has highlighted the fact that there does not appear to be a coherent capital strategy for the school department. Several of the projects that were identified last year as “critical items” are not on the list. Of these six items, one (Project 1) has been rejected for funding twice by the Capital Planning Committee, two (Projects 2 and 6) are newly identified, two (Projects 3 and 5) appear to be supplemental to prior appropriations, and one project (Project 4) may need further definition.

To be certain, our committee believes that every proposed expenditure for the fall, 2005 Special Town meeting is likely justifiable. However, we question whether this list, and specifically the list of six capital projects we reviewed, represents the highest priority items for the first \$106,250 in deferred maintenance items within the school facilities. Our list of possible higher priority capital items includes (but is in no way limited to): completing the repairs to sidewalks around Williams School (a safety item), Center School carpet replacements, Center school outside trim painting (maintenance), or replacing the Glenbrook School temporary walls. Each of these projects were considered high priority during prior review by our committee but were prioritized just below the “available funds” level of projects. Put more succinctly, the list of proposed appropriations at the fall, 2005 Special Town Meeting will have minimum impact in reducing the list totaling \$1,473,000 in “deferred capital” school department related expenditures that we presented to your committees prior to the May, 2005 annual meeting appropriations.

For the Capital Planning Committee,

Mark P. Gold – Chairman

CC: Finance Committee
Robin Crosbie – Town Manager