

Town of North Yarmouth Capital Improvement Program

Capital Improvement Program

The purpose of this program is to develop an understanding of the importance of capital improvement programming and to provide the Town with a framework for making the best use of scarce financial resources in highly uncertain times.

What is Capital Improvement Programming?

It is a multi-year scheduling of public physical improvements, based on studies of available fiscal resources and the need for specific improvements to be constructed in the future. Although a long term program does not commit the Town to a particular expenditure in a particular year, it provides an identifiable framework for informed decision-making.

How is the Capital Improvement Program Developed?

The CIP is updated annually (beginning in January) as part of the Town's regular budget process. After departments submit their CIP requests to the Town Manager in early February, they review and evaluate the proposed projects based on the Manager's service desires, other town infrastructure needs, the financial capacity of the town, and the impact the projects will create on the Town's operating budget.

Once the projects are evaluated, the Manager recommends to the Select Board and the Budget Committee the selection and timing of capital projects into future fiscal years. First-year projects are incorporated into the Town Manager's recommended annual operating budget. The Select Board and Budget Committee are also presented the future, unappropriated, programming years for their consideration, review, and endorsement so staff can proceed with planning and evaluation of potential capital projects.

What is the importance of Capital Improvement Programming?

The Capital Improvement Program, as a timetable for accomplishing needed improvements on a scheduled basis, is one of the most important documents considered by the Select Board. It is important because it has a major impact on the allocation of fiscal resources, and it contributes to setting Town expenditures for many years to come. When the Program is adopted and fully utilized, it ensures that needed facilities are provided within the Town's financial capability. The Program's purposes are to:

1. Provide a complete picture of the Town's major development needs;
2. Establish fiscal priorities for and between various projects;
3. Schedule major projects so as to reduce fluctuations in the tax rate;
4. Balance the use of funding sources in the most beneficial manner;
5. Discourage piecemeal improvements and duplication of expenditures;
6. Coordinate the activities of various Town departments;
7. Assist in implementing recommendations of the Town's Comprehensive Program;
8. Inform the taxpayers of anticipated future improvements; and,
9. Arrange opportunities for the public to offer comments on the Program.

What is a Capital Improvement?

A common definition of a capital improvement includes new or expanded physical facilities that are relatively large, expensive and permanent. It is a major fiscal expenditure which is made infrequently or which is not-recurring and includes one or more of the following:

1. Acquisition of land;
2. Construction or expansion of a public facility, street, or utility;
3. Non-recurring rehabilitation of an asset provided the cost is more than \$10,000 and extends the useful life of the asset;
4. Design or Programming related to an individual project; or,
5. Any item or piece of equipment, that will be bonded or budgeted in more than one fiscal year.

Methods of Financing

Capital Improvement Program projects are funded from a variety of sources. These include: General Fund; Bonds or Leases; and Federal/State Grants.

General Fund - The most commonly used method of financing capital projects is through the use of the General Fund. The General Fund includes the money raised by the local property tax for a given year. When a project is funded with General Fund revenues, its entire cost is paid off within the year. The intent is to budget annually a certain amount from the General Fund to address Town priorities. If the Town has the financial capacity to pay for a project in a given year, the cost to the taxpayer will generally be less than if bonded because there are no interest payments to be made. However, it does have the effect of lumping expenditures into one year, thereby giving a peak tax loading.

General Obligation Bonds - Bonds are used to finance major municipal capital projects. These are issued for a period of time generally extending from ten to twenty years during which time principal and interest payments are made. They are secured by the raising of property taxes. The time payment has the advantage of allowing the costs to be amortized over the life of the project and of allowing taxpayers to pay a smaller amount of the project's cost at a time. However, they do commit the Town's resources over a long period of time and decrease the flexibility of how yearly revenues can be utilized. The Town's bonding capacity is a limited resource. All projects, which are to be bonded should meet minimum eligibility criteria and must have a life span at least equal to the bond life.

Grants - One source of grants is from other levels of government, for example, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Maine Department of Health and Human Services, U.S. Housing and Urban Development, Maine Department of Environmental Services, and the Department of Transportation. Generally, these Federal and State sources provide an outright grant or matching funds to go with locally raised funds. Deciding on which method of financing should be selected for a given project is dependent on a number of factors. These include the cost of the project, its useful life, the eligibility of the project to receive funds from other than local taxes, long-term and short-term financial obligations of the Town and a project's relative priority in terms of implementation. The Capital Improvement Program seeks to maximize the potential benefits from all revenue sources.