



Town of Nantucket

Capital Program Committee

September 7, 2023 Minutes

Called to order at 1:00 p.m. and audio/visual announcements made by Chair Welch.

Staff:	Susan Carmel, Assistant Finance Director
Attending Members:	Stephen Welch - <i>Chair</i> , Peter (PJ) Kaizer – <i>Vice Chair</i> , Howard Matz, Brooke Mohr – Select Board Representative, Barry Rector, NP&EDC Representative, Jill Vieth, Finance Committee Representative
Absent Members:	Christy Kickham – <i>Secretary</i> ,
Documents Used:	Department Capital Request spreadsheet

I. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion:	Motion to Approve, as submitted. (made by: Vieth)
Roll-Call Vote:	Carried 6:0//Welch, Mohr, Matz, Rector, Kaizer, Vieth (Aye)

II. PUBLIC COMMENT

Welch called for public comment. (None)

III. FY25 CAPITAL REQUESTS AND OUT-YEAR DISCUSSION: NATURAL RESOURCES & SCHOOL DEPARTMENT

Discussion:	Welch - Discussion focused on Fiscal Year (FY) '25 with a total of five capital requests. - The expected process involves committee members having already reviewed the detailed information provided on each request before the meeting. - The primary activity during the meeting is for members to ask questions about the requests to clarify and finalize understanding. Jeff Carlson, Natural Resources Director, provided a brief overview of each of the requests as outlined below: - The first request discussed is the Folgers Marsh Bridge Project. - The project involves the culvert next to the Life-saving Museum. This culvert connects a creek system from Nantucket Harbor to the marsh across the way. - The road by the culvert is located below flood elevations, not accounting for potential sea level rise. - There is a potential isolation risk if the area were to get flooded or washed out, particularly affecting the areas in the north, which have previously experienced road loss during storms. - This project is addressed in both the Hazard Mitigation Plan and the Coastal Resiliency Plan. - The goal is to raise the area out of the flood zone and enhance the flow of floodwaters from the northern creeks to the marsh side, thereby maintaining and restoring the saltwater meadow and supporting a more natural ecosystem. - The second capital request discussed is the Strategic Retreat and Relocation Program. - This program is part of the Coastal Resiliency Plan. - It aims to develop strategies not only for the town but also for private homeowners. - The program is designed to facilitate the process for residents to retreat and relocate from areas vulnerable to erosion and flooding. - A key objective is to streamline permitting processes to assist homeowners during this transition. - The program intends to provide tools to make the relocation process as easy as possible for those leaving areas they are attached to due to increasing risks. - There are no new projects in the Hazard Mitigation plan this year. - The Madaket/Long Pond Hardening projects have been postponed. - The delay is to synchronize these projects with upcoming discussions on potential sewer and other resiliency measures for the Madaket area.
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- It was deemed prudent to wait until these related projects are further along in the conceptual or design phase before proceeding with the hardening projects, to ensure better integration and effectiveness.
- The third request is for updating Nantucket's Climate Action Plan.
- The update is in sync with the Commonwealth's Climate Action Plan and the State Hazard Mitigation Plan.
- While Nantucket already has an active Hazard Mitigation Plan, this update focuses on the complementary aspects of climate action.
- The plan aims to adapt current practices to meet the Commonwealth's 2050 environmental targets, which include reducing greenhouse gas emissions, increasing energy efficiencies, and promoting electric fields.
- The plan will be developed through a sustainability lens, outlining specific targets and programs to guide the community towards these environmental goals.
- The fourth request concerns the development of an Environmental Adjustment Policy.
- Initially referred to as "environmental justice," which aligns with state and federal nomenclature.
- The aim is to enhance engagement and integration of Nantucket's six environmental justice communities in planning and project development.
- The program is designed to specifically address the resiliency needs of these communities.
- This initiative spins out of the town's original Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) efforts.
- There is an increasing requirement for an environmental justice component in state and federal grant applications. Lack of a formal program in this area is becoming a hindrance in securing funding.
- Establishing this policy would not only meet grant requirements but also position Nantucket to better compete for and utilize available grants, thereby enhancing community resiliency and inclusion.
- The fifth request is for the Baseline Environmental Data Program, commonly referred to as the data collection program.
- Scope of Data Collection:
 - o Water Quality Monitoring: Assessing the quality of water in various environments.
 - o Eelgrass-Based Scallop Assessments: Evaluating scallop populations and health in relation to eelgrass habitats.
 - o Groundwater Monitoring: Tracking the quality and levels of groundwater.
 - o Stormwater Monitoring: Analyzing stormwater to manage its impact on the environment.
- Purpose of Data Collection:
 - o Project Design: Utilizing collected data to inform the design of environmental projects.
 - o Evaluation of Strategies: Assessing the effectiveness of management strategies and project developments post-implementation.
- Ongoing Requirement: Continual data collection is essential for staying competitive and effective in environmental project development and adaptation.

Welch

Regarding the data handling and meeting efficiency for the Capital Program Committee:

- All data related to the requests are compiled into a database.
- The database serves as a resource for the Capital Program Committee, Finance Committee, Select Board Members, and Department Heads.
- Allows these stakeholders to review the detailed information provided on each project.
- With the provided data, the committee can quickly move to asking pertinent questions, proceeding topic by topic to ensure thorough discussion and clarification.

Carlson provided an overview and responded to questions related to each request, as follows:

Strategic Retreat and Rehabilitation programs

- o Folgers Marsh experienced flooding during the same storm that washed out Polpis Road at Sesachacha Pond.

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- Impact of Flooding: The flooding caused the area north of Folgers Marsh to be geographically isolated for several hours due to storm damage.
- Concerns About Accessibility: There is a significant concern about the inability to access the area during such events, especially in emergencies.
- Long-Term Flooding Risks:
- Increasing Frequency: With sea level rise projections, flooding and overtopping in the area are expected to become more frequent.
- Infrastructure Deterioration: The culvert beneath the road is showing signs of wear and tear and is starting to fail. Visible signs include a depression in the roadway above the culvert where it has begun to crack.
- Maintenance and Project Urgency:
- Immediate Maintenance Needs: The culvert requires maintenance soon to prevent further deterioration.
- Cost Considerations: Costs for repairs and maintenance are escalating, making it prudent to address this project sooner rather than later to avoid higher expenses in the future.
- Estimation of Costs: It was suggested that replacing the culvert, including design, permitting, and installation, would cost about 75% of the full project amount.
- Urgency of Replacement: There is a noticeable urgency to replace the culvert proactively due to visible signs of deterioration.
- Potential Failure Timing: While the exact timing of complete failure is uncertain, the signs indicate it could be soon.
- Questioning Short-Term Fixes: Debated whether a temporary fix would be cost-effective given the rapid changes and increasing flood risks.
- Long-Term Financial Implications: It's argued that putting a temporary fix (a "bandage") might prolong the project unnecessarily and incur higher costs in the long run due to inflation and escalating project costs.
- Further Actions:
- Need for Accurate Cost Estimate: A commitment was made to obtain and submit a more accurate cost estimate for the immediate repairs.
- Discussion with DPW: Plans to discuss further with the Department of Public Works to assess their capability and viewpoint on undertaking the immediate repairs.
- Consultation with Transportation Officials: Discussed the project with Mike Burns regarding potential funding under Transportation Improvement Programs.
- Current Relevance: To date, no suitable grant opportunities through transportation programs have emerged, but they remain vigilant for any that might arise.
- Cultural and Conservation Significance: Explored funding options related to the preservation of access to the Life-Saving Museum.
- Partnerships with Local Organizations: Engaged with local stakeholders like the Conservation Foundation and Egan Maritime, owners of significant local properties, to support the project.
- Community Engagement: Initial collaboration with private homeowners on Fulling Mill Road for project scoping and design, although differing project objectives led to a dissolution of this particular partnership.
- Continual Search for Opportunities: Constantly reviewing potential grant opportunities as they come through, ready to explore any feasible options to support the project.

Climate Action Planning

- Acknowledgement of Overlap: There is recognized overlap among various plans like the Climate Action Plan, Open Space Plan, Resiliency Plan, and Master Plan.
- Purpose of Climate Action Plan: It aims to fill necessary gaps and act as a central hub that integrates aspects of these overlapping plans.

- Project Development Synergy: When developing projects identified through plans like the Coastal Resiliency Plan, elements from the Climate Action Plan are considered to ensure comprehensive environmental management.
- Transportation and Resource Planning: The Climate Action Plan also contributes to transportation and resource use planning, aligning with state goals.
- Greenhouse Gas Emission Goals: Currently, Nantucket lacks formally adopted greenhouse gas emission goals, which are under consideration and development to match state objectives.
- Nantucket's geographic and community characteristics necessitate tailored approaches compared to mainland communities.
- Community-wide Relevance: The plan is intended for all of Nantucket, not just municipal operations.
- It is designed to provide a framework for both public sectors and private citizens.
- The plan may include both regulatory requirements and voluntary compliance options.
- Lead by Example: The town aims to demonstrate environmental leadership by adopting and promoting sustainable practices, encouraging broader community participation in these efforts.

Environmental Justice Assessment and Policy Development

- Environmental Justice Communities: Discussed the identification and connectivity of Nantucket's six Environmental Justice communities, defined primarily through census blocks based on the 2020 census.
- Criteria for Identification: These communities are identified based on minority population percentages, household income, and language isolation (English as a second language).
- Inclusion in State Criteria: Environmental justice has become a part of the state's criteria for evaluating projects, affecting scoring and funding opportunities.
- Digital Project Impact: Projects like the Folgers Marsh Bridge could miss out on funding if they don't incorporate environmental justice components.
- State Policies: Discussed the state's environmental justice policy, which includes broad mandates for local agencies to identify and engage with these communities but provides limited guidance on implementation.
- Local Struggles: Highlighted local difficulties in developing strategies to meet state mandates, especially in engaging vulnerable communities effectively.
- Covid Outreach Experiences: Shared insights from struggles during Covid outreach, emphasizing the need for improved communication and resource access in these communities.
- Cultural and Language Considerations: Issues like fishing regulations only being available in English, highlighting the need for multilingual resources.
- Engagement Strategies: Discussed the need for better strategies to involve these communities, potentially through local organizations like churches.
- Developing Effective Strategies: The importance of creating effective local strategies tailored to Nantucket's unique characteristics and community needs.
- Goal of Inclusion: The desire to not only comply with state requirements for better grant scoring but to genuinely integrate and support these communities.
- Ambition for Improvement: Expressed a hope to develop better engagement strategies and policies that are effective and inclusive, acknowledging the challenges but emphasizing the importance of community participation in environmental justice.
- Aiming for Cultural Change: The discussion emphasized the goal of not just achieving points on grant applications but driving a cultural change within the community and local government operations.
- Incentivizing Strategic Planning: Discussed the approach of encouraging department heads to incorporate environmental justice into the Capital Improvement Program, where proactive planning is rewarded in the evaluation process.

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- Harbor Plan as a Model: The Harbor Plan was highlighted as a key example where integration of environmental justice can make a significant impact. It's an area used widely by the community for various activities like fishing, swimming, and boating.
- Engagement of Underrepresented Communities: There's a recognized need to better engage communities from environmental justice areas in decision-making processes related to the Harbor and other communal resources.
- Knowledge and Participation Gaps: Discussed finding where knowledge gaps exist for residents using local resources and what additional activities or facilities they might desire.
- Challenges in Post-Plan Implementation: Noted the difficulties that arise when affected communities are not involved from the beginning of the planning process, often leading to less successful program implementations.
- Cultural Considerations and Environmental Impact:
- Understanding Cultural Practices: Acknowledged the diverse cultural practices of Nantucket's residents, particularly those from different parts of the world, and the importance of integrating this understanding into environmental and public health strategies.
- Educational Outreach: Stressed the importance of educating all community members about their environmental impacts, such as the consequences of improper disposal of chemicals and paints, especially for those living in the harbor watershed.
- Long-Term Community Engagement: Discussed the potential for ongoing engagement to not only address immediate project concerns but also to establish lasting relationships that facilitate broader participation in town programs.
- Enhancing Service Distribution: Highlighted the need to improve how services and programs are delivered to areas that historically may not have received equitable levels of support, thereby enhancing overall community resilience and integration.
- Recreational Disparities: Acknowledged the potential disparities in recreational access and preferences among different communities, which could be addressed as part of environmental justice initiatives.
- Indoor and Outdoor Recreation: Consideration of both indoor and outdoor recreational needs, ensuring that the right type of facilities are provided based on community demand.
- Broader Applicability: The discussion emphasized the potential for environmental justice considerations to be woven into various town initiatives beyond direct environmental interaction, such as open space and recreational planning.
- Community-Centric Planning: Highlighted the importance of aligning recreational facilities with the actual interests and needs of the community, such as deciding between additional hockey rinks or baseball fields based on real demand.
- Importance of Community Input: Discussed the critical role of community feedback in determining the types of recreational facilities that should be prioritized.
- Public Transportation Access: Considered the accessibility of recreational areas, particularly the availability of public transportation to these sites.
- Land Bank Cooperation: Mentioned ongoing discussions with the land bank regarding the acquisition and development of properties for parks and recreational opportunities, ensuring these developments make sense for the community's needs.
- Engagement and Network Building: The ultimate goal is to foster strong relationships with communities, particularly those historically underrepresented, to ensure they are actively involved in planning processes that affect their recreational opportunities.

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- Universal Application of Strategies: Expressed hope that strategies developed through environmental justice efforts could be universally applied, enhancing engagement and meeting diverse community needs effectively.

Mohr

- Recognized the heightened trust barriers that governmental entities face when engaging with communities, especially those whose cultural heritage may involve a skeptical view of government due to experiences in their countries of origin.
- Emphasized the need for government to acknowledge that individuals from diverse backgrounds may not see themselves as having a place within the governmental system.
- Discussed the importance of reaching out to communities in familiar settings, such as through faith communities and other gathering places.
- Suggested that traditional government methods might need to adapt to more community-oriented organizing to effectively engage these groups.
- Proposed the creation of a temporary government committee focused specifically on engaging with and understanding the needs of environmental justice communities.
- Highlighted the role of faith and other community groups in facilitating communication and trust.
- Acknowledged improvements in multilingual communication within town government, particularly in response to the pandemic.
- Cited an example of a successful outreach effort involving multilingual informational cards with QR codes distributed in food markets, which resulted in a higher response rate from multilingual community members.
- Emphasized the need for ongoing evaluation of engagement strategies to determine effectiveness and make necessary adjustments.
- Suggested that the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) office could play a significant role in these efforts, aiding in strategy development and implementation.

Rector

- Mentioned the potential to draw on existing environmental justice work from transportation planning, which has been ongoing for 10-12 years, possibly providing a useful starting point or framework.
- Highlighted recent successes in improving multilingual communication capabilities within the new Communications Department, which could serve as a model for broader outreach efforts.
- Stressed the need for the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) office to take a central role in coordinating environmental justice initiatives across various sectors such as housing, transportation, and natural resources.
- Emphasized the importance of the DEI office in preventing duplication of efforts and ensuring that environmental justice strategies are integrated efficiently across different areas.
- Expressed concerns about potential inefficiencies in how resources are currently allocated for environmental justice initiatives without centralized coordination.
- Suggested that while individual departments like Natural Resources may still require funding for specific projects, a more unified approach led by the DEI office could enhance overall effectiveness.
- Advocated for better coordination of environmental justice efforts through the DEI office to streamline processes and maximize the impact of initiatives.
- Recognized the necessity of tailoring environmental justice efforts to the unique challenges of different sectors such as natural resources, transportation, and housing.
- Discussed the urgency of enhancing the role of the DEI office to lead and unify environmental justice strategies to avoid scattered efforts and ensure a cohesive approach.

Carlson

- Departmental Realignment: The newly established sustainability office was integrated into the Natural Resources Department to facilitate its initial operations and focus on environmental goals.
- One of the primary objectives of the sustainability office is to serve as a central hub, coordinating efforts across various departments.

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- Before submitting the proposal, it was vetted through key departments including Health and Human Services and the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) office.
- Specific discussions with Kamal from the DEI office ensured alignment and acknowledgment of current bandwidth limitations, leading to Natural Resources taking the lead on this initiative initially.
- Efforts were made to ensure that the policy would not be confined to the Natural Resources box but would involve input and collaboration from various departments.
- There was a consensus on the necessity of addressing environmental justice comprehensively, involving all relevant stakeholders from the beginning.
- Natural Resources was selected to spearhead the initial stages of the project due to the strategic fit with the sustainability goals.
- Plans are in place for leadership and responsibility to transition to other key players like Jericho, Kamal, and potentially new hires in relevant positions as the project progresses.
- A team comprising individuals from various departments including PLUS (Planning and Land Use Services) and energy concerns was formed to ensure a multi-disciplinary approach.
- The initiative was timed and organized around the availability and capacity of the various departments to take on such a comprehensive project.
- Natural Resources took on the responsibility for the early budget planning and town meeting discussions to set the groundwork.
- As the project receives funding and moves forward, it is planned that a more diverse group of department representatives will take over to reflect the wide-ranging impact and needs of the initiative.
- On the integration of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) principles with sustainability efforts, particularly focusing on environmental justice within town initiative, it is one of the broadest frameworks within the town, influencing all town programs and initiatives.
- Sustainability and DEI are closely linked, both having significant impact across various town functions.
- Highlighted the importance of environmental justice, driven by state and federal goals and initiatives, particularly in relation to access and environmental resiliency.
- Emphasized that environmental justice is a crucial area that cannot be ignored or compartmentalized, necessitating active engagement and strategy development.
- Given the resource availability and expertise, the responsibility for leading the initial phases of environmental justice efforts was assigned to the sustainability section within the Natural Resources Department.
- This decision was based on the current staffing resources and expertise available, deemed most appropriate for initiating budget planning and strategic development for environmental justice.
- Discussed the potential for leadership roles to evolve as the initiative progresses, with an acknowledgment that while sustainability leads initially, DEI might ultimately take over.
- Despite the initial placement within sustainability, there is a strong collaborative approach with DEI and other departments. Kamal from the DEI office expressed support and a commitment to be involved throughout the process.
- The focus in the early stages is on understanding the costs, structuring the team, and defining the roles and contributions of various stakeholders.
- Acknowledged that while sustainability might start as the lead, the initiative's leadership is dynamic and could shift as the project matures and evolves.

Welch

- Clarification was sought on whether the available funds are dedicated specifically to environmental justice or if they are meant for broader social justice initiatives.
- The question was raised about the efficiency of dedicating funds specifically to environmental justice versus a broader social justice scope. It was noted that while the

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broader scope is important, the specific focus on environmental justice is crucial due to new state mandates and the specialized nature of the required initiatives.

- It was emphasized that the Natural Resources Department is not looking to develop a town-wide policy on environmental justice on its own. Instead, the focus is on how to incorporate environmental justice assessments and policies specifically within the projects and goals of the Natural Resources Department.
- The approach involves developing methodologies to assess and integrate environmental justice considerations specifically in natural resources projects, such as those related to social resiliency and hazard mitigation.
- Acknowledged the influence of state and national directives on the town's approach to environmental justice, highlighting the need to align local actions with broader guidelines.
- Described the initiative as compartmentalized and as an initial step towards integrating environmental justice into specific types of projects, with potential broader applications later.
- Discussed the need for professional expertise in developing appropriate assessment tools and policies for integrating environmental justice into natural resources projects.
- While the current focus is on natural resources, there is an understanding that environmental justice will eventually need to be integrated more broadly across various town departments and initiatives.

Carlson

- o It was noted that state and federal governments have defined certain programmatic areas within DEI, mandating specific initiatives like environmental justice as part of these broader frameworks.
- o There is a consensus on the need to develop these initiatives as part of broader social programs that ensure fair and equal access for all community groups across the island.
- o While acknowledging the need for broad engagement, the discussion highlighted that the Natural Resources Department's primary focus is on environmental justice due to its direct connection to managing natural resources.
- o The Natural Resources Department is particularly involved with the environmental justice initiative due to its responsibilities in managing the island's natural resources.
- o The department's involvement is framed as contributing to a specific aspect of the broader DEI and environmental justice objectives mandated by higher government levels.

Mohr

- It was highlighted that the Natural Resources Department is focusing on environmental justice partly because the lack of initiatives in this area is resulting in lost grant opportunities. This creates a practical impetus to address environmental justice to secure funding.
- The department's work on environmental justice is seen as developing a model that can potentially be applied to other areas on the island, starting with the most urgent need.
- The broader national context of environmental justice was discussed, emphasizing its purpose to address historical injustices where resources were inequitably allocated, often at the expense of marginalized communities.
- The situation on Nantucket was contrasted with more pronounced historical injustices in larger cities like Boston, where infrastructure projects disproportionately impacted communities of color.
- The discussion also covered how to assess and ensure that resources on Nantucket are allocated fairly among different areas of the island, such as Polpis and Mid Island, in accordance with governmental standards of need.
- There's a focused effort to evaluate whether funds are being distributed equitably, particularly to those who are considered by government standards to be struggling more than others.

Welch

- The conversation noted that the Natural Resources Department is the starting point for environmental justice efforts, tasked with examining how principles of equity can be applied within their specific operational context.
- Emphasized a bottom-up strategy where individual departments first develop their own plans tailored to their unique responsibilities and needs.
- Future steps could involve a global review of these departmental plans by a working group or the Select Board to integrate efforts across the town.
- It was suggested that a hybrid model might be adopted where certain specialized aspects remain decentralized within specific departments, while overarching coordination and administration could be centralized, possibly under the DEI office.
- Highlighted the potential role of the Communications Department as a central repository for tracking and measuring the success of various initiatives, ensuring that data from different departments are collected and analyzed systematically.
- The importance of not losing sight of what other departments have achieved was noted, suggesting that learning from past successful initiatives could inform new strategies.
- The need for robust communication between departments to share insights and strategies was underscored, ensuring that efforts are aligned and synergistic.
- Recognized that specialty consultants might be necessary for addressing specific departmental needs, emphasizing the specialized nature of some aspects of environmental justice.
- Acknowledged that the approach to integrating environmental justice into town governance will likely evolve, requiring flexibility and adaptation as new developments and insights emerge.
- While it's anticipated that newer departments like Communications might play a significant role initially, the long-term structure and leadership of these initiatives are expected to be dynamic and responsive to the town's evolving needs.

**Carlson continued to respond to questions, regarding the following:
Baseline Environmental Data Program**

- o "Baseline" refers to the collection of fundamental environmental data necessary to inform management recommendations and programs. It represents the essential data required to understand ongoing environmental conditions.
- o Environmental data must be collected continuously because environmental conditions are dynamic and can change significantly over time.
- o Continuous data collection is crucial to maintaining the statistical significance of the data and ensuring that it remains relevant for effective environmental management.
- o The department commits to collecting certain types of environmental data annually as part of its baseline data program. This routine monitoring is crucial to keep track of changes and trends in the environment.
- o The baseline data serves as a foundation for any specialized investigations or monitoring that might be necessary for specific projects or to address particular environmental concerns.
- o The goal is to maintain a comprehensive understanding of the environmental systems across the island, ensuring that management decisions are well-informed by current and accurate data.
- o While baseline data provides the core annual metrics, the department is prepared to conduct additional research or expand monitoring to new areas as specific projects or needs arise.
- o Initially, the program relied on gifts and donations for funding its activities.
- o As the need for consistent and reliable data collection reached a critical mass, the department recognized the necessity to secure stable funding.
- o The need for substantial funding was discussed with Libby Gibson, the Town Manager, and Brian, presumably another key town official. The discussions were aimed at securing a significant budget allocation to ensure the continuity and reliability of the environmental data collection.
- o The town leadership agreed on the importance of the program, supporting the request for increased funding.

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- The baseline data program is seen as vital for connecting people to their natural resources and helping them understand the environmental dynamics of their community.
- The program is likened to a foundational educational tool, similar to a science fair project, that helps explain and demonstrate environmental changes and impacts in an accessible manner.
- Emphasizes the importance of being honest about the outcomes of various initiatives—acknowledging both successes and failures.
- The continuous collection of data allows for the evaluation of long-term environmental trends and the effectiveness of different management strategies.
- With solid baseline data, the department can make well-informed decisions that are backed by empirical evidence, enhancing the effectiveness and accountability of environmental management.
- The data provides a basis for measuring the results of environmental policies and practices, enabling adjustments based on actual outcomes rather than assumptions.
- While other groups like the Land Council conduct water quality monitoring, they focus on different water bodies, such as Tom Nevers Pond, ensuring that there is no overlap with the department's monitoring, which focuses on harbors.
- Specific mention was made of groundwater sampling related to the sewage treatment facility, which assists in regulatory compliance and supports municipal facilities.
- Initial projects such as the eelgrass, bay scallop, and whelk surveys were initially funded as a proof of concept by external sources such as the Great Harbor Yacht Club Foundation. Subsequent funding was secured through state appropriations and private donors.
- There is an ongoing effort to expand these surveys to additional areas like Madaket Harbor to gain a comprehensive understanding of various environmental indicators.
- The data collected provides crucial information on the health of the harbor, tracking changes in scallop populations and eelgrass coverage, which are vital for assessing the impact of environmental management strategies like wastewater, stormwater, and fertilizer regulations.
- There are areas where nutrient sampling within groundwater is not currently conducted by other entities, highlighting a gap that the department aims to fill to provide targeted data for localized environmental management.
- By collecting data yearly, the department can justify the costs of its programs and provide specific goals and objectives to smaller community groups, enabling more localized and effective environmental impact.

Welch

- It was clarified that for the data to maintain its value and relevance, it must be updated regularly, not just stored as a one-time study. This ongoing update is crucial for the data to be useful in making informed management decisions.
- Discussions highlighted that some environmental data projects were funded through external donations, while others were supported by the department's operating budget.
- Establishment of a Dedicated Funding Line: With the establishment of a specific budget line item for these activities, there has been an expansion of the data set collected, moving beyond what was previously done to a more comprehensive and detailed collection effort.
- The expansion of the data set not only increases the scope of environmental monitoring but also enhances the department's ability to conduct thorough analyses and develop more robust environmental policies.

Carlson

- Securing consistent funding for environmental projects is crucial as it enables the department to plan for long-term data collection and analysis.
- Stable funding allows for the hiring and retention of personnel who can assist with data processing and collection over extended periods, enhancing the continuity and consistency of the data gathered.

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- Maintaining sampling continuity is vital for minimizing variations in data quality that might occur due to different individuals conducting the surveys.
- Differences in data quality were noted depending on whether the survey is conducted by the department's shellfish biologist, another researcher, or external consultants, highlighting the need to standardize data collection methods.
- Locking in contracts for services over two to three years can lead to significant cost savings, particularly in times of inflation. This approach has proven economically beneficial, as exemplified by current contracts where inflation rates were higher than projected, resulting in unexpected savings.
- While acknowledging that costs may increase in subsequent contract periods due to inflation, the approach of securing multi-year contracts is still seen as beneficial for managing budget more effectively in the long term.
- Efforts are made to minimize the differences in data quality to ensure reliable and actionable environmental assessments.

Welch

- Highlighted that the costs associated with testing services provided by the department have become substantial, warranting closer scrutiny and detailed tracking.
- It is noted that the definition of a capital request typically starts at \$50,000.
- Suggests that breaking out expenses by department within the capital requests would enhance clarity and accountability.
- By itemizing expenses by department, it ensures transparency and holds each department accountable for their portion of the budget.
- Proposes that in future budget cycles, itemizing expenses such as \$50,000 for natural resources, sewer, and stormwater separately could be advantageous. This would not only clarify financial distributions but also allow each department to discuss and justify their specific financial needs and impacts.
- The recommendation aims to improve how financial information is processed by decision-makers, ensuring that each department's funding needs and expenditures are clear and justifiable.

Carlson

- The department has aimed to stabilize costs by locking in contracts for set periods. The \$500,000 budget was initially formulated by aggregating existing contracts or quotes, ensuring coverage for expected needs.
- A percentage of the budget is reserved as a contingency to handle unexpected needs, such as unforeseen environmental testing related to specific events like harmful algal blooms that occurred this year.
- The budgeted amount for the upcoming year (\$500,000) remains consistent with the current year's budget, suggesting a stable financial plan for ongoing environmental monitoring activities.
- The budget is currently deemed sufficient for the department's planned activities. It accommodates regular operations and allows for some unforeseen testing within the fiscal year.
- While the current budget is adequate, there is an acknowledgment that future requirements, as directed by town leadership for additional investigations or projects, may necessitate adjustments to the funding.
- Any significant project-specific testing that goes beyond the standard environmental monitoring would likely require additional funding, which would be accounted for separately within those specific project budgets.

Welch

- Participants are encouraged to review the RORI criteria closely when previewing requests.
- There's a strategic approach to placing projects that are more than three years out into the capital improvement program as placeholders. This helps maintain general awareness of potential future projects.
- While placeholders broadcast potential projects to the public and help with long-term planning, they also generate questions that may be premature for the department heads to answer due to the early stage of project conception.

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	- The discussion includes how the Natural Resources Department maintains a list of goals and objectives that inform their projects. These are contingent on ongoing plans, programs, and studies that are evolving. - As these plans mature, they help in developing a more refined list of capital requests. The department prefers to wait until they have a clearer understanding of their priorities before finalizing and submitting capital requests. - There's an emphasis on the importance of not being premature with capital requests to ensure that they genuinely reflect the department's needs and objectives once they are more fully understood. - The conversation also highlights the intention to keep other departments and stakeholders informed about the expectations and approaches to capital requests. - Emphasizes the importance of having backup details for any budget requests with a specific dollar value. - There's a standard policy and practice mentioned that involves linking detailed plans and programs relevant to the budget requests. Carlson Discussed the scheduling and coordination of various infrastructure projects, with specific attention to integration with other town plans and considerations for staffing and resource management. - Detailed communication with relevant department heads (e.g., discussing sewerage timelines and bike path planning) ensures that the projects are well-coordinated with broader town initiatives. - New or updated plans such as the Coast Resiliency Plan and the upcoming Harbor Plan significantly influence project planning. There is a conscious effort to ensure that the department has the necessary staffing and resources to manage and execute the projects effectively.
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IV. GREEN SHEET / COMMITTEE REPORTS

Discussion:	Welch - Green sheets serve as a formalized method for liaisons from the Select Board to request direct communication on specific topics of interest or concern. - The introduction of a form as part of the green sheet process was highlighted as a best practice. This form helps document requests or issues systematically, ensuring they are effectively communicated and tracked. Once completed, the form can be forwarded or brought to the relevant meeting, serving as a documented reminder and ensuring that all parties are updated accordingly.
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V. GOOD OF THE ORDER

Discussion:	Welch - The "Good of the Order" section on a meeting agenda is designed to provide a flexible space for participants to offer feedback or suggestions about the meeting's process.
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VI. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Regular Meeting: September 14, 2023, at 1:00pm

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Motion:	Motion to adjourn at 2:24. (made by: Vieth) (seconded)
Roll-Call Vote:	Carried 6:0//Welch, Mohr, Kaizer, Matz, Rector, Vieth (Aye)

Submitted by: Elaina Cano