HARDWICK, MA
TOWARDS A CAPITAL PLAN
May, 2015

UMass Center for Economic Development
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Introduction

Overview:
The Town of Hardwick acquired the services of the University of Massachusetts Center for Economic Development (CED) to assist in the Town’s initial capital planning efforts. The Town recognizes the benefit of capital planning as a means of forecasting capital needs, minimizing emergency and unexpected expenses, and ultimately leveling out costs to local taxpayers. The CED’s role in this process was gathering information and making recommendations about capital needs expected in the next five years, with a particular focus on facilities-based capital needs. This focus was identified because the Town is in the position of having to make decisions regarding the functional use of its facilities and their ability to accommodate the functional needs of various town departments and services. How the facilities are used and how town services are organized within them has bearing on the capital improvements that the Town will need to plan for and finance.

For the purposes of this report and for the Town’s official capital planning purposes, a capital improvement is qualified as any tangible development or purchase of town-owned property costing $20,000 or more and having a lifespan of five years or more. Operational budgets and expenses, and administrative structure are NOT considered capital improvements, though they may affect capital improvement decisions. The Town will plan for capital needs on an annual basis: extending their scope one year further into the future as each year passes.

Lastly, regardless of the findings and recommendations contained within this report, the Town maintains all final control and decision-making related to its capital plans and expenditures. The CED has served as an objective party and neutral facilitator of discussion, but ultimately the Town and townspeople should be responsible for doing what is best for the community.

Goals and Objectives:

- Conduct interviews with appropriate Town department and service representatives to create an inventory of capital improvement needs expected within the next 5 years.
- Hold a public workshop to engage town residents and gather input on improvement options, focusing on facilities-based capital improvement options.
  - Gain a sense of the community’s preference regarding different organizational strategies and capital improvement options.
  - Identify the community’s priorities regarding the funding and progress of the various facilities’ capital improvement needs.
• Generate a set of recommendations for ongoing capital planning efforts and for moving forward with capital improvement decisions.
  ▪ Identify strategic capital planning recommendations that satisfy the needs of town departments and services, and satisfy the will of the public.
  ▪ Suggest specific recommendations for managing the capital needs of each facility and the service(s)/department(s) contained within it.

Methodology:

The CED employed various methods for this project, including gathering material about capital planning strategies and precedents, and conducting interviews with town department and service representatives. In the very early phase and throughout the remainder of its work in Hardwick, the CED consulted the Massachusetts Department of Revenue’s (DOR) Manual, *Developing a Capital Improvements Program*, and various documents from the DOR’s Division of Local Services. These documents provide the structural, procedural, and legal foundations of municipal finance management and planning, and enabled the CED to approach capital planning in Hardwick with the necessary practical knowledge of municipal finance.

Armed with a thorough understanding of municipal capital planning and finance management, the CED began conducting interviews to create an inventory of capital needs for the next five years. These interviews were conducted with various representatives from the Town’s departments and services, including: the Police Department, the Fire Department, the Regional School District, the Water Pollution Control Facility/Sewer Enterprise, the Hardwick Rescue Squad, the Youth Center and Commission, the Senior Center and Council on Aging, the Local Food Pantry, the Recycling Center, the Highway Department, the Gilbertville Public Library, and representatives of the Page Agricultural Building. Additional town departments were invited to give interviews but were unable to do so for assorted reasons. The results of the interviews are located in the following section: *Summary of Facilities and Services Capital Needs*. However, not all of the interviews conducted contributed to the main content of this report; some interviews revealed that capital improvements were not expected within the five-year timeline, and some interviews were conducted with services that are not Town-owned and thus not the financial responsibility of the Town at this time.

In addition to the interviews with Town representatives, the CED conducted interviews with experts and key stakeholders related to Hardwick’s capital planning needs. The interviewees included State Senator Anne Gobi, Steven Bonavita from the United States Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) local Rural Development Agency office, and Andrew Loew from the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission. The interview with Representative Gobi served to make her aware of Hardwick’s needs and gather information about pending and upcoming acts of
legislation that may help with the Town’s capital improvement needs. Respectively, Steven Bonavita and Andrew Loew were interviewed about the Rural Development Agency’s incentives and Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) provisions, with the goal of identifying external funding opportunities for capital improvement projects. It was identified through the interview with Steven Bonavita that the Rural Development Agency has grant and loan opportunities for public facilities projects and that many of Hardwick’s capital needs are eligible for these grants and loans. As for the CDBG program, the eligible projects in Hardwick are more limited, but there are opportunities to apply for and utilize CDBG money to meet certain capital improvement needs. Details about where the Rural Development Agency and CDBG programs can be applied, as well as other external funding opportunities are included in the following section.

The final method employed by the CED was the use of a public workshop held in collaboration with the Massachusetts Office of Public Collaboration to engage community members in the capital planning process and gather feedback about the direction the Town should take on facilities-based capital improvement needs. Public participation is essential to any planning process, and was an integral part of the formulation of the CED’s recommendations. Though the workshop, the Town and CED were able to update community members on progress since last year’s workshop, provide information about more recent capital planning efforts, and maintain public involvement and support for Town planning efforts. This workshop was especially important because it plainly identified the numerous capital improvement needs of Town facilities, allowed participants to discuss and consider how or if the Town should meet those needs, and prepared them for when actual decisions need to be made about funding capital improvements. The CED believes that introducing large expenses and improvements and allowing the community to think about them and participate in the planning process will ultimately yield more support for necessary projects and reduce conflict and discord within the community. The results of the public workshop are discussed in the section: Summary of Public Workshop Results, with a more detailed compilation of the results found in Appendix A.
Summary of Facilities and Services Capital Needs

Richardson Municipal Building

The Richardson Municipal Building is Hardwick’s primary administration building. Its current uses include the Senior and Youth Centers, the local Food Pantry, municipal offices, Veterans’ Services, and the Police Department (note that the Police Department is included as a separate facility for the purposes of this study). The CED interviewed various representatives of the different functions within the Richardson Building, including Youth Commission Chairman Liz Reilly and Youth Center Coordinator Kim Wright, Town Administrator Sherry Patch, and Senior Center Coordinator Joyce Lam. It is clear from the interviews that the Senior and Youth Centers need more space for activities, and are willing to share a space. It was also established that the seniors and youth would benefit greatly from a community kitchen. The conclusion is that general capital needs for the Richardson Building revolve around making the space in the building more functional and efficient for the needs of the current uses (Police excluded).

Capital Needs:

- ADA compliance for all levels (Elevator and restrooms)
  Estimate: $721,000+\(^1\)
- Roof replacement
  Estimate: $115,000
- Energy upgrades, including new windows and furnace
  Estimate: $350,000+\(^1\)
- Parking lot resurfacing
  Estimate: $32,800
- Community Kitchen
  Estimate: Forthcoming

Options:

1. Do nothing, leave the Richardson Building and included functions as is.
   **Total Estimated Cost:** Unknown, high chance for unplanned, emergency expenses.

2. Make only essential building and site improvements: Roof replacement
   **Total Estimated Cost:** $115,000

3. Reconfigure space for more efficiency and better service, including relocating seniors and youth to a shared space on the top floor: ADA compliance, roof replacement, community kitchen
   **Total Estimated Cost:** $836,000 + Community Kitchen

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\(^1\) All figures contained within this report are estimates provided by reputable sources; however, some estimates are still forthcoming and final costs may be different.
4. Make all improvements necessary to keep the building in a state of good repair: ADA compliance, roof replacement, parking lot resurfacing, and energy upgrades

**Total Estimated Cost:** $1,218,800+

### Potential External Funding Sources:

- **USDA Rural Development Agency Community Facilities Direct Loan and Grant Program**

  Through this program, the United States Department of Agriculture Rural Development Agency can provide Hardwick with grants and direct loans for public facilities.

  - If applying for a grant, Hardwick qualifies for up to 35% of project costs up to $50,000. (*Note- Due to limited funding, amounts awarded are often less). Grants are recommended for smaller, immediate purchases such as equipment.

  - If applying for a direct loan, Hardwick would be able to finance facilities projects directly through Rural Development. The interest rate for these loans is approximately 3.75% for a 40-year term. The benefit of this financing option is that there are no commission or service fees in addition to the interest payments, and there is no penalty for pre-payment. This loan opportunity is recommended for larger expenses that need to be financed over a longer term.

- **USDA Rural Development Agency Community Facilities Guaranteed Loan Program**

  Rural Development also enables towns to access loans from private lenders by providing the lender with a loan guarantee if the town is otherwise unable to secure credit. Rural Development guarantees up to 90% of the eligible loss, and requires a one-time guarantee fee of 1% of the principal loan amount time the % of the guarantee. This is recommended for projects that cannot otherwise be financed through the Rural Development Direct Loan Program.

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**Police Department**

The Hardwick Police Department is located in the basement of the Richardson Municipal Building in a space that is readily acknowledged as inadequate for the department’s needs. The CED interviewed Police Chief James Ayotte, who indicated problems with safety and security, issues with flooding, and the lack of adequate space for personnel, equipment, and storage. The conclusion drawn is that there is a need for a new facility, and discussions about potential sites are underway at the time of this writing.

**Capital needs:**

- New facility
  
  Estimate: See Options

- Police Cruisers (2 yearly)
  
  Estimate: $30,000 ($15,000/each)
Options:

- Do nothing, continue to operate Police Station as is.
  **Estimated Cost: Unknown**, high chance for unplanned, emergency expenses.

- Consider leasing or purchasing an existing, unused property in town for use as a police station, with the potential to include other appropriate town functions/uses space permitting.
  **Estimated Cost:** $500,000+ (Includes purchase cost and renovations)

- Build a new police station.
  **Estimated Cost:** $1 million+ (Based on 1998 Oakham Public Safety building, in 2015 dollars).

Potential External Funding Sources:
- USDA Rural Development Agency Community Facilities Direct Loan and Grant Program
  See Page 6 for more details.
- USDA Rural Development Agency Community Facilities Guaranteed Loan Program
  See Page 6 for more details.

Fire Department

To determine the Hardwick Fire Department’s current and upcoming capital needs, the CED interviewed Deputy Fire Chief Bruce Gasco. It was established during this interview that the department applied for a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Assistance to Firefighters Grant with the intention of purchasing new equipment. At the time of this report the status of the grant is still pending. The conclusion from the interview is that the Fire Department’s current safety equipment is non-compliant and current facility is inadequate for their space needs. If the FEMA grant comes through, the Fire Department plans to obtain a fourth vehicle, for which this is no space in the current two-bay facility.

Capital Needs:

- Additional Storage Space for Vehicles
  Estimate: Forthcoming

- Replace Non-Compliant Equipment: Turnout Gear and Air Tanks
  Estimate: $38,000 - $66,000

- Extractor and Drier (for maintenance and longevity of turnout gear)
  Estimate: Forthcoming

- Facility ADA Compliance
  Estimate: $62,500
Options:

- Replace non-compliant equipment.
  **Total Estimated Cost:** $38,000 - $66,000

- Replace non-compliant equipment and purchase extractor and drier to maintain the equipment and extend its life.
  **Total Estimated Cost:** $38,000 - $66,000 + Extractor and Drier

- Explore opportunities for storage in other Town facilities.
  **Total Estimated Cost:** Not a capital expense.

- Build an addition onto the current facility.
  **Total Estimated Cost:** Forthcoming

- Build a new facility.
  **Estimated Cost:** $1.8 million + (based on 2004 Montague and 2001 Rutland Fire Depts, in 2015 dollars)

Potential External Funding Sources:

- FEMA Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program
  Provided by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, Assistance to Firefighters Grants can be used to obtain equipment, protective gear, emergency vehicles, and pay for personnel training. This grant program is operated at the national scale, and is “discretionary” and “competitive”. The amount awarded is entirely dependent upon the perceived need and the availability of funding. At the time of this writing the Hardwick Fire Department is awaiting response on an active grant application. The results of the current grant application may affect the Town’s probability of getting grants in the near future.

- USDA Rural Development Agency Community Facilities Direct Loan and Grant Program
  See Page 6 for more details.

- USDA Rural Development Agency Community Facilities Guaranteed Loan Program
  See Page 6 for more details.

Highway Department

The Highway Department operates out of a stand-alone, single-use facility. Highway Supervisor Michael Howe provided insight on the department’s current and upcoming capital needs. These needs include both facility and equipment upgrades. The facility needs a new roof as well as an oil and water separator to allow for the cleaning and maintenance of department vehicles on site. It is important to note that the Highway Department shares larger, more expensive equipment with surrounding towns when possible to reduce individual equipment needs.
Capital Needs:
- Roof Replacement
  Estimate: $33,800 (Shingles) $100,000 (Metal)
- Oil and Water Separator
  Estimate: Forthcoming
- Heavy Equipment: for uses including paving and hauling
  Estimate: Forthcoming

Options:
- Do nothing, continue to operate the Highway Department as is.
  **Estimated Cost:** Unknown, high chance for unplanned, emergency expenses.
- Make all necessary improvements to the existing building: Roof replacement and install oil and water separator.
  **Total Estimated Cost:** $33,800 + oil and water separator
- Build a new Highway Department facility.
  **Total Estimated Cost:** $800,000 (Based on 2007 Phillipston DPW, in 2015 dollars)

**Potential External Funding Sources:**
- USDA Rural Development Agency Community Facilities Direct Loan and Grant Program
  See Page 6 for more details.
- USDA Rural Development Agency Community Facilities Guaranteed Loan Program
  See Page 6 for more details.

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Recycling Center

Hardwick’s Recycling Center operates as a “Center for Hard to Recycle Materials” (CHaRM), taking items such as batteries and tires which require special processing, as well as collecting traditional recyclables. The Recycling Center sold approximately 272 stickers for the year, which covers the holders’ use of the facility’s traditional services. Additional fees apply to CHaRM use. The 272 sticker holders represent less than 1/3 of Hardwick’s population. According to the CED’s interview with Recycling Coordinator Theresa Cofske, the Recycling Center building is in need of repairs to remediate past water damage and mold, and to mitigate ongoing leaks in the roof. Additionally, there are problems with sinkholes and driveway flooding as a result of site runoff problems.
Capital Needs:
- Roof and Drywall Repair
  Estimate: Forthcoming
- Driveway Repair
  Estimate: Forthcoming
- Flooding and Runoff Remediation
  Estimate: Forthcoming

Options:
- Do nothing, continue to operate recycling center as is.
  **Total Estimated Cost:** Unknown, high chance for unplanned, emergency expenses.
- Invest in all necessary building and site improvements.
  **Total Estimated Cost:** Forthcoming
- Consider options for reducing or ending the active use of the Recycling Center, and direct residents to private haulers or other area recycling centers.
  **Total Estimated Cost:** Not a capital expenditure

Potential External Funding Sources:
- USDA Rural Development Agency Community Facilities Direct Loan and Grant Program
  See Page 6 for more details.
- USDA Rural Development Agency Community Facilities Guaranteed Loan Program
  See Page 6 for more details.

Gilbert Building (Former Senior Center)
The Gilbert Building previously housed the Youth and Senior Centers, but is now vacant. The property and structure need considerable improvements to be safe, functional, and building and fire code compliant. It should be noted that the Town has applied for a Community Development Block Grant to fund the removal of an underground storage tank that is on the site. At the time of this writing, the results of that grant application are still pending.

Capital Needs:
- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Compliance
  Estimate: $642,000
- Parking Lot Resurfacing
  Estimate: $33,500
- Energy upgrades, including windows and furnace
  Estimate: $280,000 +
- Remediation of hazardous materials in building.
  Estimate: Forthcoming
- Removal of underground storage tank on site.
  Estimate: $49,000 (CDBG Grant applied for, waiting for approval/award)

**Options:**
- Do nothing, leave the Gilbert Building as is.
  **Total Estimated Cost:** Unknown, high chance for unplanned, emergency expenses.
- Explore repurposing the building for town use and make all necessary improvements to the building and site: ADA, parking lot, energy upgrades, removal of underground storage tank.
  **Total Estimated Cost:** $1,000,000+
- Consider demolition of building and repurposing the site for town uses such as parking and/or recreation space.
  **Total Estimated Cost:** Needed
- Consider selling the building to a private owner and make only the necessary improvements to the building and site for the purpose of a sale agreement: Hazardous materials mitigation, removal of underground storage tank.
  **Total Estimated Cost:** $49,000+

**Potential External Funding Sources:**
- **HUD Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program**
  This program is funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, which allocates grants to large cities directly and provides funds to each state, who then oversee the allocation of grants to smaller communities. Hardwick is eligible for CDBG grants dispersed at the state level. The maximum grant allotment that Hardwick can apply for and receive each year is $800,000. CDBG eligible projects are those that remediate blight, and/or serve low to moderate-income populations. Senior citizens are assumed by HUD for the purpose of this grant to be low to moderate-income. Census tract data can be used to prove the grant will serve low to moderate-income populations where they are not otherwise assumed. It is important to note that these grants can be used to cover the percentage of the project that meets the eligibility standards, meaning the project does not have to exclusively serve the required functions.

- **USDA Rural Development Agency Community Facilities Direct Loan and Grant Program**
  See Page 6 for more details.

- **USDA Rural Development Agency Community Facilities Guaranteed Loan Program**
  See Page 6 for more details.
Hardwick Elementary School

Hardwick Elementary School is the only active Town-owned educational facility in Hardwick, and it functions as part of the Quabbin Regional School District. The school district has a lease agreement with the Town which establishes that any capital improvement above $4,999 is the responsibility of the Town. Quabbin Regional School District Superintendent, Dr. Maureen Marshall was interviewed regarding all current and upcoming capital needs for the Elementary School Building. Critically, this interview also established that Hardwick Elementary is assumed to be in operation for the next five years, and thus conforms to this study’s 5-year outlook on capital expenses.

Capital Needs:
- Roof Replacement
  Estimate: Forthcoming
- Smoke Detector Replacement
  Estimate: $12,000
- PA System Replacement and Classroom Telephones
  Estimate: $15,000
- Parking Lot Replacement
  Estimate: $75,000
- Floor and Bathroom Repairs
  Estimate: $22,000

Options:
- Make only critical repairs: Conduct an engineering study on the condition of the roof to establish necessary repairs and estimated cost. Replace all smoke detectors older than 10 years, per state mandate.
  Total Estimated Cost: $12,000 + Roof
- Make all repairs identified by Superintendent Marshall as necessary for student and staff safety: Roof replacement, smoke detector replacement, PA system replacement and installation of classroom telephones.
  Total Estimated Cost: $27,000 + Roof
- Make all repairs necessary to keep building in a good state of repair: Roof replacement, smoke detector replacement, PA system replacement and installation of classroom telephones, parking lot replacement, and floor and bathroom repairs.
  Total Estimated Cost: $124,000 + Roof

Potential External Funding Source:
- Massachusetts School Building Authority Accelerated Repair Program
This state run program makes grants available for the repair and/or replacement of roofs, windows/doors, and/or boilers. If invited into the program, the town must fund the project independently, and will then receive reimbursement from the school building authority for eligible costs.

__________________________________________________________________________________________

Other Facility and Service Considerations

Other town facilities and functions were considered during the interview and capital needs inventory processes. Interviews were conducted with representatives of Hardwick’s Town House, the Town’s Sewer Department, the Gilbertville Library, and the Hardwick Rescue Squad. The following is a discussion of the needs of these facilities and functions.

**The Town House** is not in need of capital improvements at this time and none are foreseen for the next five years, thus it is not within the scope of this study.

**The Sewer Department** has ongoing capital improvements, none of which are new and applicable to this study.

**The Gilbertville Library** is a privately owned library in the Village of Gilbertville which is open to all Hardwick residents and serves many in the Gilbertville area. However, because the building is privately owned, its capital needs are not the responsibility of the Town. Nonetheless, it is a valuable town asset and was worthy of consideration for this study. During the interview, the library trustees identified the need to replace the 100+ year old windows and the need for a new heating system for the historic library building, as well as their desire for new computers, general technology upgrades, top coating on the parking lot, and a motorized door for handicapped accessibility. The estimated cost of the windows is $32,800 and the estimate for the new furnace is $15,000. The other miscellaneous needs come together in an estimate of about $15,000.

The CED recommends that the trustees pursue funding from the Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund for the replacement of the library’s windows. The fund is specifically for municipalities and non-profits, and offers a 50% reimbursable matching grant for projects that stabilize, protect, rehabilitate, and/or restore historic properties. If the grant is accepted and used, the library must enter into a preservation restriction and maintenance agreement in perpetuity. This does not mean that the state owns the deed or has rights to the property; it means they have some oversight over how the building is used and any alterations made to it. To be eligible, the library must be listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

**The Hardwick Rescue Squad**, like the Gilbertville Library, is a private non-profit entity and thus does not fall under the Town’s responsibility for capital improvements. However, the state
of the Rescue Squad is vitally important to the Town and its residents and as such it deserves consideration. An interview with Director Eric Volheim revealed that the Rescue Squad is in need of a new ambulance and training to stay up to date with certification requirements. These expenses are likely to be beyond the means of the Rescue Squad and the Town of Hardwick should be prepared to help finance the costs or to explore alternative options for providing town residents with Emergency Medical Services. Some alternative options to consider are starting a Town owned and operated emergency medical service or contracting to use a neighboring town’s service, such as Ware.
Summary of Public Workshop Results

Workshop Overview:

On the morning of Saturday April 11, 2015 the UMass Center for Economic Development (CED), in collaboration with the Massachusetts Office of Public Collaboration, facilitated a public workshop to engage Hardwick community members in the Town’s capital planning process. Approximately 42 people participated in the workshop, including some residents who played dual roles as facilitators/note takers and participants. The goal of the workshop was to update the community on the status of capital planning efforts in the town and gather feedback and a sense of direction on how the Town should proceed with various capital improvement needs. Additionally, the workshop served to highlight the unanswered questions and previously unconsidered opportunities.

The focus of the workshop was capital improvements as they related to the organization and function of town facilities. Smaller improvements such as equipment and vehicles were acknowledged and identified, but the discussion prompts and questions were based upon facilities needs and opportunities. In terms of logistics, workshop participants were broken into six groups for the purposes of discussion. For the first half of the group session, participants were asked to consider the different strategies for meeting the facilities-based capital needs of the following: the Richardson Building, Police Department, Fire Department, Highway Department, Recycling Center, Gilbert Building, and Hardwick Elementary School. These specific buildings and associated departments were chosen for discussion because they have capital needs foreseen as arising in the next five years, and there is an opportunity to make choices as to how those needs are met. To prompt discussion and feedback, the CED presented a series of possible options of how to meet each facility’s capital needs, and asked participants to identify the best one or write in a different option that was not listed.

Workshop Exercise I: Options

Many workshop participants took advantage of the space to identify different options and made general comments on their worksheets during the options exercise. Additionally, some participants selected multiple options, suggesting that they would be okay with either, or a combination of both moving forward. Table 1 summarizes the results of the options exercise. The facilities with the most comments and feedback were the Richardson building, the Police Department, and the Highway Department. The most popular suggestions for these facilities, respectively, are moving some town offices and services to the mill, moving the police and other town functions to the McCarthy building, and increasing sharing of highway department equipment and services with other towns.
Given the options provided, participants overwhelmingly selected “move seniors and youth to another facility” for the Richardson building, though the comments supported keeping them together. For the Police Department, 29 people, the majority, supported purchasing or leasing an existing facility for the police, and 9 people commented that the McCarthy Building was a good potential site. 6 participants also commented on sharing a facility between the police, fire and possibly the highway, though the results for the Fire Department options show that building an addition onto the current facility received the most votes at 14. Not far behind with 10 votes was the option to explore sharing storage space with other town facilities to accommodate the Fire Department’s needs. Some comments suggest using the McCarthy building to store fire equipment if the Town acquires that building. Only six people each supported building a new police station and a new fire station.

The Highway Department votes show that the vast majority of participants favored making improvements to the existing facility, with six people commenting that it should be outfitted with a metal roof, rather than a shingle roof. Only four people indicated that a new Highway Department facility should be built, with some comments suggesting an addition to the current structure if necessary. The Recycling Center results reveal a more even split amongst participants, with 15 people indicating that the Town should make necessary improvements to the existing facility, and 15 choosing the option for the Town to explore sharing recycling services with a neighboring town. Additionally, 11 people supported exploring options for transferring recycling service to a private hauler. Notably, 5 people each made a comment about their priorities of keeping the “swap shop” open and the maintaining bulk waste services.

The Gilbert Building was the other facility with a more even distribution of votes: 24 people chose considering demolition of the building and repurposing the site for town use as the best option, and 18 chose selling the building to a private owner as the best option. 4 people commented about their desire to see the building demolished and the site turned into a green/recreation space with amenities such as a playground and basketball hoops. Only five participants supported renovating and repurposing the building for Town use. Lastly, every participant identified making needed improvements to the Elementary School as the best choice. The comments on the Elementary School indicate that participants were looking forward, as well; some people suggested selling the building or repurposing it as offices if the School District leaves the building.

Overall, the options exercise shows a preference for focusing on existing buildings in town rather than building new. Although some people did support new facilities, comments indicated that it might be a longer-term solution rather than one that should be done in the next five years. For the current buildings, making improvements such as ADA accessibility and energy efficiency were noted as important, as well as considering the Mill and other unused town buildings as alternative space options for town functions. Also fairly common throughout the results are
indications towards sharing services, facilities, and equipment where possible to be more efficient and minimize costs.

Note: A detailed summary of the responses to the options exercise is located at the end of this report in the Appendix.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Facility</th>
<th>Options Provided</th>
<th>Votes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Richardson Building</td>
<td>Do nothing</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Make all essential improvements and reconfigure space</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Make all essential improvements and maintain current space configuration</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Explore moving seniors and youth to new facilities in town</td>
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<tr>
<td>Police Dept. Facility</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Consider leasing or purchasing an existing property in town</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Build a new police station</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fire Dept. Facility</td>
<td>Do nothing</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Explore options to share storage space in other town facilities</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Build an addition onto the current facility</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Build a new facility</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highway Dept. Facility</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Make all necessary improvements to the existing building</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Build a new facility</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recycling Center</td>
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<td>Invest in all necessary improvements to the facility</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Explore opportunities to share services with a neighboring town</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transfer recycling service to a private hauler</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gilbert Building</td>
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<td>Explore renovating and repurposing the building for town use</td>
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<td>Consider selling the building to a private owner</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Make all essential improvements</td>
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</table>
Workshop Exercise 2: Prioritization

For the second half of the group session, participants were asked to rank the facilities from 1 to 7 in terms of their general capital improvement needs, with “1” being the highest priority, “7” being the lowest priority. Table 2 contains the results of the ranking exercise and illustrates that the community’s priorities are Hardwick Elementary School, the Police Department’s facility, and the Richardson Municipal Building. Over half of the workshop participants identified the Elementary School as the number one priority, while 23% and 21% identified the Police facility and Richardson Building as the number one priority, respectively.

During the larger group presentations that occurred after the prioritization exercise, several groups identified the Elementary School improvements as the top priority because they were compulsory and there was no choice as to whether the roof needed to be done. An audience member also spoke to their view that the town’s children are the lifeblood of the community and the Elementary School is critical to attracting and maintaining young families in Hardwick. Regarding the police, groups acknowledged during the discussion that the police provide an essential service and the current facility prevents the department from functioning at its highest level. Similar to the police, residents identified the Richardson Building as a priority because it provides the town with many important services and could better do so with some improvements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Capital Improvement</th>
<th>Average Rank (from 1 to 7)</th>
<th>Total #1 votes</th>
<th>Percent who voted #1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Richardson Municipal Building</td>
<td>2.35</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police Facility</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fire Facility</td>
<td>4.75</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highway Facility</td>
<td>4.52</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recycling Facility</td>
<td>5.07</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gilbert Building</td>
<td>6.58</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hardwick Elementary School</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Recommendations

Overview:

The following section contains two sets of recommendations: General Recommendations and Facility-Specific Recommendations. The General Recommendations are intended to provide the Town and the Capital Planning Committee with a direction for moving forward, including which capital needs to prioritize, and how to begin the process of meeting those needs. The Facility-Specific Recommendations include suggestions for the management of capital needs at each town-owned facility in relation to the services contained within those facilities.

Both sets of recommendations are informed by the results of the CED’s research and information gathering over the last several months, and are especially influenced by the results of the public workshop and various interactions with community members. Ultimately, the workshop and community members made several points clear:

- The repairs to the Elementary School, the relocation of the Police Department, and the improvements to the Richardson Building are top priorities.
- It is important to integrate social services, such as the Senior and Youth Centers and the Food Pantry, together in the same facility.
- There is a strong desire to use existing buildings to meet town needs rather than expanding into open space.
- The McCarthy Building, or a similar structure, is a viable option for the Police Department and could house equipment and vehicles from the Fire Department and Highway Department to meet their space needs.
- Opportunities for regionalizing and/or sharing services should be considered if partnerships prove to be mutually beneficial.
- There is little interest in reusing the Gilbert Building for town functions, but substantial interest in selling the building or reusing the land for recreation and parking.
- Other Town-owned buildings such as the Town House, Ruggles School House, and old Highway Barn should be considered as options to meet additional space needs if/when they arise.
- There is sustained interest in the Hardwick Knitters Mill as a place for consolidating town services in the long-term, but no immediate action is necessary.
- There is no consensus on how to move forward with the Recycling Center, and more consideration and community discussion is needed before a decision is made.
General Recommendations:

1. Prioritize the capital improvements needed for Hardwick Elementary School, the relocation of the Police Department, and the improvement of the Richardson Building, per feedback from the public workshop.

2. Acquire approval and funding, and then hire consultants to complete a comprehensive engineering study of all Town-owned facilities. The study should determine the structural condition of the facilities, the space needs of the uses contained within them, and identify space surpluses and deficits. The study should also include estimates for necessary improvements and indicate recommendations for space efficiency. Engineering studies necessary for roof replacements at Hardwick Elementary, Highway facility and Recycling Center should be completed first to allow completion of these more urgent repairs.

3. Begin the process of applying for a grant from the Massachusetts School Building Authority to help cover the costs of replacing the Hardwick Elementary roof.

4. Apply for Rural Development grants for needed police equipment, and for fire equipment not covered by the pending Assistance to Firefighters grant.

5. Decide on the new Police Department location and begin applying for direct loans from Rural Development to finance necessary improvements to the new location.

6. Apply for CDBG grant monies to fund the installation of an elevator (preferred) or chairlift in the Richardson Building. Move the Senior Center to the second floor to share space with the Youth Center. Even if senior and youth services are relocated in the longer-term, as desired by the workshop participants, an elevator is essential for meeting shorter-term needs.

7. Pursue the “Green Communities” designation to make the Town eligible for energy efficiency grants. These grants can fund energy improvements such as window and heating system replacements in Town-owned buildings. This is especially important for the Richardson Building due to its very high-energy costs.

8. Encourage renewed discussion and consideration of the Community Preservation Act. Although voters defeated this in the past, the Town can benefit from the additional revenue it will generate and from the additional matching grants provided by the state under the Act. This does cost the taxpayers directly, but exemptions to lower-income individuals can be applied, and ultimately the availability of these funds reduces the need for loans and interest payments that drive up overall project costs. Additionally, the funds from the Act can only be used for specific purposes that provide a broad local public benefit: historic preservation, open space preservation and recreation, and affordable housing.

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2 For more information see: http://www.mass.gov/eea/energy-utilities-clean-tech/green-communities/gc-grant-program/

9. Remain open to opportunities for sharing and/or regionalizing services such as fire and highway, but be critical about the benefit of such partnerships.

10. Form a committee and/or hold additional public forums to discuss the future of the Recycling Center. Consider different scenarios for how the Center could be used and what services it could offer, and then what capital needs are associated with each scenario. Build consensus on the best option and make necessary improvements based upon that decision.

11. Form a Mill Revitalization Committee to focus on the feasibility of the Mill as an option for town functions. This committee will ensure that energy is given to studying the Mill and that progress is being made, while allowing other Town planning entities to focus on more immediate needs and decisions.

Facility-Specific Recommendations:

**Richardson Building:**
- Install an elevator or chairlift to make all levels handicap accessible.
- Move Senior Center to second floor to share space with the Youth Center.
- Make energy upgrades to lower costs.
- Acknowledge the Mill as a long-term option outside of the scope of the current 5-year capital plan.

**Police Department:**
- Purchase or lease an existing building in town and move the Police Department as quickly as possible.
- Apply for Rural Development grants and direct loans to fund new equipment needs and repairs to the new facility.
- Consider opportunities for the new space to accommodate town vehicles and equipment from other departments, including Fire and Highway.

**Fire Department:**
- Store equipment/vehicles in other town facilities as needed.
- Purchase gear and equipment in smaller number on a more frequent basis (yearly).
- Manage the number of volunteers to keep equipment costs down.
- Apply for Rural Development grants to help cover new equipment or vehicle costs not covered by Assistance to Firefighters Grant.

**Highway Department:**
- Replace roof and make repairs to the driveway.
• Continue to share equipment and services with neighboring towns and expand sharing where partnerships are possible and mutually beneficial.
• Consider the creation of a DPW for increased management and efficiency.
• Apply for Rural Development grants and direct loans to fund repair costs and help fund the purchase of new equipment and vehicles.

Recycling Center:
• Stabilize the building by repairing roof and drywall.
• Form a subcommittee to discuss the future of the Recycling Center and clarify the current discord about whether to cease regular recycling or continue normal operations.
• Maintain some incarnation of bulk waste and “swap shop” services regardless of decisions about regular recycling services.
• If decision is made to stop regular recycling, negotiate with a local hauler to reduce recycling costs if a certain number of customers are guaranteed.

Gilbert Building:
• Put out a Request for Proposals to purchase the site as is, or with minimal improvements.
• If the site does not receive any interest or offers in one – two years, begin the process of demolishing the building. Apply for CDBG grant monies under “blight removal” to help fund the demolition costs.
• After demolition, reuse the site for municipal parking and recreational space.

Elementary School:
• Apply for MSBA Accelerated Repair Grant and replace the roof according to the MSBA guidelines.
• Make repairs to the PA system and install telephones for increased communication and safety.
• Negotiate a longer lease or commitment to longer-term use by the School District before other non-essential maintenance is completed (i.e. parking lot repavement and bathroom partitions)
Appendix A: Public Workshop Results

Richardson Building

Options:
1. Do nothing (0)
2. a. Make all essential improvements and reconfigure space (6)
   b. Make all essential improvements and maintain current space configuration (2)
3. Explore moving seniors and youth to new facilities in town (22)

Alternative Suggestions and Comments:
- Consider moving town functions to the mill in the longer term. (3)
- An elevator needs to be installed. (3)
- Explore using Paige Building or Ruggles Hill School for town uses. (3)
- Need to expand and resurface parking lot. (2)
- Having youth, senior, and food pantry functions in the same building is great and gives the best ability to service families. (2)
- Get rid of the cement stairs between the parking lot and the sidewalk.
- The building should only be used for municipal offices.
- Part of Prospect could be used for new building.
- Needs to be more direction in terms of long term goals before decisions can be made about short term solutions.
- Survey the building for code upgrades to retain as a town municipal building.
- Building has excellent potential, worth bring to current standards for present and future use.
- Would like a new building containing several town needs in one place, including senior and youth services.
- Regionalize senior and youth services with New Braintree, Barre, and/or West Brookfield.
- The youth need green/playground space, possibly at the Gilbert Building.
- Seniors and youth should be in space separate from the police department.
- Move police department to another building.
- Move seniors to a new side that does not require major ADA upgrades.
- When the roof is redone, install solar panels if the building gets adequate sun.
Police Department

Options:
1. Do nothing (0)
2. Consider leasing or purchasing an existing, unused property in town (29)
3. Build a new police station (6)

Alternative Suggestions/ Comments
- Lease or buy the McCarthy building (9)
- Locate the fire, police, and possibly highway in one shared facility (6).
- New station could also have a community room. (3)
- Building a new station should be considered as a long term solution (3).
- The McCarthy building has extra space and can be done quickly (2)
- Current police space could be used for other functions if/when they relocate (2).
- Consider regionalization of police services (2).
- The McCarthy building could also serve as a regional dog pound.
- Current facility impairs the quality of service.
- Purchasing a building is better choice than leasing.
- Update existing police parking area for the department and for patrons.
- There is no need to build a new police station.
- Town should be considering the Mill.
- Move police to a new building near their present location.
- Incorporate solar panels at the new site.
- Using an existing building is preferable to prevent more development in town.
Fire Department

Options:
1. Do nothing (2)
2. Explore options to share storage space in other town facilities (10)
3. Build an addition onto the current facility (14)
4. Build a new facility (6)

Alternative Suggestions/Comments
- Create a shared space for fire and police, and possibly highway. (8)
- Fire truck could fit in McCarthy building if it is used for police. (5)
- Possibly limit the number of volunteers to limit the amount of equipment needed. (4)
- Need for ADA compliance. (4)
- The town should spread out purchasing equipment over years instead of all at once. (3)
- Look into sharing/regionalizing with other departments to save on equipment costs and space requirements. (2)
- Look into using highway barn or highway department for storage (2)
- Consider adding on a drive-through bay.
- Explore adding ambulance services.
- Be better about maintenance, equipment and facility.
- Determine future demands and size needs.
- There is no need for more space.
Highway Department

Options:
1. Do nothing (2)
2. Make all necessary improvements to the existing building (30)
3. Build a new facility (4)

Alternative Suggestions/ Comments:
- Continue and explore additional opportunities to share services and equipment. (6)
- Put a metal roof on the building. (5)
- Incorporate solar panels if feasible. (5)
- An oil and water separator at the sewer plant can be used for highway department needs (5)
- Make energy improvements to the facility. (4)
- Put a shingle roof on the building. (3)
- Sell scrap metal around the facility. (3)
- Repair/repave the driveway. (2)
- The oil and water separator is a critical need. (2)
- Create a shared space with Police, Fire, and Highway. (2)
- The environmental impact of the site is a priority.
- Use a portable building to cover new equipment if necessary.
- Look into building a roof over the fuel pumps.
- Consider creating a Department of Public Works.
- Local businesses/landscapers/contractors could be called upon to possible rent/barter their equipment to the town.
- Minimize additions and new buildings, focus on what is already there.
Recycling Center

Options:
1. Do nothing (3)
2. Invest in all necessary improvements to the existing facility. (15)
3. Explore opportunities to share services with a neighboring town. (15)
4. Explore transferring recycling service to a private hauler (11)

Alternative Suggestions/Comments
- Keep the “swap shop”. (5)
- Maintain bulk waste services. (5)
- Private trash haulers already provide recycling services. (4)
- Explore ways to increase sticker sales, create incentives for recycling. (4)
- Town should have a transfer option for regular waste as well, maybe pay by bag. (4)
- Place remote recycling bins around town. (3)
- Close the Center for regular recycling services. (3)
- Bring the shredder back annually or semi-annually.
Gilbert Building

Options:
1. Do nothing (0)
2. Explore repurposing the building for town use (5)
3. Consider demolition of the building and repurposing site for town use (24)
4. Consider selling the building to a private owner (18)

Alternative Suggestions/ Comments
- Demolish building and use the site for a playground/recreational/green space. (4)
- Demolish if it cannot be sold within 3-5 years. (2)
- Construct a new senior center on the site.
- The building is not worth repairing.
- Demolish the building and sell the lot.
- The building has no emotional or historical value.
- The site is a good central location for town uses.
- The building should be renovated and reused for seniors.
- Sell the building to be developed into affordable housing.
- Careful consideration should be made of how the building would be used if sold.
- Consider selling materials if building is demolished.
Hardwick Elementary School

Options:
1. Do nothing (0)
2. Make all essential repairs and improvements (38)

Alternative Suggestions/ Comments
- Use a metal roof. (3)
- Add solar panels to the roof. (4)
- The building can be used for other purposes than a school if the district takes it out of service. (2)
- Consider the eventual sale of the building.
- Create a capital improvement plan for all building repairs.
- Repairing the roof and making other improvements are a high priority.
- Remove islands in the parking lot to create additional parking.
- Explore using the building for other town uses as well.
- Apply for grant for roof repair.
- Repairs must be done, “These are our kids”