

## **Citizen's Advisory Committee for Capital Expenditures**

In order to address the pressing inventory of capital needs, the City's Capital Improvement Committee recommended a list of improvements including public safety and other critical capital items for inclusion in a proposed general obligation bond issue. A bill has been introduced in the Board of Aldermen to begin the legislative process and various forums have been held as part of the public deliberation process. An additional mechanism for advising the Capital Committee on capital expenditures is contained in Ordinance 61250 which provides for the establishment of a Citizens' Advisory Committee. While not active in many years, the Citizens Advisory Committee provides an additional forum for public education, discussion and vetting of these and any additional items for the general obligation bond issue proposal. The following is a summary of comments and recommendations of recent meetings of the Citizens' Advisory Committee.

# **Citizens' Advisory Committee – Comments and Recommendations on Proposed General Obligation Bond Issue**

The Citizens' Advisory Committee met over a period of four weeks and was given a general overview of the proposed general obligation bond issue and the proposed project list as recommended by the City's Capital Committee. The Committee also had the opportunity to hear from key heads of departments regarding the proposed projects. These included the Police Chief, Fire Chief, Building Commissioner, President of the Board of Public Service and Commissioner of Equipment Services. At its final meeting, the committee met to discuss any final questions on the proposed projects, make recommendations regarding the exclusion or inclusion of any project and discussed some more general ways to present the bond issue as the City prepares to submit the bond issue to a public vote. Some of the key discussion points follow:

## **1) Bond Issue as One Item or Multiple Items**

The committee had various points of view regarding whether the bond proposal should be submitted as a single item with one lump sum number or identify a number of categories for which funding is to be provided and voters could approve. (e.g. 1998 referendum had three categories). Some members felt that separating out categories would invite voters to cherry pick items and could result in some important items failing to receive sufficient support. Other members felt that proposed projects should be presented in key categories as this would provide some accountability to ensure project funds are spent as voters intend as well as avoid the "scary" notion of a single large number. It was suggested that should the items be broken-out that the categories be limited to no more than four in number, be related (e.g. Fire projects A & B from list, Police and Public Safety, etc..) and that language be sufficiently descriptive for each. The majority of the committee favored the break-out approach.

## **2) Recommended Project Discussions**

### **Fire Department Vehicles, Equipment and Buildings**

There was pretty much consensus on the critical nature of replacing Fire vehicle fleet as well as addressing other equipment items (e.g. breathing apparatus). It was discussed that some of the critical vehicle needs were being met by refurbishing rather than replacing apparatus in order to meet funding limitations. There was some interest expressed in notion of utilizing equipment efficiently and support for initiative to include smaller first responder vehicles in support of this effort.

### **Police Department**

The primary focus of discussion on projects for the Police Department was on the Real Time Intelligence Center. Opinions on this project in particular varied. A small group expressed the opinion that they were in favor of any technological advancements that would assist the Department to combat crime, (e.g. shot locators, etc.) A second slightly larger group expressed opposition to the proposal, suggesting that the camera monitoring aspect of the project would have limited reach (only areas with cameras would benefit) and thus it would be difficult to justify the nearly \$6M cost. A third, plurality of the group expressed general support but expressed the need for further public discourse as details of the proposal need further explanation and there is a need to avoid the risk of this item dragging down other items on the ballot measure due to apprehension or misinformation.

### **Corrections and Other Public Safety**

The committee was generally receptive to the need for the projects identified in this category. The PSAP (public safety answering point) which proposes to consolidate Police, Fire and EMS dispatchers as well as CEMA operations into a single location was seen in a positive light as a project which offered the opportunity for operational efficiencies. Though not discussed at the final meeting, one committee member advocated for providing air conditioning at the City's Medium Security Institution, (MSI), an item not included in the recommended list. There were contrary opinions on this item as well particularly with how such a project would resonate with voters.

### **Building Demolition**

While most committee members recognized and expressed support for the need to demolish unsafe buildings, there was some sentiment expressed to find ways to support preservation as well. It was discussed that there are some limitations on the uses of public funds (e.g. can be used to demolish a private building that is a public safety hazard but not necessarily be used to improve/preserve a property that is privately owned.) The sentiment of the committee was to support, to any legal extent possible (e.g. LRA properties, etc.), a preservation component to supplement the building demolition effort.

### **Streets and Bridges**

The committee expressed support for the recommended street and bridge projects. Given the fact that funds applied to these projects can be leveraged to receive federal funds ( a four to one match), there was sentiment expressed that the City

should provide as much funds as would be possible to max out any fund matching opportunities. There was also expressed an additional interest in streetscape projects that would promote economic development (e.g. Morganford streetscape that did not make recommended list), as these type of projects have the potential to provide economic benefits over the longer term.

### **Other City Buildings and Vehicles**

There were various sentiments expressed on items in this category. While one member remarked that “City Hall looks terrible”, opinions varied on the best way to address this with regards to the bond issue. Some members saw this need as not as important relative to other projects on the list while other expressed support for addressing the building’s needs. It was remarked that the proposed Assessor’s office system update was long overdue, resulting in backlogs to the system. There was some discussion on the proposed improvements to the Convention Center that were not included on the list. This entailed a \$45M proposal for improved ballroom capacity, dock space, etc. While it was discussed that the CVC made compelling arguments for this item as it relates to the competitive nature of the facility, the sheer size of the request precluded the Capital Committee from recommending it. There were general expressions of support from the group of the Capital Committee’s recommendation. As to vehicle purchases, there was some sentiment expressed that the City pursue purchases of vehicles that promote efficiency when economically viable.

## **3) Other Potential Projects**

### **ADA Improvements**

It was discussed that one component missing from the proposed project list was projects related to ADA improvements. While there are a number of facility improvements included in the municipal facility categories (both in Courthouses and City Hall) which will necessarily include ADA upgrades, there was a question as to whether there are outstanding ADA requirements not being met in any facilities that would not be seeing any improvements through the proposed bond issue. It was recommended that this issue be examined and that any requirements in this regard be met.

### **Others**

One committee member requested whether items such as community centers could be included in the recommended proposal. It was discussed that the Capital Committee had purposely omitted recreation centers and the like from inclusion

due to the adoption in recent years of sales taxes dedicated specifically to parks and recreation. It was also stated that the Capital Committee specifically avoided projects that would result in additional operating costs that would create further strains on the operating budget.