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Bristol unveils capital improvement plan

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By Marin Howell

BRISTOL — The town of Bristol is putting together its first capital improvement plan (CIP).

The plan compiles into one document the town's capital budgets and programs that have previously been included in annual Town Reports, the Town Plan, budgets and various other documents. It's made up of two main components: a capital budget for the current fiscal year and a capital program identifying projects proposed for the next five years.

According to the CIP, the document is intended to "maintain a stable tax rate; to plan for orderly growth and development consistent with the town's fiscal ability to provide facilities and services and in accordance with the Town Plan; and to anticipate facility and service needs and develop funding plans to address them." Adoption of a CIP is also required as part of the renewal process for Bristol's Downtown Designation, a status that provides technical assistance, financial incentives and other benefits to support community revitalization.

An initial public hearing on the CIP was held during the Bristol selectboard's meeting on Monday. Town Administrator Valerie Capels provided a brief overview of the planning document, which in addition to this year's capital budget, outlines the town's priority capital funding needs, a recommended financing schedule and potential funding sources.

The CIP also includes highlights from the Bristol Town Plan and recent capital improvements and investments made over the past five years. Recent projects detailed in the plan include a 2022 sidewalk scoping study on Airport Drive, this year's purchase of a 4.7-acre property on Hewitt Road to house a future Public Works Department facility, and an ongoing feasibility study of options for the site of a new police station.

"This kind of narrative will be helpful going forward just for historic context, to remind people of the level of effort that has gone into a lot of these different types of projects," Capels said.

The CIP also includes descriptions of, and recommendations for, various projects around town. The capital budget and improvement program included in the CIP lists various capital projects and funding sources for fiscal years 2025-2030, as well as contributions to reserve

funds, debt payments and expenditures for various town departments. Some of the ongoing or planned projects included in the CIP include paving roads around town, sidewalk projects and work on town buildings.

Capels noted the CIP is a work in progress with additional descriptions and information in the process of being added. A more complete version of the CIP is expected to be available ahead of the selectboard's Aug. 26 meeting, when a final public hearing on the document will be held.

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