

Amherst Joint Capital Planning Committee

Why Joint Capital Planning?

- Founded in 1992 when Amherst was beginning to recover from the fiscal crisis of the early 1990s.
- Capital needs had been neglected and the previous, more ad hoc, method of capital planning was not sufficient to meet the needs of the Town.

Who serves on the committee?

- 2 Members of the Finance Committee
- 2 Members of the Select Board
- 2 Members of the School Committee
- 2 Members of the Library Trustees

- Finance Director is the Staff Liaison

How does the Committee do its work?

- Financial policies and definitions guide the committee's work. For example, a goal for the amount of the Levy to be dedicated to Capital, definitions for what are considered Capital projects, and criteria for prioritizing spending.
- Projection of available funds.
- A one year budget, a five year plan.
- Capital Project Proposal forms for each project.

How does the Committee do its work?

cont'd.

- Weekly meetings to hear from each of the departments proposing capital projects.
January – March
- Discuss, deliberate, and decide regarding projects for the upcoming fiscal year and the five year plan.
- Submit written report.

Why has this worked for Amherst?

- Reasonable and functional framework for all involved.
- The Town gets to be more proactive rather than reactive toward capital projects.
- Hearing about all of the needs leads to a greater sense of the context for each of the projects.
- Having a five year view creates less of a “mine versus yours” approach.
- Working on this committee fosters a sense of connection and commitment to the Town as a whole and that comes through in the committee’s recommendations and reports.

References

- Town of Amherst web site
<http://amherstma.gov>
- JCPC report to Town Meeting for FY15
<http://amherstma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/26198>
- Amherst Financial Management Policies & Objectives
<http://www.amherstma.gov/DocumentCenter/Home/View/1986>