

Community Development Advisory Committee Meeting
November 3, 2017
1:30 p.m.

Committee members present: Eric Weber, Nick Dines, Fred Goodhue, Sally Loomis

Others present: Bill Sayre

1. The Committee unanimously agreed to elect Eric Weber as chair. Thanks Eric!

2. Town tax rate calculator

Bill Sayre explained the tax rate calculator tool that he and Charlene have developed to look at the average Williamsburg family tax bill from 2011 – 2017 and predict those bills 10 years into the future given likely town spending on the Public Safety complex, Mill River greenway and other important projects. The information comes from the town's capital plan. There are three versions of the graph included in the document and we are looking at the middle version with a \$2.5 million PSC, the greenway fundraising 50% protected town funds and no funds for renovation of the Old Town Hall. With that scenario, Williamsburg's average family tax is just below the state average. A \$3.5 million PSC puts the tax rate at just above the state average.

The graph shows the reserves/ debt target both at about 10%. Ideally reserves are above 10% and debt is below it. Williamsburg has historically been within our target which preserves our bond rating. If we can keep the PSC costs to \$2.5 Million, we can stay within financial abilities of the town. If we go to \$3.5 million, we exceed our capacity, but not dramatically.

The middle road option includes renovation of HEJ School at \$1.4 million - a low-ball number generated from previous studies and focused on stabilizing the building. This expenditure is not connected to the police being or not being located in the basement of HEJ.

The tax rate calculator model allows for plugging in other numbers and looking at other scenarios. The biggest variable is debt – for the Dunphy School (which is set) and for the PSC.

Taxes are the only revenue in this calculation. Relying exclusively on tax revenue means the town has little buffer and is constantly living at the edge of our means. Bringing in other town revenue would give the town more latitude to pursue other activities.

Other options for revenue:

- Community Preservation Act (CPA) – this is a tax, but it comes with matching state resources and funds things we are not otherwise able to do such as historic preservation, open space protection, affordable housing and recreation.
- Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)
- Foundation funding geared to specific endeavors (such as historic preservation)

3. Building on past work

It would be helpful to have (and consolidate) paper and electronic copies of all previous Williamsburg studies, plans, financial projections, etc. Eric has much of this, but it is very challenging to compare or summarize them. The facilities planning document has some of this information as an appendix.

Eric will develop a first draft of an inventory of Williamsburg reports/ studies/ plans and send it to the committee. The rest of the committee and other knowledgeable people in town will need to add to this inventory. Could a planning intern or PVPC intern help with something like this? Maybe start with a few knowledgeable people in town to find out what documents exist.

4. CDAC charge

It would be good for the CDAC recommend improvements to the capital planning process and documents.

We should also give a voice to other planning issues that might not be addressed otherwise. For example, developing a framework for evaluating town facilities and improvement of town planning proposals. Nick will work on making the framework more operational. Currently, all planning decisions are based on costs and the only income considered is the town's tax base.

It is important to keep the CDAC's voice active. Bill Sayre suggested quarterly meetings with the Select Board which could vary between an update from one member to a longer meeting of both groups depending on the issues at hand.

There might be more support for CPA now, from a broader spectrum of people in town. We might need to envision a particular project that could happen with CPA, but not without it.

The meeting adjourned at 3 p.m.