

Town of Needham  
Capital Improvement Plan  
January 2011

**GLOSSARY**

Provided below are some of the most commonly used terms in capital planning and debt management.

**APPROPRIATION** – An authorization granted by Town Meeting to expend money and incur obligations for specific public purposes.

**AVAILABLE FUNDS** – Balances in the various fund types that represent non-recurring revenue sources. As a matter of sound practice, they are frequently appropriated to meet unforeseen expenses, for capital expenditures or other onetime costs. Examples of available funds include free cash, stabilization funds, overlay surplus, and retained earnings.

**BETTERMENTS (Special Assessments)** – Whenever part of a community benefits from a public improvement, or betterment (*e.g.*, water, sewer, sidewalks, etc.), special property taxes may be assessed to the property owners of that area to reimburse the governmental entity for all, or part, of the costs it incurred in completing the project. Each property parcel receiving the benefit is assessed a proportionate share of the cost which may be paid in full, or apportioned over a period of up to 20 years.

**BOND** – A written promise to pay a specified sum of money (called the face value or principal amount) at a specified date or dates in the future (called the maturity date), together with periodic interest at a specified rate. The difference between a note and a bond is that the latter runs for a longer period of time and requires greater legal formality.

**BOND ANTICIPATION NOTE** – Short-term interest-bearing notes issued by a government in anticipation of bonds to be issued at a later date. Notes are retired from proceeds from the bond issue to which they are related (also referred to as a BAN).

**BOND AUTHORIZATION** – The action of Town Meeting authorizing the Board of Selectmen to raise money through the sale of bonds in a specific amount and for a specific purpose. Once authorized, issuance is by the treasurer upon the signature of the selectmen.

**CAPITAL EXCLUSION** – A *temporary* increase in the tax levy to fund a capital project or make a capital acquisition. Exclusions require 2/3 vote of the entire Board of Selectmen and a majority vote in a town-wide election. The exclusion is added to the tax levy only during the year in which the project is being funded and may increase the tax levy above the levy ceiling.

**CAPITAL FACILITY STABILIZATION FUND** - This fund was created at the 2007 Annual Town Meeting. The purpose of this fund is to allow the Town to reserve funds for design, maintenance, renovation or reconstruction relating to the structural integrity, building envelope or MEP (mechanical, electrical, plumbing) systems of then existing capital facilities. For this purpose, capital facility refers to any building or structure which is located on Town property and is under the jurisdiction of the Town Manager, including any Town owned building, structure, room, or space within a building, facility, park or plaza, open space, driveway, landscaped area, or other physical improvements under the administrative control of the Town.

**CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT FUND** – This fund was created at the 2004 Annual Town Meeting. The purpose of this Fund is to allow the Town to reserve funds for the acquisition of new equipment and/or the replacement of existing equipment (for which the Town may borrow money for a period of five years or more), and/or for building/facility improvements with a cost of less than \$250,000 (for which the Town

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may borrow money for a period of five years or more). Only general fund capital that has been recommended in the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) is eligible for funding in this manner.

**CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN (CIP)** – A financial planning and management tool that identifies public facility and equipment requirements and schedules them for funding and implementation.

**CAPITAL PROJECT** – Major, non-recurring expenditure involving one or more of the following: acquisition of land for a public purpose; construction of or addition to a facility such as a public building, water or sewer lines, play field, etc.; rehabilitation or repair of a building, facility, or equipment, provided the cost is \$25,000 or more and the improvement will have a useful life of five years or more; purchase of equipment costing \$25,000 or more, with a useful life of five years or more; and any planning, engineering, or design study related to an individual capital project.

**CHAPTER 90** – Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 90, Section 34 authorizes the Commonwealth to allocate funds to municipalities, through the Transportation Bond Issue, for highway construction, preservation and improvement projects that create or extend the life of capital facilities; routine maintenance operations such as pothole filling and snow and ice removal are not covered. The formula for determining the Chapter 90 level of funding is based on a municipality's miles of public ways, population and level of employment. Municipalities receive Chapter 90 reimbursement only for pre-approved projects.

**COMMUNITY PRESERVATION ACT (CPA)** – Enacted as Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 44B in 2000, CPA permits cities and towns accepting its provisions to establish a restricted fund from which monies can be appropriated only for a) the acquisition, creation and preservation of open space; b) the acquisition, preservation, rehabilitation, and restoration of historic resources; and c) the acquisition, creation and preservation of land for recreational use; d) the creation, preservation and support of community housing; and e) the rehabilitation and restoration of open space, land for recreational use and community housing that is acquired or created using monies from the fund. The local program is funded by a local surcharge up to 3 percent on real property tax bills and funds from the state generated from registry of deeds fees. The voters of Needham approved a 2 percent surcharge effective July 1, 2005.

**COMMUNITY PRESERVATION FUND** - A special revenue fund established pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 44B to receive all monies collected to support a community preservation program, including but not limited to, tax surcharge receipts, proceeds from borrowings, funds received from the Commonwealth, and proceeds from the sale of certain real estate.

**CONSERVATION FUND** – The Town may appropriate money to a conservation fund. This money may be expended by the Conservation Commission for lawful conservation purposes as described in Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 40 Section 8C. The money may also be expended by the Conservation Commission for damages arising from an eminent domain taking provided that the taking was approved by two-thirds vote of Town Meeting.

**CONTINGENT APPROPRIATION** – An appropriation that authorizes spending for a particular purpose only if subsequently approved in a voter referendum. Under Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 59 Section 21C (m), towns may make appropriations from the tax levy, available funds or borrowing, contingent upon the subsequent passage of a Proposition 2½ override or exclusion question for the same purpose. If initially approved at an annual Town Meeting, voter approval of the contingent appropriation must occur by certain date after

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the Town Meeting dissolves. The question may be placed before the voters at more than one election, but if not approved by the applicable deadline, the appropriation is null and void.

**DEBT EXCLUSION** – A *temporary* increase in the Town's levy limit (and possibly the levy ceiling) to exclude the payment of debt from the limits of Proposition 2½. The debt service is added to the levy limit for the life of the debt only. To place a debt exclusion question on the ballot requires a 2/3 vote of the entire Board of Selectmen. The debt exclusion question requires a majority vote by voters for passage.

**DEBT EXCLUSION OFFSET** – Other funds that are used to reduce the amount of the debt paid by the tax levy. An example is a bond premium which is the difference between the market price of a bond and its face value. A premium will occur when the bond's stated interest rate is set higher than the true interest cost (the market rate). Additions to the levy limit for debt exclusion are restricted to the true interest cost incurred to finance the excluded project. Premiums received at the time of sale must be offset against the stated interest cost in computing the debt exclusion. If receipt of the premium and the payment of interest at maturity of an excluded debt occur in different fiscal years, reservation of the premium for future year's debt service is required at the end of the fiscal year when the premium was received.

**DEBT LIMIT** – The maximum amount of gross or net debt that is legally permitted under State Law.

**DEBT POLICY** – Part of an overall capital financing policy that provides evidence of a commitment to meet infrastructure needs through a planned program of future financing. The Town of Needham has debt policies that have been developed in consultation with the Finance Committee and reviewed and approved by the Board of Selectmen.

**DEBT SERVICE** – The amount paid annually to cover the cost of both principal and interest on a debt issuance until its retirement.

**ENTERPRISE FUND** – A municipal fund established for the operation of a municipal utility, health care, recreational, or transportation facility whereby the operations are fully funded by the fees associated with that enterprise rather than by the tax levy. The "surplus" or retained earnings generated by the operation of the enterprise remain with the fund to offset future capital improvements, extraordinary maintenance expenses, or to reduce future fees and charges of the fund.

**FIXED ASSETS** – Assets of a long-term character, which are intended to continue to be held or used, such as land, building, and improvements other than buildings, machinery, and equipment.

**FULL FAITH AND CREDIT** – A pledge of the general taxing power for the payment of debt obligations. Bonds carrying such pledges are referred to as general obligation bonds or full faith and credit bonds.

**GENERAL OBLIGATION BONDS** – Bonds for the payment of which the full faith and credit of the issuing government are pledged.

**INFRASTRUCTURE** – The underlying foundation or basic framework of an organization or system, e.g., roads, bridges, buildings, land, and natural resources.

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**LEASE-PURCHASE AGREEMENTS** – Contractual agreements which are termed "leases," but which in substance amount to purchase contracts in which the financing is provided by an outside party.

**LEVY LIMIT** – Property tax levy limits that constrain the total amount of revenue that can be raised from the property tax. In Massachusetts, the levy limit is governed by Proposition 2½.

**NOTE PAYABLE** – In general, an unconditional written promise signed by the maker to pay a certain sum in money on demand or at a fixed or determinable time either to the bearer or to the person designated therein.

**OVERRIDE** – A permanent increase of the Town's levy limit (but not the levy ceiling) when a majority of voters in an election approve such an override. The override amount becomes part of the levy base when setting the next year's levy limit. To place an Override question on the ballot requires a majority vote of the Board of Selectmen.

**PAY-AS-YOU-GO** – A term used to describe the financial policy of a government which finances all of its capital outlay from current revenues rather than by borrowing. A government which pays for some improvements from current revenues and others by borrowing is said to be on a partial or modified pay-as-you-go basis.

**PAY-AS-YOU-USE** – A term used to describe the financial policy of a government which finances its capital outlays from borrowing proceeds and pays for capital assets over their useful life.

**PROPOSITION 2½** - That measure which limits municipal property taxes to 2½ percent of the community's full and fair cash value (levy ceiling), and which limits the amount of revenue a municipality can raise through property taxes (levy limit) to 2½ percent each year, plus a factor for new growth. A municipality may exceed its levy limit in two ways: override or debt exclusion.

**STABILIZATION FUND** – Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 40, Section 5B allows a municipality to appropriate annually to such fund an amount to be raised in the preceding fiscal year; the aggregate amount in the fund shall not exceed ten percent of the equalized valuation of the municipality. The Treasurer shall be custodian of the fund and may invest the proceeds legally; any interest earned shall remain with the fund. The Stabilization Fund may be appropriated by Town Meeting. The appropriation may be used for any lawful purpose.

**UNIFORM PROCUREMENT ACT** – Enacted in 1990, Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 30B establishes uniform procedures for local government to use when contracting for supplies, equipment, services and real estate. The act is implemented through the Office of the Inspector General.

**UNDESIGNATED FUND BALANCE (ALSO CALLED FREE CASH)** – A community's unrestricted available funds that may be used as a funding source for appropriations. Undesignated **Fund** Balance is generated when the actual operating results compare favorably with the budget. It can only be used after the certification process by the Department of Revenue is complete. For example, the July 1, 2010 certified amount may be used to fund supplemental appropriations voted during fiscal year 2011, or applied as a revenue source to support the fiscal 2012 budget voted in the spring of 2011.