

# Town of Eaton Capital Improvements Plan—2024

## Introduction:

The Eaton Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) is an advisory document created by the Capital Improvements Committee, the formation of which was approved by a vote at the Town Meeting on March 21, 2023. The CIP will list a recommended program of municipal capital improvement projects in accordance with New Hampshire RSA 674:5-8.

## The CIP will:

- provide the Eaton Select Board with a guide for portions of the annual budgeting process;
- aid in the provision of a stable property tax base over many years;
- aid the Select Board, Town Committees and Road Agent in prioritizing municipal expenses;
- inform residents and developers of planned Eaton capital improvements.

## Goals:

In planning for long-term capital expenditures and their funding, the CIP will help protect taxpayers from large swings in their tax bills. The plan will include an evaluation of large expenditures for Town buildings, roads, equipment and the School District.

Needed expenditures are effected by properly planning, scheduling and setting aside funds, as well as by potential borrowing via bonds or bank loans.

For purposes of a CIP, the State of New Hampshire designated capital improvement projects as items that cost more than \$10,000 and have a useful life of at least 8 years. However, most normal projects and

equipment purchases in Eaton have been provided for via the yearly budgeting process and/or the establishment of Capital Reserve accounts.

The Town annually puts funds into Capital Reserve accounts in anticipation of buying new highway equipment and covering unanticipated expenses for the Town Hall, office equipment, cemeteries and other Town buildings.

Revaluing the Town for tax assessment purposes occurs every five years and the cost is anticipated and funded through a separate Capital Reserve account. Also, the Eaton School District is anticipating the purchase of a new school bus and is aware of likely increased costs for special education services. The Town raises funds for the Capital Reserve accounts for these needs every year.

This CIP concerns itself with four major potential expenditures:

- 1—reconstructing gravel roads and repaving paved roads;
- 2—funding of expanding school system needs;
- 3—constructing an addition to the Town Hall;
- 4—building a new, larger garage for Eaton's road equipment.

Members of the Capital Improvements Committee are:

Ed Reilly— Select Board  
Richard Heath, Jr.— Road Agent  
Jane Gray—Citizen Member—ex-School Board Representative  
Monique Hebert— School Board Representative  
David Norton—Citizen Consultant in Construction  
Greg Grinnell— Select Board  
Peter Klose— Planning Board  
Lianne Boelzner— Town Administrator.

### Item #1: Road Reconstruction:

The cost of reconstructing most gravel roads over the next ten years is estimated at \$950,000 and repaving the paved roads at \$775,000. The Committee calculated that much of this work could be done on a year-by-year basis and included in the annual budget.

The costs may actually be lower than expected, borne out by the recent (fall-2023) cost of \$125,000 to repave Stewart Road and smaller sections of other roads as part of the same expenditure.

Further, the Road Agent felt that a more pressing issue was the preservation of our expensive and mostly new road equipment in a larger, better-insulated garage.

Eaton's Master Plan on page 8 states that a goal of our road system is "To preserve and enhance the road network in Eaton". The annual budgeting process allows us to avoid putting this need into the CIP.

### Item#2: School System Funding:

Increased funding for School System needs is due to greater monetary requirements for special needs students, as mandated by the State (amount unknown). There will also be costs due to increasing enrollments as Eaton's population slowly grows and due to cost increases passed on from the Conway School District. Specifics are not known at present.

The Committee's review indicated that not enough detailed information on School System needs was available. Also, it seemed likely that increases will be fundable via the yearly budgeting process, without severe effects on tax rates. Thus, this item was not included in the CIP.

### Item #3: Town Hall Addition:

At present, Eaton's Town Hall has no security or privacy for daily activities by the Town Administrator or Town Clerk. This includes security for computers, personal data, a safe haven for historical documents, and personal safety for the office workers.

Eaton could readily be sued if personal data are stolen. Our open computer locations and lack of enclosed offices makes this a possibility. The potential for theft or robbery exists due to the Clerk having cash exposed during evening work hours—the entire first floor is open to any visitor.

Meetings by the various boards and the Select Board are often held at the same time that private transactions are taking place by the Clerk or Administrator, leading to noise and an unacceptable spread of information to non-target audiences.

The Committee reviewed the idea of building enclosed offices in the west end of the building for the Town Administrator and in the east end for the Town Clerk. However, doing this will require that the entire building be brought up to modern building codes for electric wiring, security, insulation, fire safety and handicapped access. The cost for all these code changes and upgrades could be about the same as the proposed cost of an addition (\$250k to \$300k).

Further, if two enclosed offices are built in the ends of the first floor, the remaining space will be too small to hold state and federal elections or any sizable meetings such as for the Joint Boards, Town Meeting or major public presentations.

The Committee studied constructing an addition of 24' depth and 38' width, with full basement, at the rear of the existing Town Hall. This design will allow for private, quiet, secure work and meetings in each of the offices. Each independent office will be lockable so Town employees can work safely during the day or after hours.

An entry hall will allow visitors to wait in a seating area until called by either town worker. An ADA disability accessible bathroom would be part of the

design. The basement room will be climate controlled to house present files and historical Eaton documents, also lockable.

The new addition will allow use of the entire existing main floor for elections, Town meetings and large gatherings. Having the full open space in the main floor also speaks to our designation of the Town Hall as the emergency meeting place for Eaton residents in case of a catastrophe.

#### Town Hall Addition Benefits:

- Lifespan of 75 to 100 years;
- Up-to-date security for employees;
- Code compliant construction;
- Complete computer and cyber security;
- Reduced heating costs;
- Fire-resistant, climate-controlled storage for all documents;
- Improved workspace efficiency.
- Estimated cost—\$300,000 although expected to be less by having the Road Agent do the site prep and citizens contributing time and materials as appropriate.

#### Item #4: New Town Garage:

Discussions were held to assess the possibility of renovating the equipment garage to allow for inclusion of all the existing road equipment.

The existing garage is old and undersized (40' x 50') for our equipment. Heating is a combination of propane and wood stove. The wood stove is old, inefficient and unhealthy. Cutting, splitting wood and keeping a fire going is poor use of highly-trained manpower, plus wood and the stove take up needed space for equipment.

Existing insulation is no more than two inches thick and torn in many places. The roof insulation is so thin that snow melts, often causing water problems on the garage floor due to formation of outside snow/ice dams. The structure was built 50 years ago at a time when snow load standards were lower. The existing garage would not support a normal full snow load if we were to insulate the roof and walls to modern codes. Insulation upgrades would require almost complete structural rebuilding at great cost. Even if that were done, the garage would still be too small for our equipment pool.

Much of our equipment is stored outside, often leading to frozen sand spreaders, discharged batteries and snow/ice covered trucks not ready for plowing. Keeping equipment outside shortens their lifespan and increases costs for repairs and replacement. Lack of space in the old garage limits how and when pieces of equipment can be accessed. The old single large door has often frozen, preventing movement of equipment when needed.

Thus, the Committee proposes a new garage, sized 80' x 80' with five large doors instead of the single one in the present garage. The floor space will be large and open (no posts), allowing all of our road machinery to be stored inside. The plan calls for new office space, a tool room, a modern bathroom, a new septic system and an outside hoistway for attaching plows and sanders to trucks.

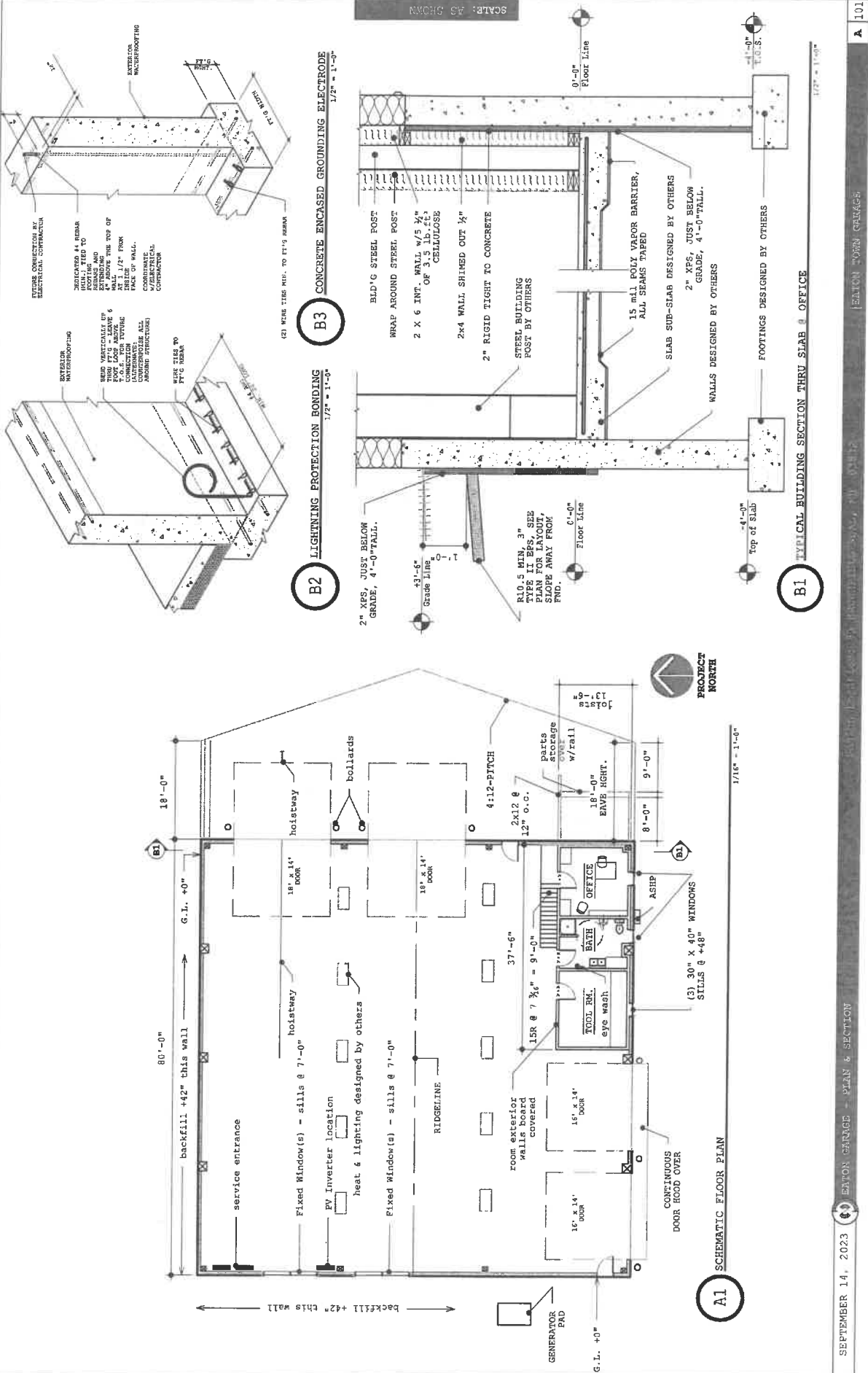
The new garage will be located in the NW corner of the property, requiring removal of the wooden open shed. The old garage will be kept and used for indoor storage of sand, thus avoiding working with frozen sand just when needed by the sanding crew.

## New Garage Benefits:

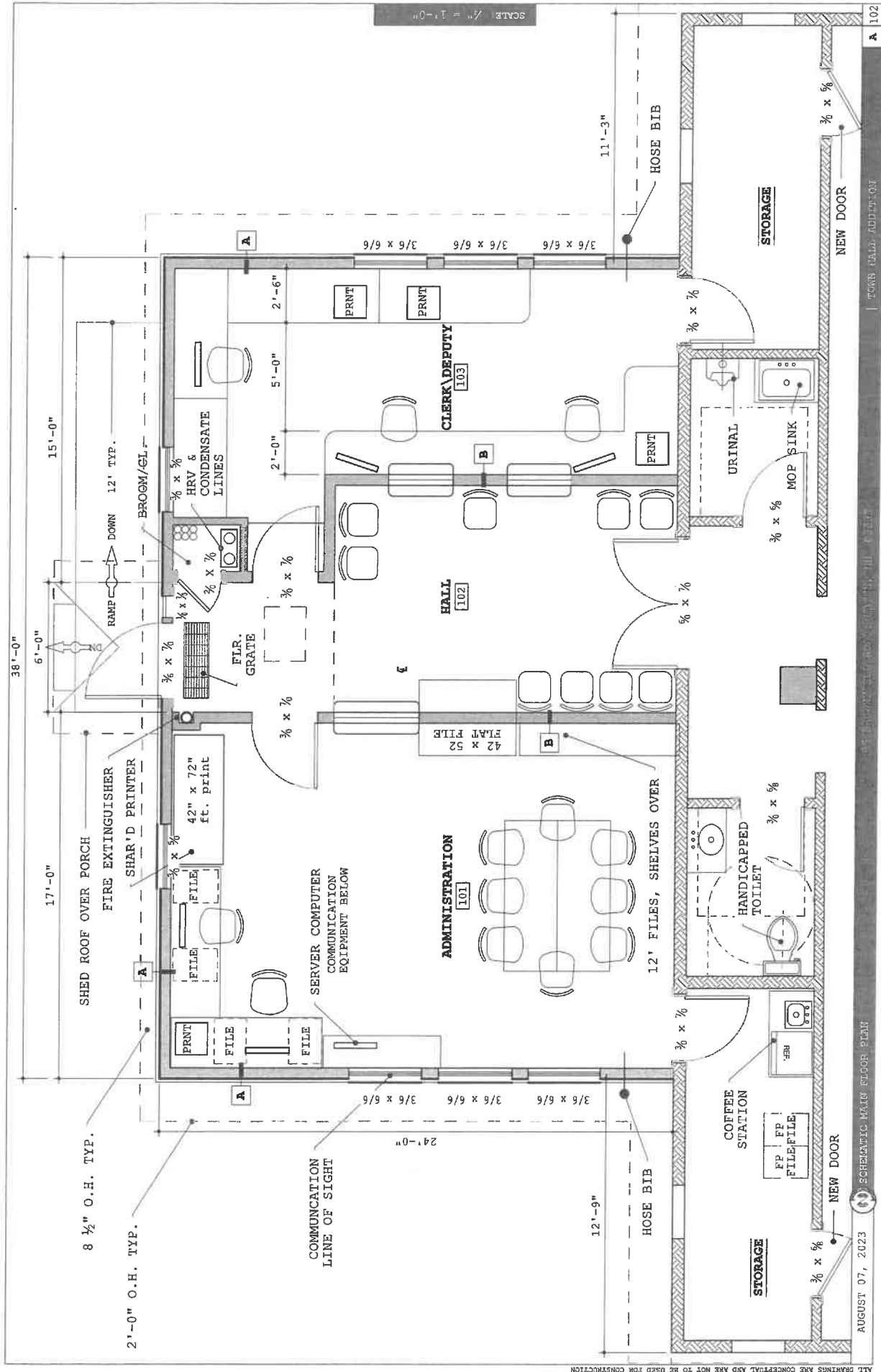
- Safer, more efficient operating conditions;
- Longer life of trucks, grader, backhoe and plows;
- Complete weather protection for all road equipment;
- Multiple ingress/egress options for trucks;
- Lifespan of 75 to 100 years;
- Elimination of wood stove heating;
- Reduction of heating costs via modern insulation;
- Improved usability of equipment in the winter;
- Improved ventilation and healthier working environment;
- Potential for future roof-mounted solar system and Power Wall to cover most of Town Hall and Garage electric needs;
- Cyber security—connection to Town Hall computer system.
- Estimated cost \$1.2 million (likely through a 10-year bond or bank loan.).

## Summary:

- a) Many expenditures which fit into the State's definition of a Capital Improvements Plan are handled in Eaton through the annual budget process.
- b) Eaton's road reconstruction and paving projects can be completed incrementally and funded via the annual budget;
- c) Future School System costs are not well defined and should be funded through the annual budget.
- d) A Town Hall addition is highly recommended by the CIP committee; funding may require the multi-year build-up of a Capital Reserve fund or the taking out of a bank loan.
- e) A new Town road equipment garage is also highly recommended for inclusion in the CIP; this longer-term project will improve working conditions, reduce expenses, reduce heating costs and safeguard our road equipment; funding may be by a ten-year bond or bank loan.







SCALE 1/8" = 1'-0"

ALL DRAWINGS ARE CONCEPTUAL AND ARE NOT TO BE USED FOR CONSTRUCTION

