

Town of Barrington
Highway Department
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Barrington Highway Department Short Term Heavy Equipment Replacement Schedule

I have already included in my budget materials the long-term heavy equipment replacement schedule which tries to predict a perfect world scenario for the replacement of our vehicles. Due to certain factors that have come to light recently, I think it best to zoom in on the short-term program so that we all are aware of what we are up against.

First is the fact that the Town is growing at a rapid rate, and we will be looking at taking over a number of new roads in the next two years, or sooner. We have already inherited the maintenance on Overlook Drive last winter, and we have at least 3 more in the pipeline to do the same thing. This will require more trucks and manpower to deal with the increased services. If this were 20 years ago, I would say we could go to the outside and hire more private plow contractors to handle the extra burden, and not increase our head count or the need for additional equipment. Such is not the case anymore, as we are barely able to scrape up enough contractors to help us now, and those will be disappearing one by one with not much hope of replacement. So bottom line is, we will be into it for another man and another plow truck minimum. The additional man will be daunting enough to find, but the truck will be even worse for reasons I will elaborate on. The lead time to procure a new, fully rigged municipal truck of any size is at an industry standard of 12 to 18 months. Part of the problem is the time to manufacture a cab and chassis, part of it is finding an upfit vendor, all of whom are swamped, and can't find any quality help, and sadly, the time it takes to shake all the bugs out of the new truck when you receive it, because of poor workmanship. This phenomenon has been getting noticeably worse with each succeeding truck we have gotten. Bottom line here is. if we are going to take over more roads within two years, we need to procure the equipment soon.

Another part of the problem is the fact that our 2012 plow truck with only 70,000 miles on it, fell into an early state of unuse because it was only driven in winter by our part timer Bob Brown. The truck was put away in April and not looked at until October. It is basically rusting into the ground and will soon reach a point where the dependability will be going away. So, there is a pretty good chance any new truck we do get will be filling in for this one that will be broke down. It is sad that this is an issue, but all I can do is try to eliminate that situation of disuse going forward. This lays out the short-term issue with trucks. Let's move on to the equipment. We currently possess, two front end loaders. One is an old Komatsu which still runs, but has a brake issue that is very expensive to fix, along with a severe rust issue. It is currently unsafe to use in this condition. Our newer loader is a 2015 John Deere 444K, its grossly underpowered, and too small to do what we need; however, it would make a good backup machine for us and take the place of the old Komatsu which could be sold.

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We also possess a 2011 Challenger tractor which serves as our roadside mower. This unit only runs 4 months out of the year, and is of no use whatsoever other than mowing roadsides. This tractor also has had a list of problems that have plagued it since it was new. Any real dealer support for it went away the year after it was bought. We are now just barely able to breathe life into it to hopefully run half the time we need it. So much money has been spent on this for so little use, it fiscally impossible to justify having it.

What I would urge the selectboard to consider is a move to consolidate some of this equipment, eliminating two problems, and end up with fewer pieces of equipment that will have more usefulness and diversity. So, the plan would be to sell the old Komatsu loader, and the Challenger mowing tractor eliminating two maintenance nightmares. Purchase a new loader a size larger than our current John Deere unit, and move the Deere unit to secondary loader status. Also with the new loader, purchase a quick disconnect reach mower to replace the Challenger tractor. This exercise would effectively remove two very problematic pieces, and replace them with one new one with a mower attachment. This way everything is useable all year except for the mower attachment which is hydraulically driven and has no engine to wear out. This would also allow us two loaders fit for the road when we have to clean up after snowstorms.

Now let's talk money. A fully rigged six-wheel plow truck with sander is in the realm of \$220,000. We will have to purchase a new sander with this one because it will be an additional unit, and we have no older sander to transfer to it.

A new loader the size of what we need is in the range of \$300,000, and the accompanying mower attachment would come in between \$50,000 to \$75,000. Between the truck and the new loader, we are looking at \$595,000. By the time we buy the latest two-ton truck that we have ordered, the balance in the capital reserve account will be around \$100,000. Last year I requested \$300,000 for heavy equipment reserve with a request also to consider \$300,000 per year for the next two years. I was granted \$200,000 which went a long way towards getting rid of some problems, but we still have a way to go. After laying these scenarios out for you, I still believe we need to go back to my original request from a year ago, of \$300,000 for 2024, 2025, and 2026, and also accelerate the purchase of the next plow truck so we can get ahead of the curve of the new roads we will be handed.

It has been said by a very revered previous selectman that every time I appear before you, it is always because my department needs money. His statement was absolutely true. This business that I do on your behalf is a very expensive one to do correctly. Personally, I am fiscally conservative, and I don't like coming before you requesting numbers like these, but if I don't make you aware of impending situations that will require huge amounts of money, or if I just allow us to get over our head by not calling these situations out, just so we can maintain a "feel good status", then at that point I am not the road agent that you need.

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As I have said before Barrington is growing fast, and as painful as it is, we have no choice but to grow our departments along with it. Sadly, there is no viable alternative. It is the often-unanticipated price of prosperity.

Respectfully submitted
Marc Moreau