



MASTER PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE

REPORT TO PETERBOROUGH SELECT BOARD REGARDING HIGHWAY, POLICE, AND FIRE FACILITIES



NOVEMBER 25, 2008

INTRODUCTION

This report is the result of an assessment of municipal facilities conducted by the Master Plan Steering Committee (MPSC) at the request of the Select Board. Specifically, the Committee was asked to examine three facilities – Highway, Police, and Fire, following other planning and assessment work previously conducted: the Weller & Michal Report of November 2005; the Municipal Needs Study Task Force Report of August 2006; and the 2006 assessment of the NEBS building for municipal facilities. The basic task assigned the Committee was twofold: (1) assess whether these three facilities are functionally adequate for current as well as future needs; and (2) if not, what should be done about it.

The conclusions reached by the Steering Committee are stated below, followed by the process the Committee undertook to reach these conclusions.

- (1) The Highway and Buildings and Grounds functions should be combined with the Utilities Division off of Pheasant Road when the new Wastewater Treatment Plant is constructed.
- (2) Police and Fire functions should be combined in a joint Public Safety Complex. To meet the more urgent needs of the Fire Department the building should be constructed to accommodate the Fire Department first and in tandem with any shared spaces, planning for a future move by the Police Department, which could be at a later date. A site has yet to be identified for such a complex.

FACT-FINDING BY MASTER PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE

A. Review of Related Reports/Planning Activity

The first task of the Committee was to review the two reports and the planning activity related to the NEBS building. A synopsis of this work is as follows:

1. Weller & Michal Report. The assessment conducted by this firm concluded that these facilities suffered from various levels of physical space restriction; in particular, the Fire and Highway facilities were judged to be the least adequate. The report further concluded that these facilities were unsuitable for rehabilitation or reconstruction.
2. Municipal Needs Study Task Force. This group was organized by the Select Board to review and comment on the Weller & Michal Report. They did this, and reached the same conclusions as that report. In addition, the group attempted to identify appropriate/available sites for relocating the facilities (see Map #1). Please note that in doing so, the Task Force examined only Town-owned parcels, with one exception, that being the Hospital site.
3. NEBS Study. In late summer of 2006 the Town had an opportunity to acquire the NEBS property off of Route 202 in north Peterborough. This triggered an extensive review by Town staff of the suitability of this facility and location for a combined municipal complex. Many issues were raised during this review, both positive and negative. It was during this process that the public response to keeping Fire and Police in the Downtown area was most vocalized. Consideration for acquisition ceased once it was determined that the costs to bring the building into compliance with required building codes for municipal facilities would be prohibitive.

B. Site Visits to the Facilities

On June 6, June 11, and June 18, 2007 members of the Master Plan Steering Committee visited the Police Station, Fire Station, the Highway Garage, and the Utilities Division, in that order. Department personnel were on hand in each case, to guide the tour, explain their respective procedures, and answer any questions the Committee members had. Following these visits, the

Department Heads were invited to a MPSC meeting so that follow-up questions from the Committee could be addressed. At these visits, the MPSC heard that Police and Fire would like to merge and operate jointly, and that the Public Works Director would like to combine as many of the public works operations under one roof – or on one site – as possible.

C. Public Input Process

In addition to the regular monthly meetings of the Steering Committee, to which the public is always invited and welcome, two public informational meetings were held on-site at two of the facilities in question. On July 30, 2007 the MPSC held a public meeting at the Highway Garage on Elm Street. The purpose of this meeting was specifically to receive public input on the issue of the particular municipal facilities examined to date. Prior to opening the meeting to public comment, the participants were first provided with an overview of the work done to date by consultants, Town Officials and volunteers, and the MPSC.

On June 11, 2008, the MPSC held a public meeting at the Fire Station on Summer Street that followed the same format as that used for the previous public meeting. This meeting, however, focused on the question of the Police and Fire facilities.

D. Examination of Privately-Owned Parcels

In August of 2008 the Master Plan Steering Committee presented their findings to date to the Select Board. They explained that all of their research and examinations had focused on the Town-owned properties, with the exception of the Hospital, as had the Municipal Needs Study Task Force, and that they had reached the same conclusions regarding these three facilities; since they agreed that the Highway Garage should relocate to the site of the new Wastewater Treatment Plant on Pheasant Road, and that Fire and Police should be in a joint facility, the only remaining question was a suitable location. They also noted that, given their findings, whether they should explore privately-owned parcels, recognizing that such an analysis would need to be sensitive to individual property owners. The Select Board agreed, and requested that the Steering Committee go back and engage in the same analytical procedure, expanding their scope to include privately-owned parcels. The Board wondered whether, by doing this, something might come to light that had not yet presented itself.

The Steering Committee set about this new task by first asking the Police and Fire Chiefs to come in to a meeting and provide them with two pieces of information: (1) a geographic parameter beyond which they would not wish to be located; and (2) whether a parcel of less than five acres could be adequate if it met certain other characteristics. The geographic parameters were described as follows and shown on Map #2: no farther north than the North Dam and Route 136, no farther south than Noone Falls, no farther east than Route 123, and no farther west than Elm Street. As for land area, the Chiefs felt that five acres would be ideal, but the Committee decided to also take into consideration lots of three-four acres in size.

RESULTS OF FACT-FINDING

The general consensus of the MPSC after reviewing the previous reports, visiting the four sites, and hearing from Department personnel is that the assessments reported by Weller & Michal were substantially accurate. Both the Fire Station and the Highway Garage are judged to be inadequate, both for today's needs and for the future. The Police Station is adequate for today's needs, although storage has been and continues to be a challenge for the Department. The Utilities Division is also considered to be inadequate, although an upgrade for this facility is already in the planning stages as part of the Town-approved new Wastewater Treatment Facility.

The public input process engaged in by the MPSC generated significant discussion about the future location and state of these municipal facilities; it could not however be said that a consensus was reached on any given issue. Concerns expressed by the public ranged from fiscal

impacts and social impacts to neighborhood and potential environmental issues associated with some of the locations.

The examination of privately-owned parcels began with a mapping exercise that identified parcels within the geographic parameters (see Map #2) as follows:

1. Parcels greater than 5 acres, vacant and occupied.
2. Parcels less than 5 acres, vacant and occupied.
3. Assessment as to whether the parcel was unlikely to be available (for example, the Hospital, the Elementary School, the Commons).
4. Presence of environmental constraints (wetlands, floodplain, Shoreland Conservation Zone).

This exercise resulted in the preliminary identification of eleven parcels; these are illustrated on Maps #3 and #4. The Steering Committee then engaged in the same advantages/disadvantages exercise they had used on the Town-owned parcels, and the results of that exercise are presented in Table #3. In sum, the analysis of privately-owned parcels identified similar issues as had been identified with the Town-owned parcels, with two significant differences: (1) any of these parcels would have to be purchased; and (2) several of them contain existing commercial operations, so that if they were purchased for Town use, the Town would lose the tax revenue generated by the use, as well as that commercial activity if it could not find another suitable location in town.

SUMMARY OF ISSUE IDENTIFICATION

Throughout the data collection and public input process of consultants, town staff and the MPSC, a number of issues came to the forefront; some issues are common to all three facilities, others are specific to a facility and/or location. Set forth below is the process followed by the Committee in working through the issues:

1. Initial site considerations were Town-owned parcels that are the current sites of municipal facilities, and a portion of the Hospital property that abuts Route 202 (see Figure #1). The Hospital site was removed from consideration following detailed topographic mapping that showed much steeper slopes than had been realized, which would increase the cost of site development substantially.
2. Since the Steering Committee accepted the conclusions of the previous reports regarding the deficiencies of the facilities, especially the Fire Station and Highway Garage, the options to consider were always the following:
 - a. Do nothing
 - b. Make repairs/improvements to the existing facility
 - c. Build new
3. If a new facility – either separate or combined, is to be considered, the choices then involved the suitability of the available Town-owned parcels:
 - a. Each of the three facilities was analyzed in terms of the needs of that facility and the ability of its current site to meet those needs (see Table #1).
 - b. Each site was analyzed in terms of its advantages and disadvantages for each of the three facilities (see Table #2).
4. The identification and analysis of privately-owned parcels for a public safety complex mirrored the process followed for the Town-owned parcels; the results are contained in Table #3.

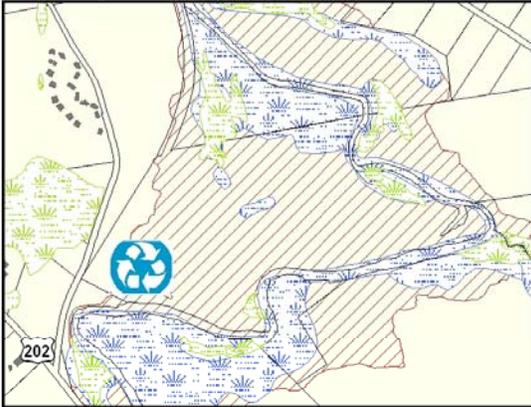
CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions reached by the Committee are as follows:

- The Committee agreed with and supported the professional opinions of the Department Heads regarding the advantages of combining their respective facilities.
- Given the pending construction of a new wastewater treatment plant, there is an opportunity for certain economies of scale in site work and construction that will accommodate an eventual inclusion of the Highway Department and Buildings and Grounds with the Utilities Department.
- When the location assessment was conducted for Evans Flats, the environmental disadvantages and negative neighborhood impacts weighed heavily in the thought process.
- The primary advantage for Evans Flats appears to be that it is Town-owned and therefore financially advantageous.
- The Committee recognizes that there will be cost-benefit advantages or disadvantages to the various locations, but that there are other considerations besides economic that have value to the public, and these are decisions that will ultimately be made by the voters of Peterborough.
- The question of a suitable and appropriate location for a Public Safety Complex is a complicated one, and not one that the Committee is able to answer at this time. Adding to the complexity is that the Police Station is currently functional, and is soon to be improved, with the construction of storage space in the garage and the repair of the garage roof. The Fire Station has more immediate structural issues. The Committee is comfortable with an opinion that the two services should be combined, but the location and the timing of any construction or reconstruction are questions yet to be resolved. A "perfect" location may not exist, but potential locations can be evaluated based on particular criteria.
- The analysis of privately-owned parcels resulted in similar conclusions, in that there were disadvantages to every parcel and in most cases the disadvantages outweigh the advantages.

**MAP #1:
INITIAL SELECTED LOCATIONS FOR FACILITIES PLANNING**

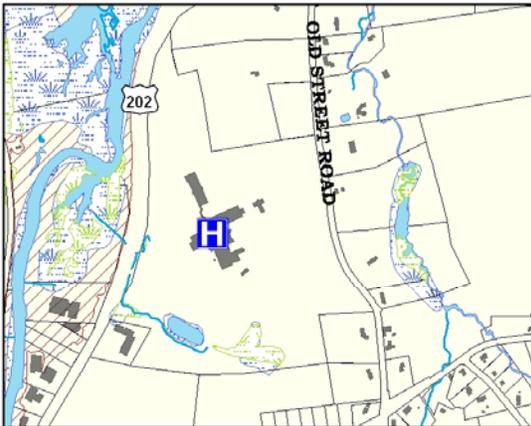
Recycling Center (74 +/- Acres)



Evans Flats (26 +/- Acres)



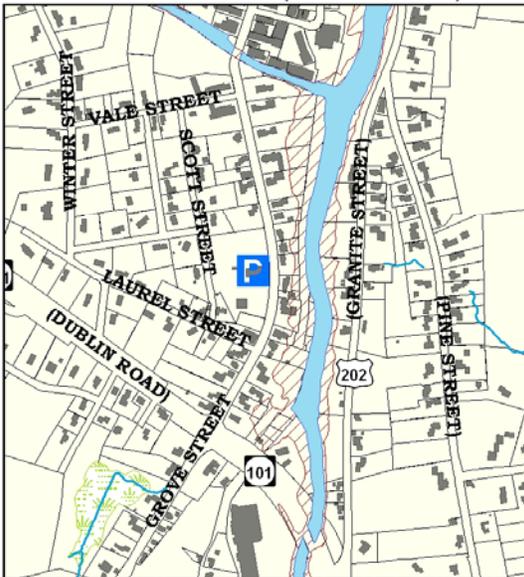
Hospital (65 +/- Acres)



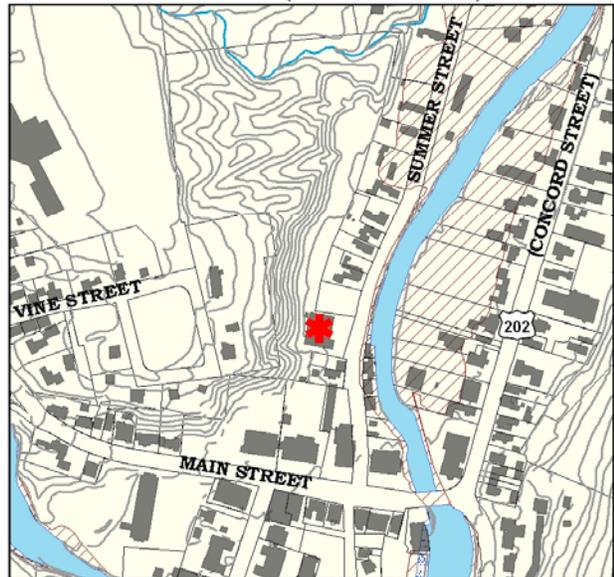
Treatment Plant (75 +/- Acres)



Police Station (3 +/- Acres)



Fire Station (10 +/- Acres)



**TABLE #1:
FACILITY & LOCATION ISSUES**

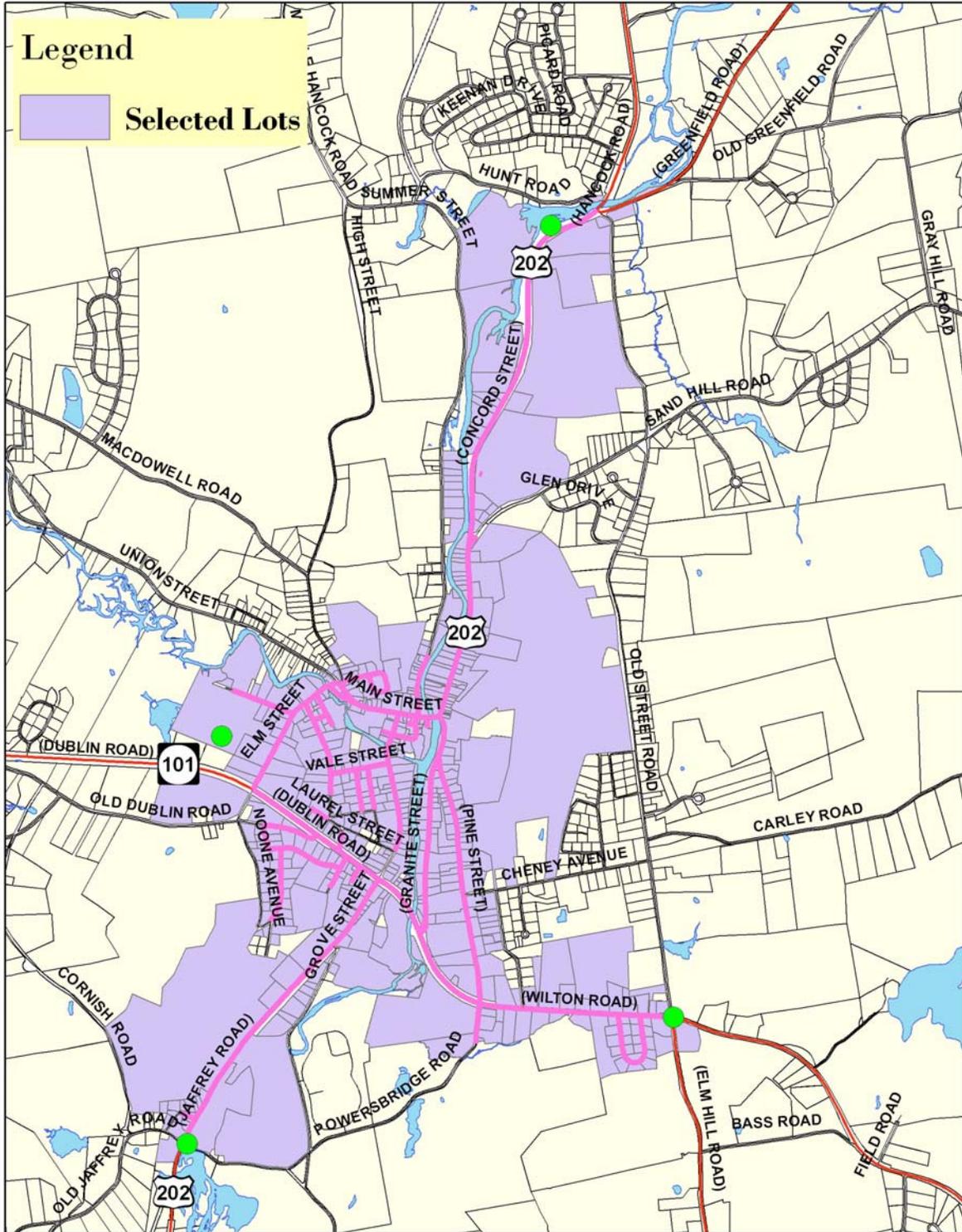
Facility	Facility Issues	Current Location Issues
1. Highway Garage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · How much space is considered adequate · Building and fire code problems: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Inadequate fire separation ○ Non-ADA compliant ○ Expansion not possible due to construction type ○ Extremely energy-inefficient 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Availability of adequate land area for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Building ○ Parking ○ Debris management ○ Snow dump ○ Salt and sand storage ○ Fuel depot · Environmental Impacts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Wetlands ○ Aquifers ○ Pollutants
2. Fire Station	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Building and fire code problems: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Undersized apparatus bays ○ Not fully sprinklered ○ Does not meet seismic codes ○ Expansion not realistic based on construction type ○ Non-ADA compliant ○ Electrical and Mechanical deficiencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Moving apparatus through congested Downtown · Inadequate land area for expansion
3. Police Station	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Storage space for evidence and archived records · Separate holding area for juveniles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Moderately-adequate land area for expansion
Applicable to All Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Cost-benefit to repair/improve versus rebuild 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Impacts on the Neighborhood: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Noise ○ Lights ○ Traffic · Is the highest and best use of the land as a municipal facility, or as a tax-paying use?

**TABLE #2:
LOCATION OPTIONS ISSUES (Town-Owned)**

Location	Advantages	Disadvantages
1. Elm Street	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Adequate land area for only some but not all functions · Closer to Downtown for snow removal and sidewalk plowing · Easy access off of Route 101 · Current operations have minimal impact on neighboring residential properties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Located over an aquifer · Complete use of the site is constrained by wetlands · Any expansion could have negative impacts on the neighborhood and on on-site and adjacent wetlands
2. Summer Street	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Psychological value to residents of having public safety services located in the Downtown · Moderate impacts on the neighborhood – mixed uses, not just residential · Environmental impacts are minimal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · No usable land area for expansion · Traffic congestion at certain times of the day
3. Grove Street	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Psychological value to the residents of public safety services being visible and close to Downtown · Easy access to both Routes 101 and 202 · Available land area for moderate expansion · No known environmental impacts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Increased activity could have negative impacts on the predominantly residential neighborhood.
4. Pheasant Road	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · More than adequate land area for any or all of the facilities · Adequate area to buffer noise and light impacts · Environmental impacts are minimal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Located north of the geographic center and of the most populated areas of town · Traffic would increase by the nursing home and the apartment complex
Applicable to All Sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · What is the importance of proximity to the geographic center of town? · What is the cost-benefit of relocating any given facility versus staying in place? · What is cost-benefit of combining any of the facilities? · Are there benefits, other than economic, to combining any of the facilities? · How would the various properties be used if a facility relocated? 	

MAP #2:
LOT SELECTION WITHIN GEOGRAPHIC PARAMETERS FOR PUBLIC SAFETY COMPLEX

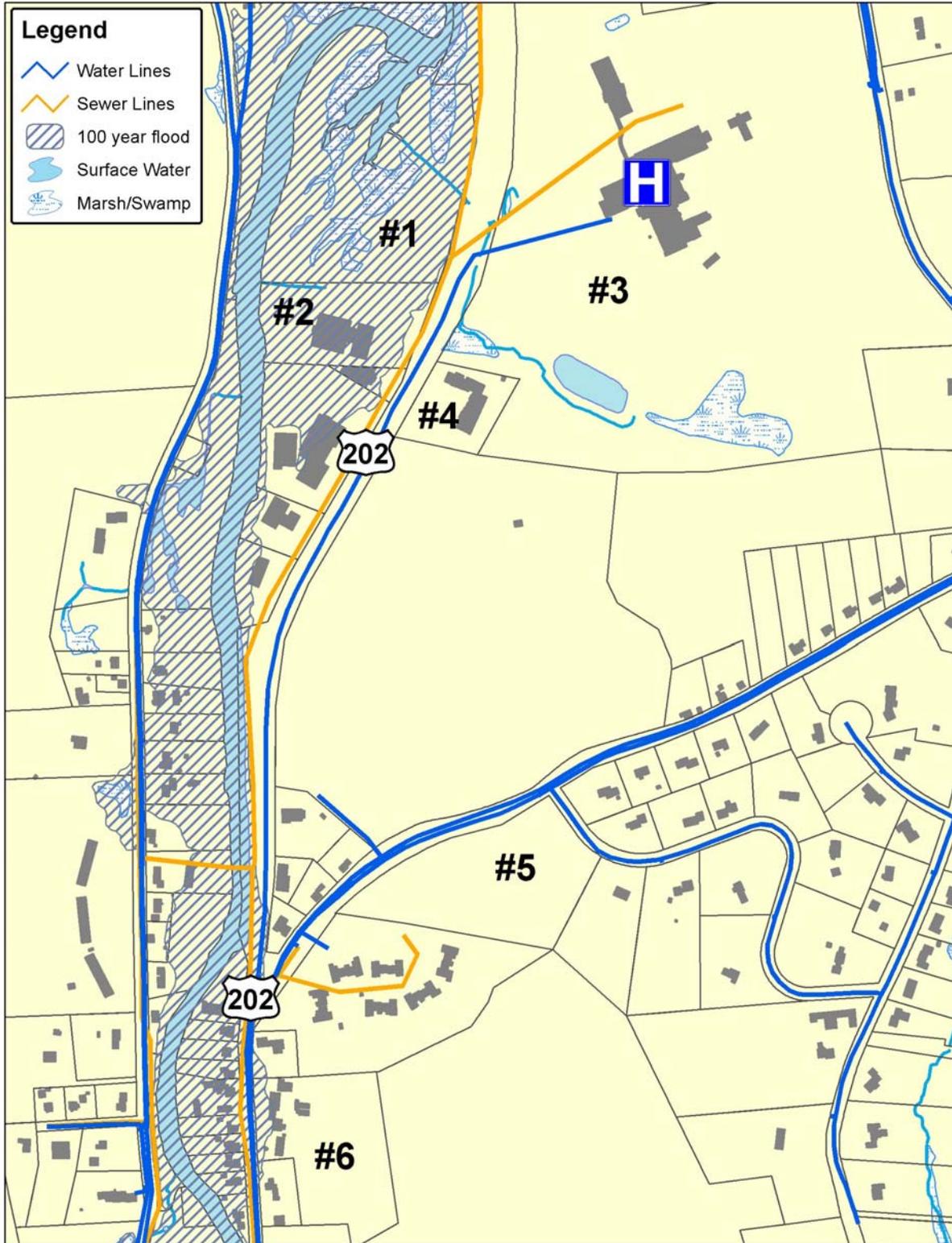
Initial Lot Selection



**TABLE #3:
PUBLIC SAFETY COMPLEX LOCATION OPTIONS ISSUES (Privately-Owned)**

Parcel #/Location	Advantages	Disadvantages
1. Route 202 North	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Located across the road from the future Connector Road · Situated in the geographic center of town 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Parcel is constrained by wetlands, floodplain, and Shoreland Conservation Zone
2. Route 202 North	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Located across the road from the future Connector Road · Situated in the geographic center of town 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Parcel is constrained by floodplain and Shoreland Conservation Zone · Is occupied and generates tax revenue
3. Route 202 North	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Situated in the geographic center of town · Adjacent to Hospital 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Portion of lot that would be available is steep, leaving little developable area, and costly to develop
4. Route 202 North	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Situated in the geographic center of town 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Parcel is not large enough for future expansion · Is occupied and generates tax revenue
5. Sand Hill Road	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Parcel has adequate size for current and future use · Located near Route 202 north · Is currently unoccupied · Has sand and gravel resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Adjacent to existing residential neighborhood · Attractive as undeveloped land
6. Concord Street	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Located near the geographic center and close to Hospital 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Much of the parcel is steep slope · Located in a densely-developed mixed-use neighborhood · Is occupied and generates tax revenue
7. Village Commercial District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Proximity to Route 202 South 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Much of the parcel has wetlands · Abuts residential neighborhood
8. Village Commercial District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Proximity to Routes 101 & 202 · Vacant · Parcel has adequate size for current and future use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Although vacant, is a very desirable commercial location
9. Village Commercial District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Proximity to Route 202 South 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Parcel is constrained by wetlands, floodplain, and Shoreland Conservation Zone · Is currently occupied and generates tax revenue
10. Village Commercial District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Proximity to Routes 101 & 202 · Vacant · Parcel has adequate size for current and future use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Costly to purchase · Needs extensive site work · Although vacant, is a desirable commercial location
11. Wilton Road	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Excellent site distance and accessibility · Parcel has adequate size for current and future use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Location not ideal for call volumes to the north · Parcel has a conservation easement on a portion

MAP #3:
PARCELS #1 - #6



MAP #4:
PARCELS #7 - #1

