



MASTER PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE

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



AUGUST 5, 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 that had been conducted: the Weller & Michal Report of November 2005; the Municipal Needs Study Task Force Report of August 2006; and the 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:

- i. 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.
- ii. 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 this report. In addition, the group attempted to identify appropriate/available sites for relocating the facilities see Map #1).
- iii. 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.

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.

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).

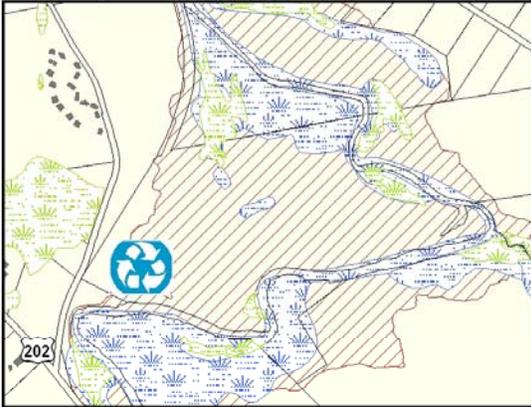
CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions reached by the Committee are, first of all, to be viewed as preliminary conclusions, since the MPSC considers that its work is not yet complete. These preliminary conclusions, then, are based principally on the following:

- 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.
- By the end of this process the Steering Committee decided that it needed to expand its potential sites for a Public Safety Complex by looking at non-town owned parcels as well, since the suitability of the town-owned lands is still unresolved. To begin that discussion, the Committee asked the Police and Fire Chiefs to define a geographic parameter for a Public Safety Complex. The response was that the site should be located no farther north than the North Dam, no farther south than Noone Falls, no farther east than Old Street Road, 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. This analysis is just beginning as of this writing, therefore no information or results of this search are included here. The Committee may ask for assistance in the form of an independent party to assess and prioritize the parcels that are identified by the Committee’s search.

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

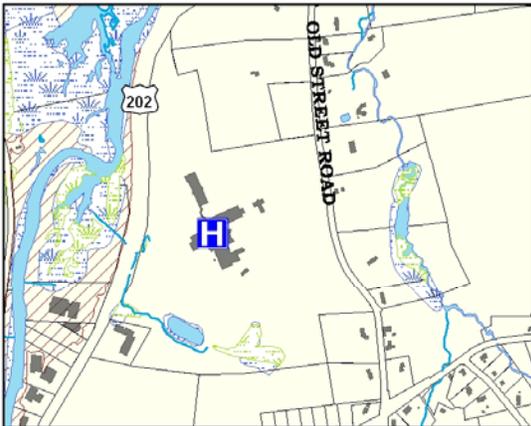
Recycling Center (74 +/- Acres)



Evans Flats (26 +/- Acres)



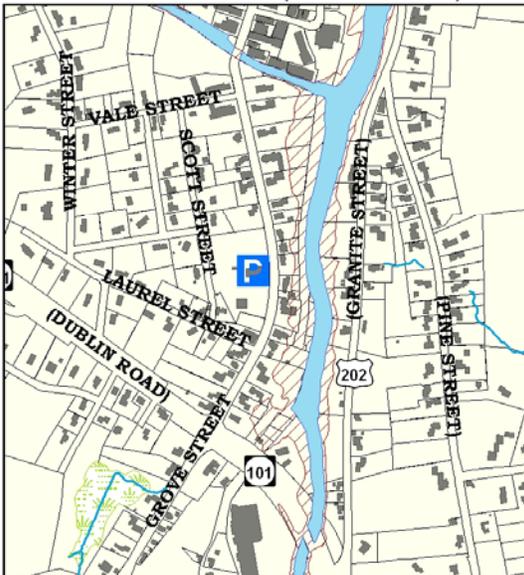
Hospital (65 +/- Acres)



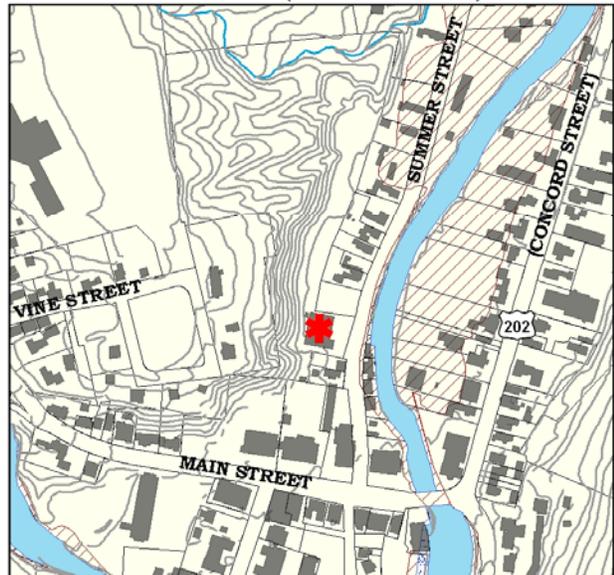
Treatment Plant (75 +/- Acres)



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? 	