

Preliminary Assessments: Public Facilities in Westwood: *Present  
and Future Needs and Options*

Comprehensive Plan Update

Community Services, Facilities and Recreation  
Sub-Committee  
April 8/2011

FIRST DRAFT

## **TOWN HALL**

*(Note: qualitative assessments of the condition or utility of facilities covered herein are largely the opinion of the interviewee and therefore attributable to them, although such evaluations are supplemented by information in the 2007 Facilities Plan by Bargmann-Hendrie + Archetype and sometimes by other studies noted in the narrative below. Latest capital budget documents were also examined, when relevant).*

### **Situation Summary Since 2000**

The situation is nearly unchanged since 2000. Other than some re-partitioning and repairs and equipment replacement, little has been done with Town Hall in the past 10 years. The building's 9600 square feet of gross floor area (gfa) have long been judged to be inadequate in facilities plans, less for the amount of floor area than for the inefficiency and inadequate quality of the space for modern functions.

The 2007 Facilities Plan identified a space deficit of only 1300 SF, thus requiring a building of 10,900 SF. However, if the sub-standard and heavily partitioned basement space is subtracted and the need for a much larger selectmen's meeting room is factored in (probably triple the size), then that 1300 SF space deficit can be considered to be functionally much higher. Internally, some functions or departments are more overcrowded or partitioned than others. There is also the issue of the split Information Systems/GIS Department, which is forced to operate in the basement of Town Hall and in a room at the High School. Records storage in general is inadequate, causing material to be stored in corners, in stairwells and crawl spaces. The upper floor is used in a haphazard way for records storage. It has been suggested in one set of alternatives in the 2007 Facilities Plan that it be converted to a 2000 SF Meeting Room, but that floor's status in terms of code-compliance and usability of the space is uncertain. The building would also have to be better handicapped-equipped to afford expanded access.

### **Data**

No further data collection is currently occurring for this facility.

### **Big Issues, Long term Needs**

The basic options are as follows:

- Construct an addition to the south (west) side, which expands the municipal space by as much as 6000 SF; doing so, however, is entirely dependent on the relocation of the present Police Station to the American Legion site, as discussed in the Police narrative.
- Expand to the rear of Town Hall, into the existing lot. Studies have shown that there is inadequate room for this alternative and the loss of parking would be too great, unless the Scout House property could be acquired from the Patriot's Council.
- Expansion to the front has never been considered to be viable for a variety of reasons, including negative impacts on architectural and landscape features of vital importance to community character and identity, as well as zoning setback issues, parking supply, among other constraints.

- Relocate TH to Deerfield School. The Deerfield was closed as a public elementary school due to declining town enrollments and rented out for a time to a private Catholic school to generate revenue. By 1995, the Deerfield was back in town use, but during this period, the Selectmen commissioned an architectural study to examine the feasibility of reuse of the school for general government purposes. These plans have not been found or scrutinized for current efforts, but given the fact that the School Department now needs the Deerfield capacity and that they have their own capital planning process, this does seem to be a likely short to medium term option.
- One of the options analyzed in the past was to renovate the present public library for use as a Town Hall annex, which under one alternative would have remained in place and not been the future site for the Colburn School, adjacent to the new library building. This option is now gone, of course, making building expansion the most likely course of action, but acquisition of the Scout lot is probably required. If that happens, a new home for the Scout House would also be required.

### **Specific Needs to Upgrade Building**

As long as the Town Hall building continues to be used, the \$940,000 (2007) in upgrade and renovation costs will have to be incurred even if the building is expanded to the rear, and this does not include the costs associated full internal space reconfiguration.

- Complete interior repainting
- Upgrade in handicapped access—an elevator
- Window repair and replacement
- Repair and repaint cupola
- Replace entire HVAC system
- Upgrade electrical system
- Upgrade bathrooms, attain ADA compliance
- New alarm systems and sprinklers

### **Broad Cost Indicators for Alternatives, 2007**

- |   |               |
|---|---------------|
| ----New Addition to Town Hall, with relocated Police Station      | \$5.5 million |
| ----Basic repairs, upgrade of systems, bathrooms, ADA compliance: | \$940,000     |

### **Other Comments**

There is a theoretical possibility that the entire building could be reused for other purposes, with private or other capital being invested in it to restore and retain the building's landmark status in the community. Among the reuse alternatives discussed in various forums, interviews and documents:

- Senior Housing
- Housing on top floor(s), retail or retail and office on first floor

Any adaptive reuse of the building would be contingent on finding another location for Town Hall, and whether that could involve a relocated Police Station and/or a Deerfield School reuse, or, alternatively, a new location outside of the High Street Center, is a complete unknown.

Interviewees:

Town Administrator Michael Jaillet

## **POLICE**

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### **Situation Summary Since 2000**

Basics of system are unchanged. The police headquarters at High Street was built in 1967 and contains 6800 square feet (gross floor area). Space and facilities needs remain largely the same as in late 1990's, but have become more pronounced with the passage of time. Police response calls and demand have slowly increased as the population has risen. The complement of personnel has risen during the life of the building from 19 to 28 sworn officers, and from 5 to 10 other personnel.

The 2007 Bargmann-Hendrie Facilities Study indicated that due to the extreme space deficit that was double the size of the present facility, a new facility with 20,000 SF gross floor area (gfa) would be the most viable alternative. A lower cost alternative with 18,000 SF gfa was also presented, but the town might want to exercise caution in regard to building "just big enough" to accommodate current needs but then facing deficiencies a few years ahead.

A new Public Safety communications system was completed in 2010 in a renovated room (\$150,000) at the Police Station, with new equipment installed for dispatch and recording. The unique requirements of a police station make it different than any other public building, because of the need to secure most areas and holding cells and separate them from the public.

### **Data**

Studies are being done now to document increase in calls and service demands since approximately 2000, broken down into certain service categories.

### **Big Issues, Long term Needs**

Expansion of the existing building toward the rear (in the direction of the American Legion post) would be extremely tight physically. Tripling the size of the building, providing adequate parking, conforming to the L-shape of the lot and the limited land area of less than 1 ½ acres was found not to be feasible. There has been discussion in the past of trying to acquire the abutting Scout House lot for municipal purposes, but this is a cost not likely to be incurred in the near term future for any town hall parking or any other facility.

Relocation to an existing building brings with it such major renovation costs due to the specific spatial needs and security requirements of police stations, that doing so might be cost-inefficient. A complete new facility has been discussed in the 2007 Facilities Plan, either on the site of the American Legion Hall (which must be acquired) or on part of the Deerfield School playing fields. Either one would present access problems, given the limited access offered by Deerfield Avenue or through the existing Police Station site, especially if the building is retained for other municipal use.

### Specific Deficiencies

- Building not handicapped-equipped, federal and state compliant.
- Prisoner detention cells have significant safety problems, such as ventilators which could provide a medium for prisoner's harming themselves.
- Absence of fully secured sally port.
- Inadequately equipped and secured evidence areas.
- Inadequate space for confidential interviews
- Building costs over \$2000 month to heat with electricity.
- No shower for female officers.
- Inadequate training room, too small, not audio-visual-equipped.
- A multi-purpose community room could be used for community policing programs at night, training during the day.

### Broad Cost Indicators for Alternatives, 2007 (minus work performed in the interim years)

---- Basic repairs, upgrade of systems, bathrooms, ADA compliance:	\$70,000
---- Cost of complete new building, not including land acquisition	\$11.1 million

Interviewees:  
Police Chief William Chase

## **FIRE PROTECTION**

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### **Situation Summary Since 2000**

Basics of facilities are unchanged. The main headquarters at High Street and the station on Washington Street continue to operate in the same buildings. The main station was built in 1946 and was renovated in 1975 and contains 13,400 square feet (gross floor area), while Islington was built in xxxx and contains 3900 SF gfa. Space and facilities needs remain largely the same as in late 1990's, but have become more pronounced with the passage of time. Hoped-for Westwood Station public safety building wasn't built. Fire Department service calls and demand have slowly increased as population increased, and as the demands have broadened over the years into fire fighting, prevention, emergency medical services, hazardous materials response, inspectional services and special response.

A new Public Safety communications system was completed in 2010 in a renovated room (\$150,000) at the Police Station, with new equipment installed for dispatch and recording. The portion of the roof overlying the apparatus floor was replaced in recent years at High St. Electrical service was upgraded to 400 amp/3 Phase a few years ago. A women's bathroom was retrofitted into the Islington Station. Many temporary repairs were made at both stations, just to keep the physical plant functional.

### **Data**

Studies are being done now to document increase in calls and service demands since approximately 2000, broken down into major service categories.

### **Big Issues, Long term Needs**

High Street Station is extremely short of both operational and administrative space, a deficiency prominently recognized in the 2000 Comprehensive Plan and the last town-wide facilities assessment in 2007. The High St. location is fine but expansion is needed; this is feasible on-site, although a new facility would offer advantages and the longest possible building life. Islington Station is still needed, according to response time studies which figure in the roadway system and traffic levels, even with a University Ave. public safety building. Islington is far too small and needs to be expanded, but the lot is small and underground utilities constrain the area between the station and Roche Brothers. Expansion and renovation on-site would cost between \$ 2.0 and 3 million per building at today's prices, not including the cost of temporary facilities. On-site expansion avoids land acquisition, site preparation and new utility costs. The cost of a new building would not be that much higher but might involve some of these extra costs. A University Avenue facility will be necessary under any circumstances, if development at any significant scale occurs there.

## Specific Deficiencies

### High Street

- 2007 Facilities Study stated that the existing 13,400 SF gfa was deficient by 4600 SF, so 18,000 SF was recommended in total. Expansion strongly recommended in 2007 Facilities Study.
- Fire apparatus floor—concrete is breaking up and leaking moisture under increased vehicle weight. Rebar likely corroding. Engineering study needed to determine if resealing and capping will suffice or if complete reconstruction is needed.
- Administrative and filing space “severely inadequate.”
- There is no hazardous materials scrub-down room.
- The HVAC systems are obsolete and poorly performing.
- The buildings are not handicapped-equipped & federal and state compliant.
- The chimney leaks and ice dams are a problem.
- There is no real storage area for hose and tools.
- The training room is functionally obsolete; it was the old apparatus floor and that is in poor condition.
- The plan review/fire prevention room is improvised and small.
- There are no fully separated facilities for women

### Islington Station

- 2007 Facilities Study stated that the existing 3900 SF gfa was deficient by 2100 SF, so 6,000 SF recommended in total.
- Shares almost all of the same problems with High St. but does have a very small women’s changing area/bathroom.
- Expansion on small site would be difficult. Renovation is preferred in Facilities Study.

## Broad Cost Indicators for Alternatives, 2007 (minus work performed in the interim years)

### ---High Street

Basic repairs, upgrade of systems, bathrooms, ADA compliance:  
\$425,000

### ---Islington

Basic repairs, upgrade of systems, bathrooms, ADA compliance:  
\$100,000

---Cost of expansion of High St. building, not including temporary facilities \$ 2.7  
to 3 million {The expansion at High St. would involve adding 4000 SF to the  
“notch” at the NE corner of the structure.}

## Other Comments

Neither the Fire nor the Police Chief sees particular advantages in a combined Public safety facility, citing highly different space and facility needs, the necessity of complete separation between Fire and Police, as well as use conflicts that have occasionally arisen in combined facilities, such as Natick and Wilmington.

Interviewees:  
Fire Chief William Scoble

[Next Section Continued Below] ↓

## **PUBLIC WORKS**

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### **Situation Summary Since 2000**

The following improvements occurred in the time since the last Plan:

- The completion of the Carby Street municipal building at the DPW yard in 2004.
- The beginning of construction for a cemetery equipment storage barn behind the Obed Baker House on High Street at the New Cemetery, 2010.
- The continued installation of sewer pipes in various streets in town between 1999 and 2005, raising the coverage area to between 85 and 90% town-wide and essentially completing the Sewer System Master Plan.
- The continued program of relining wastewater collection pipes, particularly where there are asbestos pipes, funded predominantly through MWRA grants-in-aid
- The initiation of some green energy activities to reduce municipal energy consumption.

However, there are major issues that must be addressed in the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, including solid waste disposal and recycling; inflow-infiltration in the wastewater collection system during storm events; the large scale uncertainties of National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System enforcement, and other matters.

### **Data**

Data specific to each public works service category will be gathered and compared to a 2000 baseline, where possible and meaningful.

### **Big Issues, Long term Needs**

#### Long Range Planning

While DPW is part of the annual capital budgeting process, there is not currently a true long range policy plan to tie it all together, in terms of buildings, facilities and equipment replacement and upgrade. A plan specific to DPW would be desirable.

#### Space

The DPW administrative offices at 50 Carby Street occupy a little under 18,000 square feet gross floor area. They are thought to be “generally adequate” for present needs although there is no room whatsoever for expansion, and the 2007 Facilities Plan actually showed an office space deficit of 3900 SF. Since one additional staff person might be brought in, some internal space reconfiguration might be necessary. Carby Street is already at capacity and expansion would be difficult. Utility lines and topography constrain building expansion to the rear and

northeast side (toward the garages), and the other bounds are limited due to required parking, setbacks and minimum landscaped areas. The DPW garage complex overlooking the 50 Carby Street building has no further lot area to accommodate expansion, although pressure on the site was relieved when the DPW barn to house cemetery maintenance equipment was built in the rear of the Obed Baker House on High Street. Carby Street is sufficient for DPW and Land Use but it is essentially at or just over 100% capacity and there are few or no viable options for expansion.

#### Wastewater, Stormwater

Utility systems vary widely in their needs. Solid waste disposal recycling rates have remained stagnant during the past decade and significant savings could accrue to the town if the rates went up significantly. This is a major challenge for Westwood. Wastewater has been implementing a pipe relining program in recent years with the help of MWRA grants and an enterprise fund, but faces an ongoing challenge with Inflow-Infiltration and illegal hookups from private sump pumps, which add to the load on the system.. Stormwater management systems function adequately but face a challenge of unknown and potentially “order of magnitude” impact in terms of compliance with the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System of the Clean Water Act, administered by the MA Department of Environmental Protection. This will require a new stormwater management plan and possibly large capital investment to bring storm drains and discharges into compliance.

#### Roadways

Roadway repaving and reconstruction has tried to base the ongoing effort on pavement condition, rather than less objective factors, but the last complete pavement management plan, prepared by VHB, is old and needs to be replaced. The document also hasn't been followed that closely. Setting priorities by means of pavement testing data, the magnitude of the required work and the estimated costs is a desired policy.

#### Energy Reduction

Finally, green policies promoting greater energy efficiency in municipal buildings, facilities and vehicular fleets have gone from almost point zero in the late 1990's to a promising start today. The DPW is moving toward a fleet replacement plan that gradually integrates more efficient cars and trucks into the fleet. The town had also examined in 2010 the possibility of a solar power purchase agreement with a private provider, but there did not appear to be sufficient incentive for the provider to move forward. But energy initiatives do not have to be at that scale. The model offered by the highly successful energy monitoring program in the schools—implemented by the Westwood Environmental Action Committee and the N-Star utility—created significant savings just by changes in lighting, with attractive financial terms that produced a quick payback and immediate reduction in energy consumption.

### **Additional Detailed Information**

#### Solid Waste Disposal

The 23% recycling rate is considered to be too low. The roughly 5500 households generate almost 6000 tons of waste per year; only 1500 households regularly recycle. Last fall the town went to a zero-sort system which in many communities is in itself an incentive to recycle but so far there has not been a large bump in recycling rates (zero-sort often has a big effect in towns where residents must transport their own materials). Each 100 tons moved out of the general waste stream saves \$5000 from the local solid waste budget. An increase to 50% would save \$90,000 per annum. Public Education doesn't seem to help much. Pay-As-You-Throw might be the best policy.

#### Wastewater

The system is in generally good condition, with adequate capacity, the 10 pumping stations functioning well, the 87 miles of sewer mains in reasonable condition, with less than 25% being more than 40 years old and a gradual relining program, especially to replace asbestos-lined pipe. But like all systems, there are problems with Inflow-Infiltration adding external water to the wastewater collection system, requiring an ongoing repair program, for which funds are inadequate (Camp, Dresser, McKee I-I Study, 2007). The Conant Street and Brook Street sub-basin areas have shown the most system overload and flooding from I-I. this will be an ongoing capital costs for years, requiring street excavation every here there is a problem.

#### Stormwater Management

The town only cleans out catch basins periodically and makes necessary repairs to them. Otherwise, little is done in regard to the maintenance of the municipal stormwater system. The large issue that every community is facing is compliance with the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES), under the US Clean Water Act. Municipal drainage systems were not originally subject to the requirements of NPDES but court cases and subsequent Congressional changes to the Clean Water Act and EPA regulations required local systems to comply. The current enforcement initiative, via the MA Department of Environmental Protection, (MA-DEP), will require Westwood to prepare a new Stormwater Management Plan and there could be high cost capital investment emanating from that for years to come. At this point, however, nothing more than that can be known, so there are no cost parameters to evaluate.

#### Water Supply

*{Section not yet researched.}*

#### Interviewees:

Public Works Director Vicky Vickery Quiram  
Sewer Superintendent Robert Angelo

**RECREATION**

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**Situation Summary Since 2000**

The Recreation Department administrative offices operate out of the High School in a small office of 600 square feet (SF) in a portion of the old men's locker room. The Facilities Plan indicates that this is a space deficiency of 400 SF, but the issue is equally the quality of the space as its area. The aquatics center (the community pool) is located there as well, as is the municipal Fitness Center.. The Department also operates the Islington Community Center in the old Islington Community Church. Youth and Family Services is situated in that building, along with a day care center, and the Disabilities Commission. The 2007 Facilities Plan indicated that the ideal situation for the Recreation Department would be to have facilities of 10,000 SF at the HS, thus indicating a space deficit of 9400 SF, but this based mostly on adding a new 9000 SF gymnasium..

The Recreation Department maintains active facilities all over the community; the playing fields are listed as follows:

FIELDS
Deerfield Softball/Soccer
Downey Little League Baseball
Downey Soccer 6 x 6
Flahive Field (field turf)
Hanlon 6V6 & Baseball
High School Baseball Downes Field
High School Multi Purpose (field turf)
High School Softball
June Street Playground Diamond
Lodge Field 11x11 Soccer/Lax

Martha Jones Baseball Field
Morrison Baseball
Morrison Softball
School Street Playground T Ball 1
School Street Playground T Ball 2
Sheehan Baseball/Overlay 6V6
Sheehan-Pete White Baseball 11V11
Thurston 11v11 Soccer/LAX Lower
Thurston 11v11 Soccer/LAX Upper
Thurston Baseball/Field Hockey 6V6
Thurston Softball

Since 2000, soccer and baseball have had the same participation rates, but since the community grew by about 1000 persons or 350 households, there was an absolute numerical increase in demand for those sports. The fastest growing sport, however, has been boy's lacrosse, followed by girl's lacrosse. Participation rates in LAX have increased steeply. The use of the field at the Westwood Lodge has helped but there is no question that there is a growing annual demand for playing fields.

Shared facility opportunities have been limited, and include the Lodge field and Xaverian Brothers H.S. using Morrison Field for freshman baseball and softball teams. There has been discussion of the possibility of a joint Westwood/Xaverian Brothers hockey rink but this concept has never moved forward.

### **Data**

Staff and the Recreation Department are working on data compilation which shows user levels in the past 10 years, categorized by activity or sport and in some cases by field or facility. Revenue streams from the revolving fund as an offset to town appropriations are also being gathered, as are estimates for capital improvements such as field turf installation.

### **Big Issues, Long term Needs**

The new Recreation Director, David Burnes, has only been here a short time but has expressed a number of early goals to guide the future growth and capital investment for the department:

- Make Westwood a sports mecca in the region, but with a business plan that generates revenue for the town.
- Establish long term investment by the town in field turf to replace natural turf on many athletic fields. There is a significant installation cost up front but it begins immediately to lower maintenance costs and it virtually eliminates down time for fields, thus increasing their capacity, which is another way of better meeting the growing demand.
- Pursue the idea of a sports mega-plex accommodating multiple outdoor and indoor sports, possibly in a private/public partnership, and located in a major business area; he suggested University Avenue.
- Generate more revenue from existing facilities, such as the Fitness Center and the Aquatics Center at the H.S. and possibly with some increase in summer use of schools. All this would add revenue to the Recreation Department revolving fund.
- Increase and broaden the cultural and recreational opportunities offered by the department that do not involve competitive team athletics. For example, the Recreation Department is currently in discussions with L.L. Bean at Legacy Place to sponsor a kayaking program for WW.
- Grow the Fitness Center.

### **Specific Facilities: Aquatics Center**

The Aquatics Center at the H.S. opened in 1972. It changed from a school to community facility by 2006. It operates from 5:30 am to 9:30 pm Monday through Friday and 6: am to 5:30 pm on weekends. While not at literal 100% of capacity, the facility is very heavily used. There are 19,000 users per year, not including the learn to swim programs and competitive team use. In the summer, average daily use is 500/day. It is open 7 days a week year-round for lap and free swim. Water safety instruction operates 12 hours a week, senior water exercise 3 hours a week, town swim teams 14 hours/week for 6-plus months, school boys and girls swim teams about 10 hours/week for 5 months/year. Special education uses pool on limited but regular basis. Outside user groups who pay to use the facility, largely at odd hours, include South Shore Diving, Underwater Hockey International, Norwood Aquatics girls' team, private birthday parties (weekend, holidays, Friday nights), and (possibly) the Underwater Rugby Club. Some possibilities exist for further use by outside users on a paid basis during odd hours, to add to the revenue going into the Recreation revolving fund. The revenue generated from user fees and outside sources covers basic operating costs and maintenance of the equipment, but doesn't come close to covering equipment replacement and major capital needs.

The biggest concern of the Aquatics Center is the lack of upkeep for the physical plant, and the lack of a reserve fund, or any specific plans, for equipment replacement and major capital needs. Among the issues with the facility:

- Excessive heat and humidity in pool
- Functional but aging pumps and condenser unit
- Crumbling or missing deck tile in various spots & need for masonry work
- Cracked sand filter & related work (\$10,000)
- Locker room floors are always wet, leaking.
- Need to inspect steel support beams
- Larger capital investment needs:

- Ultraviolet sanitizing system instead of chlorine, which corrodes and is expensive to maintain (up to 30,000)
- Family changing room (major need); lobby expansion might be possible.
- Handicapped & companion seating area
- Acoustic baffling--noise became bad when old drop ceiling was taken down.

There is no plan and capital budget for addressing the long term needs of the aquatic center.

### **Specific Facilities: Islington Community Center**

The Community Center principally contains the Youth and Family Services operation, with administrative offices, drop-in centers for middle school students, a day care program (which generates revenue for the Recreation Department's revolving fund), a new moms program, and some other services, but the building is constrained by very limited parking. It also needs extensive work to make the structure code-compliant, to upgrade building systems and to reconfigure internal space. The 2007 cost estimate for doing this work was \$730,000.

The Recreation Director would like to make use of the sanctuary, which is now essentially unused space. His vision is to make this into a performing arts center for the use of the community and outside users. However, discussions with the Building Inspector have indicated that there would be extensive work needed to make the room code-compliant and functional.

Expansion of the building has been looked at but the site is considered too small for any substantial addition. It certainly would not accommodate a gym. The lot, parking and interior constraints in this building have prompted some to suggest selling it and putting the money toward an addition of 10,000 SF at the HS, which would contain the administrative offices and a gymnasium..

### **Future Options**

There is room for a 10,000 SF addition for the Recreation Department at the HS, if some landscaped area is used for this purpose on the Nahatan Street side. Whether or not this is a community priority is another matter, involving town-wide preferences and fiscal constraints.

The option of expanding the Senior Center has also been discussed in the Facilities Plan, integrating the Council on Aging, Recreation and Youth and Family Services, thus creating an integrated Human Services function under the same roof. The structure was opened in 1998 but was built to minimum dimensions due to the fact that it was funded with \$600,000 in federal/state funds and the town limited the facility to the smallest usable floor area that would meet COA needs. It has been said that the senior center was at 100% capacity the day it opened. An addition of 9,000 SF could be accommodated on the Middle School side of the building (left side from Nahatan Street.), with a gym and administrative offices and other facilities. Such an addition would be efficient cost-wise

Interviewees:

Recreation Director David Burnes

Aquatics Director Sue Perry

## **SENIOR CENTER**

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### **Situation Summary Since 2000**

Basics of facilities are unchanged. The Senior Center on Nahatan Street between the High School and Thurston Middle School was completed in 1998, taking advantage of one-time federal block grant funds for social services, in the amount of \$600,000. Since the town did not add to the building fund the building for the Council on Aging was built with only 5000 square feet of gross floor area (gfa), which some consider to have been inadequate from the day it opened. The 2007 Facilities Plan identified a space deficit of 5000 SF, equal to the size of the new building.

The COA operates programs in arts and crafts, food and nutrition, health maintenance, transportation and recreational trips. While the 2010 US Census data is not yet available, every indication in preliminary research indicates that the senior age population has increased by at least 20% since 2000, which places additional service pressure on the Council and the Senior Center. The Council has also indicated a growing demand for other elder-related human services, such as expanded transportation, tax assistance relief, daily life assistance, support for care-givers, bereavement counseling, and other services, which generates further pressure on the program.

### **Data**

Additional data will be gathered on user level increases by service type.

### **Big Issues, Long term Needs**

One option in the Facilities Plan was to add a 5000 SF addition to the Senior Center, on the side toward the Middle School. There is sufficient area available to do that, without a major increase in parking or creating other physical difficulties on the lot.

The second option for expanding the Senior Center has also been discussed in the Facilities Plan, and would integrate the Council on Aging, Recreation Department and Youth and Family Services, thus creating an integrated Human Services function under the same roof. An addition of 9,000 SF also could be accommodated on the Middle School side of the building, with a gym and administrative offices and other facilities. Such an addition would be efficient cost-wise and probably desirable from a long term administrative and policy viewpoint, but some conflicts between uses and populations would be likely to occur over time, as children and teens converge on the property at the same time as seniors. The pressure on the site would increase as well in terms of traffic and parking impact, but could be designed to accommodate the increased demand.

**Broad Cost Indicators for Alternatives, 2007 (minus work performed in the interim years)**

---- Basic repairs and upgrades	\$20,000
---- Cost of 5000 SF addition (includes repairs to existing building )	\$1.58 million

**Other Comments**

The Senior Center will need to be expanded eventually. Its space deficit is significant, in spite of being only an 11 year old building and there is a demand for additional services directed toward this population. Senior services, due to their being a less mobile set of users, are usually best concentrated in one place. The big issue, then, is whether or not to pursue an integrated Human Services function and a larger addition on Nahatan Street.

Interviewees:

Michael Jaillet, Town Administrator

COA Director Pat Larkin (*pending; not conducted yet*)

### **ISLINGTON BRANCH LIBRARY**

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#### **Situation Summary Since 2000**

Basics of facilities are unchanged. The Islington Branch used to be open 45 hours per week; it is now open 24 hours/week and this is about to be reduced to 21. There is one full-time equivalent employee. The building was constructed in 1884 as Wentworth Hall (a school) and contains 1600 square feet of gross floor area (gfa). The Facilities Plan does not characterize this building as having a space deficit, because an old building needing improvement is simply not going to be expanded, given the fact that the community has invested so heavily in what will be a state-of-the-art new Main Library on High Street that will double the size of the existing Library. Library patronage was estimated to have stayed “about level” in recent years.

The Islington Branch did have its electrical service upgraded in recent years (specs not yet known) and there were some lighting improvements in the last decade. Siding was replaced about 10 years ago, although it has tended to yellow from air pollution and looks older [*ed. note: it might be that a pressure washing will help with that*]. The natural gas burner is about 15 years old so has life left in it, but probably will need to be replaced in 5 to 10 years.

#### **Big Issues, Long term Needs**

The last attempt to close the Islington Branch occurred in 2005 and met with staunch opposition and the initiative failed. One of the reasons cited was potential loss of state grant money (for the new Library?) Others just didn't want the branch to leave the neighborhood.

With the new Library breaking ground, the extremely limited hours and a building that is aging and in need of upgrading and repair, and which is functionally inadequate in a number of ways, there is a strong argument to be made to close the branch. There is also the reality that the new Library will need more, not less, staff due to nearly doubling the floor area from the existing building. The existing Main Library also has a high percentage of users from Precinct 4, which encompasses Islington. However, actually achieving this objective could be extremely difficult, because residents in Westwood and many other places value their neighborhood branches enormously and fight to keep them open when their closure is pursued. .

#### **Specific Deficiencies**

- Building lacks a handicapped access bathroom.
- The roof is more than 20 years old and likely will face increasing repairs and eventual replacement.
- Administrative areas are unenclosed.

- The large wooden rear porch collects snow and must be hand-shoveled, and it heats up in summer and dry-rots the wood.
- Forced air heating and cooling has created interior dry air issues.
- Handicapped access exists in front, not in rear of building.

**Broad Cost Indicators for Alternatives, 2007 (minus work performed in the interim years)**

---- Basic repairs, upgrade of systems, bathrooms, ADA compliance: \$30,000

**Other Comments**

The decision of whether or not to close the Islington Branch Library, while having its fiscal aspects and potential cost savings to the town on a long term basis, is ultimately a political issue. An attempt to close a branch library can become a lightning rod for contentiousness, although the matter has precedent in Westwood.

There has been public discourse in the past in regard to selling the building to the private sector. There was at least one informal inquiry about doing that in recent past years. There has also been some discussion about using it for other uses, such as relocating the Community Center there. Any of these options would have to be studied and debated in greater detail in an organized process.

Interviewees:

Library Director Tom Viti

