

Progress Report - Facilities Master Plan - Town Meeting



May 1, 2006

Dear Town Meeting Members,

Article 36 approved at the 2005 Annual Town Meeting appropriated \$150,000 to conduct a town wide facilities master plan study to be performed under the direction of the Permanent Public Building Committee (PPBC) and the Town Manager. The Town Manager appointed a working group to assist the PPBC and the Town Manager in performing the study, which group is called the Facilities Working Group (FWG). The FWG consists of 15 representatives from all the relevant Town committees and departments, including the Finance Committee, the Board of Selectmen, the School Committee and School Department, the Parks and Recreation Commission, the Council on Aging, the Department of Public Works, the Municipal Building Maintenance Board and the Conservation Commission.

After a thorough selection process done in accordance with the state designer selection regulations, the PPBC hired DiNisco Design Partnership to conduct the facilities master plan feasibility study. Although the study will not be completed until the fall of 2006, we submit this progress report at this time to inform you in a summary way of the work performed to date by DiNisco in conjunction with the PPBC and FWG.

At this point it is important to emphasize that there are no conclusions and that costs for multiple planning options are still emerging and incomplete.

Please note that a public hearing is scheduled for May 30, 2006 to be held at Pollard Middle School Auditorium at which time we welcome an interactive dialog with interested Needham citizens. Public notices of this meeting will be posted.

Goals & Objectives

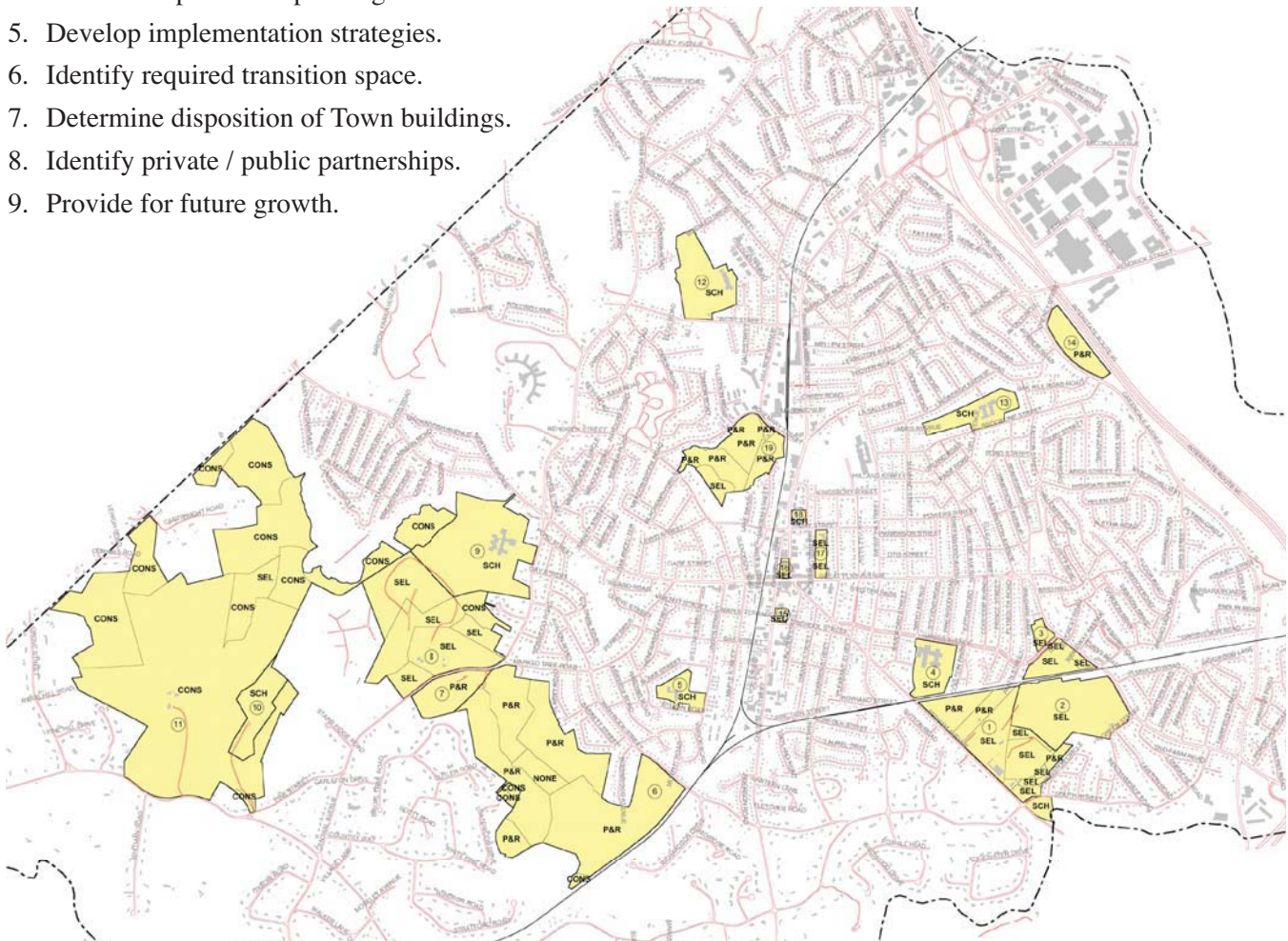
The 1999 Master Plan has served the Town well, but now it is time for the Town to reconsider the next set of facilities decisions. The overall objective of the current Master Plan Study is to build on the information obtained through prior facility and site studies. Specific objectives include:

1. Evaluate space needs for:
 - Schools & School Administration
 - Senior Center
 - Current Town Hall Departments
 - Department of Public Works (DPW)
 - Recycling and Transfer Station (RTS)
 - Public Facilities
 - Emergency Management
2. Identify sites and determine building sizes.
3. Create a realistic master plan for implementation.
4. Estimate capital and operating costs.
5. Develop implementation strategies.
6. Identify required transition space.
7. Determine disposition of Town buildings.
8. Identify private / public partnerships.
9. Provide for future growth.

Background

In 1999 the Town completed a Facilities Master Plan which identified and prioritized Town facility projects. Under the Master Plan, projects that have been completed include Broadmeadow School, Eliot School, Pre-school at Newman, Needham Public Library, addition of portable classrooms to Pollard Middle School and the Needham High School (which is under construction).

With the exception of the High School the Town has adhered to the prioritization of the 1999 Master Plan. The next set of facility projects in the Master Plan include: Town Hall, middle school, DPW, Human Services Center (including Senior Center) and School Administration. Further out on the time line are Mitchell and Hillside school renovation / additions.



Town Owned Property Under Consideration

Space Needs Program

In addition to facilities, the study includes a review of requirements for each department based upon current and future space needs, relationships with other departments and frequency of public access. From this analysis various organizational patterns emerge.

Administration & Finance

Core town management functions include:

- Town Manager / Selectmen
- Town Clerk
- Finance
 - Treasurer / Tax Collector
 - Retirement Board
 - Town Accountant
 - Information Technology
 - Assessor
 - Parking Clerk
 - Personnel

Community Services

Other departments identified as Community Services ideally belong with core town functions but could also be grouped with the Council on Aging, Senior Center, Community Development or Public Works, depending upon available space or cost. Community Services departments include:

- Health Department
- Veterans Services
- Youth Services
- Park and Recreation
- Council on Aging / Senior Center

Community Development

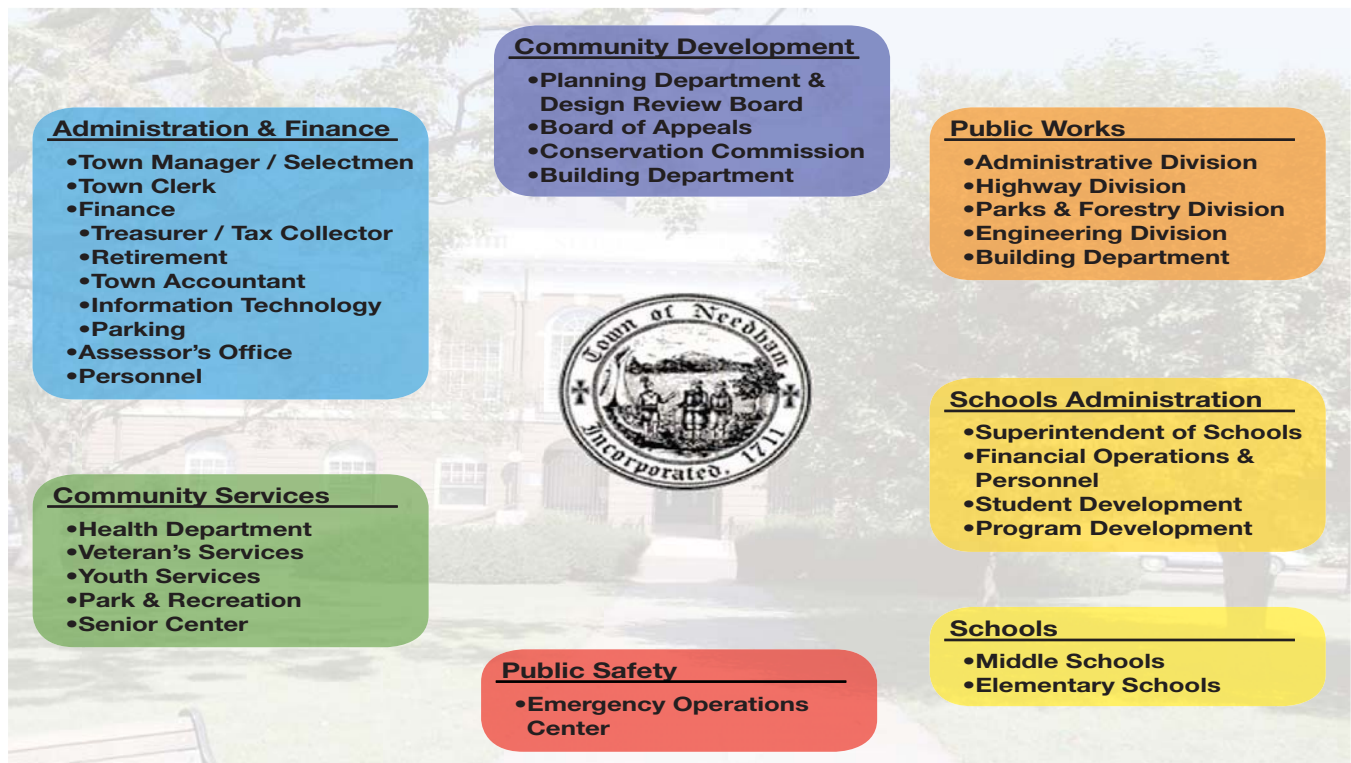
The following departments share similar permitting functions and can be associated with core functions or with Public Works.

- Planning Department
- Design Review Board
- Board of Appeals
- Conservation Commission
- Building Department

Other Departments

Other departments with clear and separate identities include:

- Public Safety
- Public Works
- School Administration
- Elementary Schools
- Middle Schools



Master Program for study

Planning Options

The study of space needs, existing facilities and town-owned sites results in multiple planning options for each space need. These options are comprehensive in scope and identify potential building sites based upon location, acreage, configuration, traffic and land development.

The options are also sufficiently detailed to validate the feasibility of program fit into available or new space, design alternative configuration of departments and construction cost estimates. Some options require relocation to temporary

space and in some instances displace other departments creating a “domino effect”. In these instances displacement costs, disruption of town or school activities and other “soft” or non-capital costs must be considered.

The following section includes brief discussion of each space need / facility requirement and description of planning options.

The chart below shows a matrix of program needs and sites, and the latest evaluation by the PPBC and FWG.

		PROGRAM NEEDS											
		Middle School 900 - 1000	Middle School 700 - 750	Elementary School 450	School Admin	EOC	DPIW & Comm Dev Depts	RTS	Senior Center	Admin & Finance Depts	Comm Serv Depts	Transition Space	Playfields
SITES	1 Dedham Ave Site	●	●	●	●	N/A	●	N/A	●	N/A	●	●	●
	2 Golf Course Site	●	●	●	●	N/A	*	N/A	●	N/A	●	×	●
	3 Harris Ave & Great Plain Ave (Parcel 3)	×	×	×	×	N/A	×	N/A	×	N/A	●	×	×
	4 Pollard School Site	×	●	*	●	N/A	×	N/A	×	N/A	×	●	●
	5 High Rock School Site	×	●	●	●	N/A	×	N/A	●	N/A	●	●	●
	6 Town Forest (High Rock)	*	*	*	*	N/A	*	N/A	*	N/A	*	×	*
	7 Claxton Field	*	*	*	*	N/A	*	N/A	*	N/A	*	*	●
	8 Central Ave Site (RTS / "12 Acres" / Landfill)	×	×	×	×	N/A	●	●	×	N/A	×	×	*
	9 Newman School Site	×	●	●	●	N/A	×	N/A	×	N/A	×	×	×
	10 Nike Site	*	*	*	*	N/A	*	N/A	*	N/A	*	*	●
	11 Ridge Hill Site	*	*	*	*	N/A	×	N/A	×	N/A	×	×	●
	12 Hillside School Site	×	×	●	×	N/A	×	N/A	×	N/A	×	×	×
	13 Mitchell School Site	×	×	●	●	N/A	×	N/A	×	N/A	×	×	×
	14 Greendale Avenue Site (Parcel 74)	×	×	×	*	N/A	●	N/A	*	N/A	●	×	*
	15 Public Safety Building	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	●	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	×	N/A
	16 Town Hall	×	×	×	●	N/A	×	N/A	×	●	●	×	×
	17 Pickering St. Site (Palmer Build & Greene's Field)	×	×	×	●	N/A	×	N/A	●	N/A	●	●	●
	18 Emery Grover	×	×	×	●	N/A	×	N/A	●	N/A	●	●	×
	19 Rosemary Lake Site	×	×	×	×	N/A	×	N/A	●	N/A	●	×	×
	20 Daley Building	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	●	×

LEGEND

- 90 - 100 % of Value
- 70 - 89 % of Value
- 50 - 69 % of Value
- 30 - 49 % of Value
- 10 - 29 % of Value
- 0 - 9 % of Value
- ×
- N/A
- *

Not Feasible - Does Not Meet Threshold Criteria

Not Applicable

Possible But Not Desirable

Space Needs / Facilities

Town Hall

In 1901 Town Meeting recognized the “... need for proper and fitting accommodations to conduct town business...” with a building that has:

- Adequate space (town offices)
- Fire-proof security (town records)
- Dynamic and modern presence

This describes a Town hall as a civic monument to Needham’s new, 20th century identity.

Today the Town Hall overlooks a beautiful common, is the civic center of Needham and anchor to the downtown business district. However, the original building is 100 years old and the second floor conversion was completed in 1965. It is over-crowded, suffers antiquated mechanical systems, limited handicapped accessibility and lacks fireproof storage. While it was appropriate for the 20th century, today it is neither modern nor dynamic.



Town Hall

Numerous planning options were explored that range from restoring the 2nd floor as meeting space, to a below grade addition under the parking lot, to a rear addition and / or a town hall annex. The proposed solution is a complete renovation to the ground, first and second floors including an “in-fill” addition as a new third floor. This plan accommodates all core administration and finance department spaces. Community Services and Community Development are located elsewhere. Temporary relocation space during construction is currently under consideration.



Town Hall - Interior perspective of new third floor

Emery Grover Building

The Emery Grover Building is too small for all of the School Administration Central Offices. Those spaces that do not fit are dispersed throughout the school system. The existing configuration of space is inefficient, there is no handicapped accessibility and building systems are antiquated. The School Department priority is that Central Administration be under one roof. Location is not important.

Three possible alternative uses of the Emery Grover Building have been considered. As a senior center the multiple floor levels are a disadvantage for seniors, even with an elevator. Since Emery Grover has a strong civic presence and is located downtown, a Town Hall Annex or housing are appropriate uses.

If used for senior housing, the building could accommodate approximately 24 units. If used as a Town Hall Annex it could accommodate Community Services and Community Development with the 3rd floor “attic” available for future expansion or other community use. All options presuppose the prior relocation of School Administration.



Emery Grover Building

Pollard Middle School

Pollard Middle School was built in 1958, added to in 1969, renovated in 1995 and expanded in 2002 with the addition of ten portable classrooms. It has a capacity of 800 students plus 200 for the portable classrooms. Today it houses 1,080 students (grades 6, 7 & 8) and by 2013 this number will grow to 1,369 students. There is no space for additional incoming students in 2008.

Elementary and middle school enrollment projections have been prepared by Future School Needs Committee during the past eleven years. These projections have been carefully evaluated for consistency and accuracy by comparing 5 year and 10 year projections to actual enrollments for the same time periods. Study consultants confirm the validity and accuracy of the process and enrollment numbers. It is reasonable and prudent to accept these projections and to plan accordingly.

Middle school options include four different approaches with a total of 11 options.

- Option A - New middle school at Dedham Avenue
- Option B - Addition at Pollard
- Option C - Convert Newman to middle school
- Option D - Convert High Rock to middle school

Some plans are for grades 6-8 and others for 5-8, with a middle school size varying from 528 to 1,054 students. The 5-8 plans solve emerging elementary growth while 6-8 plans defer the problem.

The School Committee has expressed a preference for option A-2 (528 students) and will consider other options once costs have been completed. Studies have shown that existing playfields, a DPW facility and a

Option	Middle Schools	Capacity / Grades	Relative Cost
A-1	New Middle School Existing Pollard MS	1056 / 5-8 704 / 5-8	\$\$\$\$\$
A-2	New Middle School Existing Pollard MS	528* / 6-8 792 / 6-8	\$\$\$\$
A-3	New Middle School Existing Pollard MS	880 / 5-8 880 / 5-8	\$\$\$\$
B-1	Pollard Addition	1320 / 6-8	\$\$\$\$
B-2	Pollard Addition High Rock Addition	1320 / 5-8 440 / 5-8	\$\$\$\$\$
C-1	Newman Addition Existing Pollard MS	1056 / 5-8 704 / 5-8	\$\$\$
C-2	Newman Addition Existing Pollard MS	880 / 5-8 880 / 5-8	\$\$ ^e
C-3	Newman Addition Existing Pollard MS	880 / 5-6 880 / 7-8	\$\$ ^e
D-1	High Rock Addition Existing Pollard MS	440 / 6-8 880 / 6-8	\$\$\$\$
D-2	High Rock New School Existing Pollard MS	528* / 6-8 792 / 6-8	\$\$\$\$ ^e
D-3	High Rock w/ Infill or Portables Pollard MS w/ Portables	352 / 6-8 1056 / 6-8	

Grades PK - 8 Options

new middle school will physically fit on the Dedham Avenue site. The underlying question is the compatibility of a school and DPW or, more broadly the appropriateness of DPW on a site dedicated to active and passive recreation.

Lastly, the School Department has suggested that High Rock may become a satellite middle school for students beginning in 2008 and increasing each year until there are three clusters or 264 students (the maximum High Rock capacity) by 2010. Whether this is a short-term or long-term solution depends on the selected middle school approach. In any event, it appears that High Rock will emerge as a critical part of the transition plan sooner, rather than later.

YEAR	1999/2000			00/01	01/02	02/03	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	
BIRTHS*		368		386	350	340	372	315	352	352	352	352	352	
SCHOOL YEAR	2005/2006			PROJ -	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16
	GRADE	PROJECTED	ACTUAL	ACTUAL										
	K-5	2,408	2,390	18	2,497	2,556	2,564	2,600	2,541	2,530	2,485	2,490	2,502	2,476
	6-8	1,101	1,090	11	1,080	1,105	1,150	1,203	1,282	1,311	1,369	1,346	1,323	1,304
	9-12	1,406	1,399	7	1,436	1,427	1,428	1,460	1,452	1,523	1,575	1,657	1,729	1,794
		4,915	4,879	36	5,013	5,088	5,142	5,263	5,275	5,364	5,429	5,493	5,554	5,574
* REFLECTS JULY 1 TO JUNE 30 BIRTHS														

Future School Needs Committee Enrollment Projections

DPW

The existing DPW facility on Dedham Avenue is too small for department needs, and garage space is inefficient and inappropriate. Second floor office space has a fire escape as a second means of egress, there is no handicapped accessibility and there is a history of air quality problems from the garage below. There is also an EPA citation for environmental site issues.

Possible sites for a new DPW facility include:

- Dedham Avenue – Renovation / New
- Greendale Avenue – New
- Central Avenue (RTS) – New

Each option has inherent problems.

The RTS site has significant topographic, wetland, space and traffic issues. It must also provide continued use of trash disposal and recycling during construction. The capped landfill may be used for a reprocessed material staging area, but cannot be used for structures. The DPW has suggested that the salt storage shed on Dedham Avenue could be relocated to the RTS regardless of the option.

Greendale Avenue is a residential area with residential zoning and requires a vote of Town Meeting to change the land use. While there are other technical issues, Greendale Avenue is adequately sized for a new DPW building with adequate vehicular access.



DPW Staging Area and Shed Storage

The current Dedham Avenue site can accommodate a new or expanded DPW facility although current activities must be relocated while construction is underway. While this is a feasible option, the land use issue of a DPW facility in close proximity to recreation land must be addressed.

Senior Center

The existing Senior Center in the lower level of the Stephen Palmer Building is too small with limited handicapped accessibility and inadequate parking. While it is an excellent location to services and downtown amenities, the building is inappropriate as a senior center. Alternative sites considered are the Emery Grover Building and Dedham Avenue (DPW). Emery Grover, while well situated, has four levels and is too small. It also presumes the prior relocation of School Administration. The existing pump house on Dedham Avenue overlooking the reservoir can be renovated and expanded. This option presumes the relocation of the DPW to another site.



Senior Center

Community Services / Community Development

Since Community Services and Community Development departments do not fit any renovation option for Town Hall, alternative sites are explored. One is to locate all permitting functions with DPW, where several of the town permitting functions already exist. While this is feasible, it presupposes a DPW option with adequate building area and parking. The only two options that marginally meet this requirement are Greendale Avenue and Dedham Avenue (existing site). Alternatively, the concept of a Town Hall Annex is explored in the Emery Grover Building using the first three levels with the fourth level available for expansion or community use. This option also assumes the prior relocation of School Administration.

School Administration

Central Offices for the School Department require 20,000 SF, preferably in one location for optimum operations plus adequate parking for staff. Location is not a critical consideration since staff visitation to individual schools occurs on a regular basis. While a totally renovated Emery Grover Building almost fulfills this option, it is not the best use of this site. Downtown housing, commercial or town hall functions are better suited. One option for School Administration is the Pollard portable classroom wing, assuming that suitable middle school expansion occurs elsewhere.



Portables at Pollard Middle School

Emergency Operations Center (EOC)

The EOC is a command post for vital town departments in the event of an emergency. Its current location in inadequate, rented space on Dedham Avenue is normally unoccupied and is used only in emergency situations. It is not a satisfactory arrangement.

A logical solution is an addition to the 2nd floor Training Room at the Public Safety Building which is staffed 24 hours a day. The EOC and Training Room are complementary, and could be used for normal and emergency operations.



Public Safety Building

Next Steps

Beginning this month there will be a series of public forums to inform the community of progress to date and to solicit meaningful feedback. While many options have been identified, the next step is to finalize costs, engage in public debate, establish priorities and determine affordability. From this public process will emerge a Master Plan including a timetable of implementation for both short-term and long-term solutions. Preliminary costs over the next ten years range from \$100 million to \$125 million. Depending on selected options and start dates, these figures can, and probably will change. To date the planning process has been open and collaborative. Between now and November 2006 the Town will debate issues that will shape the operational and capital development of Needham for the next fifty years. We welcome and encourage your participation.

Respectfully submitted,

John Connelly, Chair
Permanent Public Building Committee

Additional Information

This report and additional information can be found on the Town of Needham web site, <http://www.town.needham.ma.us>. Click the link for the Facilities Working Group under Committees.