

FINAL REPORT

*Of the Town of Tuftonboro Public Safety Facilities
Committee*

Presented to the Town Selectmen, August 31, 2009

INTRODUCTION

The Tuftonboro Public Safety Facilities Committee was formed in March, 2008 when the Selectmen appointed 9 members to the Committee, and gave the Committee recommended guidelines. The 9 initial members were Dave Eaton, Lane Evans, Betsy Frago, Richard Knapp, John Lapolla, Lewis Lawton, Guy Pike, Fenton Varney, and Tom Young. At its first meeting, it was learned that Fenton Varney declined to serve. The Committee chose to proceed with 8 members. Guy Pike was elected chairman, and Tom Young Secretary. In February, 2009, Guy Pike resigned from the Committee, and John Lapolla was elected Chairman. In June, 2009, Lewis Lawton passed away, and the Committee chose to complete its work with the 6 remaining members.

Unlike the previous Committee(s) which studied the same subject, this Committee did not include members of the Police or Fire Departments, and no Selectman was included. However, the original Committee included 2 engineers (including Lewis Lawton, Director of Facilities at UNH), construction or contractor experience, Planning Board experience, experience working on Fire Equipment in many of the Stations around the area, and more. Over the past 18 months, the Committee has met 33 times, and spent over 600 man-hours on the study. Two written Progress Reports were prepared and presented to the Selectmen, and the Committee met frequently with the Police and Fire Chiefs. The local Police and Fire Facilities were toured and discussed, along with those of several other towns, by some or all of the Committee. The Committee wishes to recognize the generous time give by the Police and Fire Departments during our study.

The initial Recommended Guidelines provided to the Committee by the Selectmen gave the Committee complete autonomy, and requested that it look forward 10 to 15 years to determine the staffing, equipment, and facility needs of the two departments. This Committee was not asked to study other needs of the town, such as the Library or Town Hall spaces. Possible expansion of existing Fire and Police facilities was to be considered, and the Committee was requested to provide an opportunity for public input. The Committee was urged to separate “Needs” from “Wants”, and it has emphasized this in its work. Finally, the Committee was requested to recommend one or two (at most) options to the Selectmen, and to provide a Final Report.

This is the Final Report of the Committee to the Selectmen. It does not re-visit the details provided in the previous two reports, which are included as attachments. In addition, for more detail, all of the meeting minutes are posted on the town website. Rather, this Final Report includes events since the previous report, the results of the Public Presentation, and the two options recommended by the Committee for the consideration of the Selectmen. It is understood that the decision of where to proceed from here, and what, if any, warrant article will be presented at the next Town Meeting will be made by the Selectmen. This Final Report, and its presentation to the Selectmen, concludes the work of the Tuftonboro Public Safety Facilities Committee. A set of all meeting minutes, meeting postings, concept drawings, and other information will be turned over to the Selectmen at the presentation of this Final Report on August 31, 2009.

RECENT EVENTS AND DISCUSSION

Previous events and meetings up to June 1, 2009 were included in the previous 2 reports. This Final Report includes events and meetings since that date.

The Committee met 6 additional times. Comments of the Police and Fire Departments were requested, received and reviewed. No written comments were received from the Selectmen, but the Selectmen did attend the following Committee meeting and provided verbal input.

Both Departments, in their comments, noted deficiencies in the concept drawings, and the Committee agrees. However, since these are just concepts, to give a picture of how the different options MIGHT look, the pressures of time and cost led the Committee move forward with the concept representations as they were.

In its comments, the Fire Department made some constructive suggestions, but basically felt that the concept for a stand-alone Fire Department was workable in the footprint shown. When the same size building was used to house a combined Police and Fire Department Facility, the Fire Department felt that it would be cramped, and would allow no room for future growth. The Fire Department also raised the concern of being able to base an ambulance in the town in the future. That consideration was not included in the "Guidelines" given the Committee, and was not studied in detail. However, some of the options developed may make space available for the Selectmen to consider this in the future.

The Police Department, in its extensive comments, had a negative reaction to the concept of expanding the existing Police Department. The Department had originally stated that 2700 square feet would be needed, and this was provided, but the Department noted that only one "Sally Port" bay was provided, and that other space was limited. Questions of how the Department would function during construction are valid concerns, but this kind of thing has been done before, and solutions could be found. In a combined facility, the Police Department also felt it would be cramped, and that certain rooms, stairs, and restrooms need to be enlarged or relocated. Both Departments noted that the conceptual layout did not adequately separate the two Departments, and this is correct. Again, the pictures shown were just concepts, and would be redrawn to reflect many of these concerns.

However, some of the written comments from the Departments noted that not everything requested was provided. This is true, as the Committee followed its guidelines to separate "Needs" from "Wants". The Committee differed from the Departments on some of these items (one example being a second "Sally Port" bay). Given the overwhelming rejection of the previous Facility by the voters, the Committee felt that an over-riding consideration had to be cost, that every option considered must be done as frugally as possible, and the cost kept to something that the voters could approve.. This meant that neither Department, in the Committee's concepts, got everything it requested.

Throughout the months of June and July, the Committee's major concentration was to prepare for its Public Presentation. This was scheduled for July 30, 2009.

PUBLIC PRESENTATION

The Committee worked prior to the presentation to advertise the time and place by articles in both the "Tuftonboro Times", and the "Granite State News" (both of which did a fine job on short notice). In addition, the sign in front of Tuftonboro School was used, it was posted on the town website, informal signs were posted in numerous public places, and the legal postings of the meeting were done in the Town Hall and Melvin Village Post Office. Considerable thought was given to when to schedule the presentation. The Committee felt that a weeknight would attract more people than a weekend, and that, given time pressures, it should be July 30, 2009, rather than waiting for the Fall. Finally, having the meeting during the Summer would allow not just residents but the many non-residents who may pay taxes in the town to attend and voice their opinions.

Each attendee was given a "Thank You for Coming" outline of the Committee's work so far, and an informal, non-binding ballot. The Committee was disappointed that attendance was 50-55 people. However, Chairman Lapolla introduced the Committee and talked about what the Committee had been working on. It was emphasized that all options considered included keeping the existing Mirror Lake and Melvin Village Fire Stations, as this had previously been a major concern of the townspeople. Other members of the Committee reviewed the options for the audience. Fire Chief Thompson spoke about his concerns of crowding in a combined facility of the size shown, but felt that the Stand-Alone Fire Department was workable at that same size. Police Chief Shagoury re-iterated his concerns, especially about operating the Department during construction of an expansion on the existing site, and about inadequate space in either the expansion or a combined facility. Both Chiefs answered questions from the audience, as did the Committee. For more detail on the Presentation, please see the minutes posted to the Town's Website.

The Committee noted that "Do Nothing" was not one of the options listed on the ballot, because the Committee felt that it was not a viable or responsible option. Even "Do Nothing" costs money, as the existing facilities will need to be upgraded to some extent, to allow the Departments to do their jobs safely. Further, the need for additional space is undeniable to anyone who has toured the facilities of either Department.

The informal ballots were later tallied, with the following results:

CONCEPT CHOICES

Options	1 st Preference	2 nd Preference
New Combined Fire/Police	12	1
Stand-alone new Fire Dept	27	8
Expand Police Dept at Town Hall	6	9
New, separate Police and Fire Buildings	11	5
Do Nothing (write in comment)	4	

Location

Gould Property	20	3
Dearborn Property	16	9
Don't care (write in comment)	19	

There was no consistent thread to the comments. Comments included “Don’t spend money”, and there were several, both written and verbal, that the Police and Fire Departments need to be considered in tandem with space needs at the Library and Town Hall. The Committee was disappointed at the turnout, and felt some members of the audience were more interested in discussing the Library needs rather than the Police and Fire needs, which was the subject of the meeting.

In the tallied results, only a new, stand-alone Fire Department received a majority of the votes cast. The Gould property was narrowly preferred over the Dearborn property, but there was no clear direction indicated by the vote. It must also be said that the vote represented only a very small portion of the voters in the town.

OPTION RECOMMENDATIONS

After 18 months of study, numerous interviews, comments, meetings, tours, a Public Presentation, and much supplementary information, the Tuftonboro Public Safety Facilities Committee is pleased to recommend two options to the Selectmen.

A NEW, COMBINED POLICE AND FIRE FACILITY IS RECOMMENDED. The Committee also feels that, while there are a few disadvantages, the advantages of a two-story building, with the Fire Apparatus Bays in the drive-out basement, are notable. It will be energy efficient, make a smaller footprint, and would be a compact, attractive, and frugal building. A combined facility means that meeting rooms, backup generator, heating and air conditioning plant, well, septic system, kitchens, and some restrooms can be shared at considerable savings. Further, once the Police Dept. moves to the new building, its former spaces would become available at the Town Hall. Given the comments of both Departments about crowding and room for future growth, it might be appropriate to consider enlarging the exterior dimensions of the building by 10% or even 20%, which would address both concerns, without adding largely to the cost. It may also be useful to consider moving the "Sally Port" outside of the major walls of the building, and just putting it on a slab (but retaining an interior connecting door with the main building. As presently done in the concepts, this building offers just over 12,000 square feet of new space, on two levels. Both Departments could continue to operate in their present facilities during construction.

Consulting with local builders, the Committee estimates this building at its current conceptual size of 72 ft. by 86 ft. could be built for \$1.7 to \$1.9 Million, including excavation, water, septic, construction of the building, conventional heating system, air conditioning, landscaping etc. This is considerably less than the original estimates based on national standards per square foot. Only specialized systems such as security, an underground cistern for the Fire Dept., and interior furniture and electronics are not included. This is based on a poured concrete foundation with a wood frame/vinyl sided main floor. Adding the specialized systems would still leave this building at approximately \$2.0 Million (estimated), resulting in a modern facility for both the Police and Fire Departments for less than the current estimated cost of a new Library. Of course, final design features and the ultimate size selected would alter the cost.

A NEW, STAND-ALONE FIRE DEPARTMENT, WITH A SEPARATE POLICE DEPARTMENT DONE EITHER BY EXPANSION OF ITS EXISTING LOCATION, OR IN A STAND-ALONE BUILDING AT ANOTHER LOCATION, IS ALSO RECOMMENDED. This option would allow the two facilities to be built at separate times, if the Selectmen so choose, but would involve duplication of meeting rooms, and the other things noted above in the combined building as being shared. Expansion at the existing location would utilize some of what is presently garden plots. However, the Committee believes this expansion could be done at the reasonable cost estimate of \$430,000., including everything except specialized security systems or electronics, computers, furniture, etc. This estimate includes continued use of the existing well and septic systems, plus the backup generator being added at this location. The functioning of the Police Department during construction is a concern, but this problem has been faced before in other places, and could be minimized by properly sequencing the work. Even then, there will be a period of time when the Department will have to vacate the building, perhaps utilizing a rented trailer or other space elsewhere within the Town. The cost of a stand-alone Fire Dept., built in the same size building as proposed for the combined facility, is \$1.3 to \$1.5 Million.

The Committee did not develop, in any depth, a concept for a separate stand-alone Police Department, although that is one part of this option. There were questions about availability of the old Library Building (after re-modeling, and should it become available). Also, the location of the stand-alone Fire Dept. limits where the Police Dept. could be located (for instance, two separate buildings would not easily fit on the Dearborn property). However, this choice, undoubtedly more expensive than anything outlined above, would eliminate Police Dept. conflicts during construction. The Committee is concerned that the cost of two new stand-alone buildings may be more than the voters are willing to approve, but this choice would be the easiest one to expand more than 20 years down the road, which was beyond the scope of time considered by the Committee.

THE COMMITTEE MAKES NO RECOMMENDATION FOR LOCATION. The Dearborn Property is large enough for the combined facility, but not separate Police and Fire Department buildings. The Gould property has ample room, but other uses has been discussed for this property, and the Selectmen or voters will have to decide what the use of the Gould property will be. The Committee notes that the Town has already spent considerable sums on survey, topography, and environmental studies of the Dearborn property. The informal ballot at the Public Presentation provided no clear guidance from those people who were there as to a preference for which property to use.

COMMENTS AND CONSIDERATIONS

The Tuftonboro Public Safety Facilities Committee was an unusual committee, in that, despite different skills and backgrounds, the Committee met frequently over a period of 18 months and conducted all of its work in a respectful and professional way. Every member contributed to the work, and, at times, one or more members changed their personal ideas to agree with what the majority of the Committee felt worked the best. The work was delayed once for over 3 months by the wait to get the Committee's ideas presented as drawn concepts, but most of the time spent was due to the complexity of the issues.

What you see in this report has been carefully considered before being recommended.

Yet, in recent months, it has become obvious that the Selectmen have started their own review of the subject in advance of this Final Report, have met separately with the Department Chiefs on this subject, and may have formed their own opinions on what to do even before the Committee completed its work.

The Committee feels strongly that the options it is proposing to the Selectmen, and the concepts of how they should look, are frugal, attractive, and workable solutions for the Town of Tuftonboro, and for the 10-15 year period the Committee was asked to consider. The approach chosen is not a copy of what has been commonly done in other towns, but the Committee urges the Selectmen to fully consider these concepts. Yes, final design work is necessary to make all the details work, and nobody got everything they asked for. But, in this Final Report, the Committee tried to incorporate and address what it felt were valid concerns brought up by the Fire and Police Departments, or by the Selectmen.

Whatever path the Selectmen choose to take, and whatever the timing, the Committee would like to make two suggestions. First, despite all of the efforts of the Committee to keep the cost down, the dollar figures still sound like a lot of money to the average town taxpayer. The Committee had neither the expertise nor the information needed to

translate this into what the cost would actually be for the average taxpayer, or its actual effect on the tax rate. That will depend on how the Facilities are funded, and when they are built. But, in seeking voter approval, these are the figures that the public really needs to see, and perhaps the Selectmen or the Budget Committee could develop an estimate.

Second, should all or part of the Facilities be delayed, the Committee urges the town to begin to set aside funds in a building reserve for the purpose of Public Safety Facilities. This was done in other towns, and the Committee believes that even the votes who are against committing to new facilities now will agree that it is prudent to plan for the Town's future needs. In its work, the Committee came to unanimously believe that more space is needed for the Fire and Police Departments.

It is the understanding of the Committee that the presentation of this Final Report on August 31, 2009 will conclude the work of the Public Safety Facilities Committee, and we wish the Selectmen success in finding the proper course for the town, and convincing the voters to approve it.

Respectfully submitted by the Committee Members:

John Lapolla, Chairman

Dave Eaton

Lane Evans

Betsy Frago

Richard Knapp

Tom Young

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

DISCUSSION AND RECENT EVENTS

PUBLIC PRESENTATION

RECOMMENDATION OF OPTIONS

COMMENTS AND CONSIDERATIONS

ATTACHMENTS

PROGRESS REPORT 1

PROGRESS REPORT 2

PUBLIC PRESENTATION HANDOUTS

CONCEPT REPRESENTATIONS

