

Report/Recommendations of the Town Manager's Task Force on Capital Projects

October 1, 2008

Background: On July 29, 2008 the Board of Selectmen convened a Capital Summit meeting with the School Committee, Appropriation Committee and Capital Expenditures Committee. The purpose of the Summit was to discuss ongoing and upcoming plans for the re-use of the White House site, former Munroe School, former Harrington School (aka, Whipple Hall) and the Muzzey Senior Center. At the conclusion of the Summit participants requested that the Town Manager convene a task force that would compile a matrix of possible re-use options for these four sites and make recommendations for narrowing the re-use options for each site, if possible.

Task Force Participants: The task force met on September 17, 2008. Participants included: George Burnell from the Board of Selectmen, Helen Cohen and Margaret Coppe from the School Committee, Susan McLeish and Pam Hoffman from the Appropriation Committee and Bill Hurley and David Kanter from the Capital Expenditures Committee. Also in attendance were Jon Himmel and Eric Brown from the Permanent Building Committee, Superintendent of Schools Paul Ash, Department of Public Facilities Director Pat Goddard and Project Manager Mark Barrett and Town Manager Carl Valente.

Findings and Recommendations: The task force makes the following findings and recommendations:

1. Prior to proceeding with any capital projects for the facilities in question, the Town should receive and review the results of the School Department Master Plan being undertaken by the Design Partnership. The draft Master Plan is due February-March, 2009. This Plan, among other things, will provide enrollment data and options which may have significant bearing on the use of the former Harrington school, including whether it will be needed for elementary school swing-space or can continue to be used for the School Central Office.
2. The Town should request funding to conduct a feasibility study of the Munroe School as a potential site for a Senior/Community Center. This feasibility study should use the same programmatic data used for the White House feasibility study. With this information, the Town will be able to compare the White House site option to the Munroe site and whether the Munroe site can accommodate the same program, given the size of this site.
3. The Town should defer the next phase of engineering/design for a Senior/Community Center until the results of the School Department Master Plan and the Munroe School feasibility study are completed, thereby providing a better understanding of potentially viable sites for a Senior/Community Center.
4. The Town should request that the Munroe Center for the Arts (MCA) Board of Directors provide a business plan or similar document that will demonstrate how the MCA will finance leasing a Town facility or the maintenance of a Town facility it may purchase from the Town (e.g., Munroe School).

5. In addressing building re-use, the Town should, in priority order, address the following space needs:
 - School Central Office: Former Harrington school or White House site as most likely locations;
 - Senior/Community Center: White House site or a renovated Munroe school as the most likely locations, if the School Central Office remains at the former Harrington school; and
 - Munroe Center for the Arts: Former Harrington school-lower level or Munroe school as the most likely locations.
6. The task force recommends that the Town defer issuing a Request for Proposals for the sale of the Munroe School until there is further discussion on whether the Town requires this property for its own purposes.
7. Other Concerns: While not formal recommendations of the task force, additional concerns included:
 - The Department of Public Facilities should continue with its current plan to replace the fire alarm and sprinkler system in the Munroe School.
 - The Town should not lose sight of a potential need to find a new site for the Supportive Adult Day Care Program if either the existing rental facility is no longer available or the program outgrows the existing facility.
 - The programmatic needs for the Senior/Community Center address primarily the needs of seniors. While the program space in a Senior Center/Community facility, as presented in the feasibility study, could be used for other purposes and by many groups, some task force members felt strongly that the Town should be evaluating a multi-generational community center facility.

Attachment: Attached is the re-use matrix presented by the Department of Public Facilities to the task force.