

Talking Points - Boxford Facilities Task Force

Approved at the May 2016 Town Meeting, the goal of Boxford's Facilities Task Force is to develop a targeted comprehensive plan that looks at selected Town user groups and selected Town buildings to come up with a long-range plan.

~The needs of the Council on Aging, Department of Public Works, Fire Department, Library, and Town Offices are being studied, and each of the selected town buildings is being evaluated for functional use and how they may be modified, if necessary, to best fit the needs of the town.

~This leads to the development of conceptual design work that matches user group functions with town buildings, and details any necessary building modifications.

~Once the conceptual design work has been completed, a financial analysis will be undertaken, in conjunction with the Town Treasurer, to minimize the long term tax impact of investment.

~The recommendations of the Task Force will be presented in the May 2017 Town Meeting in an article asking for approval of the plan.

LIST OF Q&A

How did this plan get developed and when was it approved?

The Task Force completed a Phase 1 study in 2015 to review many options for siting our town functions and developed a final recommendation that was approved by the Planning Board and the Board of Selectmen. The final recommendation was presented at the Annual Town Meeting in May 2016 and approved to move forward into Phase 2, which is the current ongoing planning effort.

I thought the Library and Town Hall were going to share space?

Yes that is the current short term plan that exists in the Town Hall building today. All Town functions have moved to the 2nd floor and the Library is expanding into the remaining 1st floor space vacated by the Town Clerk. This will serve both functions for the short term until a long term plan is approved in the future.

Are there other options to consider for siting of these town functions?

That discussion occurred in Phase 1 and many options were evaluated and eliminated from consideration. The current plan under study in Phase 2 is a "targeted" facilities plan in which specific locations have been targeted as the final destination for these town services.

Why does the Fire Department need more space?

Although their current space is sufficient and manageable, we are considering their longer term needs due to the trend of increased size of emergency vehicles. As part of the Phase 2 study, a general recommendation will be made as to the direction we should consider for the future, but no immediate conclusions will be made.

Where in town would we move the DPW Yard?

Currently that has not been decided. The DPW building is in need of repair and much like the Fire Department, the size and complexity of the vehicles require more space for storage as well as maintenance. This would be the initial assessment of the DPW and a general recommendation will be made as to the direction we should consider for the future.

Can't we just update the COA space and not have them move and get new space?

Updating the existing COA space comes with many complications that, even if done, would not increase the quality or efficiency of the building. This was considered in Phase 1 and deemed to be an unacceptable option. However, by choosing to utilize 188 Washington St we would take advantage of the existing building that is there now and construct a reasonable addition that would provide the COA with services they can not offer in their current building.

How will we move all these functions and still keep Town Services operating?

As part of this Phase 2 plan, we will present a Master Timeline & Phasing Schedule that will outline the sequence of planning, design, construction, and moving that will need to occur over many years to complete this effort. The goal will be to develop a staged schedule that will minimize down time and maintain a level of service to the Town that is acceptable to maintain operation of services.

Are my taxes going up for another capital project?

An important part of this Phase 2 Project will be the development of a Financial Model that will outline all costs associated with this effort. It will include a full analysis of project soft costs such as design, engineering, and financing as well as hard costs for construction. The model will consider all costs and will show it as a schedule over time in order to minimize taxpayer impact over the long term, likely 20 years. The goal is to complete this facilities plan in the most cost efficient manner to minimize taxpayer impact but also create a schedule of predictable and reliable financing that will define the scope and timing of each capital project needed to achieve this facilities plan.

Will the Community be involved in this process?

Yes, there will be community forums in January and April (specific dates TBD). Residents are encouraged to attend these and Facilities Taskforce meetings. We are also utilizing web, print, and social media, and other outlets within Town to help publicize the project and familiarize all residents with each and every aspect of the project. The Task Force has developed 6 key aspects of this study focused on the following areas:

- Functional needs and Program Space – Christian Wise
- Community Outreach – Holly Langer
- Conceptual Space & Building Models – Rich O'Brien
- Regulatory Overview – Peter Bernardin
- Financial Model & Long Term Impact – Ellen Guerin
- Master Timeline & Phasing – Al Vaz

Each Member of the Task Force listed above is assigned to head up one of these areas. The entire Task Force will then evaluate the cost estimate and proposed budget for this project.

Have we hired an outside firm to assist us with this planning?

Yes. The Task Force and Planning Board developed and issued a formal Request for Proposal (RFP) this past summer and invited interested firms to submit proposals and interview for this important role. Through the RFP Process and the formal Procurement function within the Town Administration, we selected Harriman Architects + Engineers, a New England based company, to help manage this project and provide the necessary expertise to develop the Conceptual Planning Models needed to meet the goals of the Project.

If this passes at Town Meeting in May 2017, what happens next?

Although we do not know the form and content that will be presented at Town Meeting in May 2017, if the Town were to approve a recommendation from this initiative, we would expect to move to the next phase of Facilities Planning. Phase 3 would involve detailed schematic design and development of construction drawings via a yet-to-be determined mechanism. As with the approval for Phase 2, the next phase would remain consistent with the Targeted Facilities Master Plan that was approved at Town Meeting in May 2016.