

Focus Committee Meeting, September 21, 2006

Present: Bob Fichtel, Chair; Pat Frederick, Christina Sargent, Sallie Thoma and non-members George Allan and Eric Smith.

Bob Fichtel called the meeting to order at 7:07 PM

Eric Smith handed out copies of his correspondence with Jonathan Dennehy concerning properties on the Winchendon Road and Williams Road, that the Committee has been considering as possible relocation sites for the Town Highway and Water Departments. Eric, Bob and Mr. Allan looked at map printouts from 1912, supplied by Eric, of properties along the Winchendon Road. It was unclear how the property lines on the 1912 map related to present day boundaries in the area.

Christina had consulted an 1870 map in Stearns' history of Ashburnham. The fact that Zebulon Rice's son Reuben married Sarah Fairbanks may provide a clue to historic ownership of the Winchendon Road property. Also, the Sanborn Maps may provide details.

Jonathan Dennehy's wife, Mary Catherine, will try to learn from childhood friend Martha Garlick whether the land on both sides of Williams Road (property of Martha's recently deceased grandfather) is going to stay in the family or become available for sale. Bob suggested that if Mary Catherine is told the land will be for sale, she might mention that the Town is potentially interested in buying it.

The Garlick property could be well screened from the street, so as not to detract from the appearance of the neighborhood; it is also desirable because of its proximity to municipal water and sewer lines, and to both the schools and the downtown.

A parcel of land on South School Street, opposite Ashley Court, might be a good location for affordable housing.

The Lombard property is not desirable, due to costs of the land and of demolishing the building on it.

George Allan handed out two "Conceptual Floor Plans" for a new highway barn: Plan I showed vehicles parked diagonally, and only two overhead doors, to provide more wall space. The more overhead doors, the greater the cost, for maintenance as well as for installation. He also showed photos of comparable, real-life spaces. Plan I would have two levels; kitchen, showers, lockers, and perhaps a lunch room and bunk areas for highway personnel, would be on the upper level. It could also have file storage space.

Plan II was more conventional. It would provide the same office space as Plan I, and the same truck wash bay; however, Plan II would have six overhead doors, and a separate maintenance bay with a solid wall between it and the main truck bay. The maintenance bay could be heated for the comfort of men working on trucks in the winter – a feature recommended by highway personnel in other towns. Since truck parts are now ordered online, clean office space is needed for the maintenance supervisor or mechanic using a computer. The building would offer 16,000 square feet if the washbay is included.

Ashburnham has 18 vehicles to be housed, including the grader, sweepers, pickup and dump trucks, and more.

Christina asked about an electric generator for emergency energy backup; it needn't be large, probably 115 volt. Three-phase electric would not be necessary for emergency coverage. This generator could be added later.

The building would need to be oriented so the doors would not face prevailing storm winds.

A separate containment storage area is needed for fuel and other liquids, and a salt storage shed must be located on the property. Storm water management must also be considered.

The next step is to narrow down site possibilities. Any site must pass a 21-E inspection for pollution.

Input will be sought from the Highway Department; George will arrange to meet with Jim Zarozinski and Steve Nims. The Committee, after seeing many highway barns in other towns agreed that these look like good, basic plans.

The Committee was reminded that on Wednesday, September 27th at 3:30, the Massachusetts Smart Growth Alliance would meet upstairs at Town Hall to discuss feasibility of a pilot project on the present town barn site.

The next Focus Committee meeting will be on Thursday, October 19th at 7:00 PM.

Chairman Bob Fichtel moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Sallie Thoma and so voted by the Committee. The meeting was adjourned at 8:34 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Patricia H. Frederick