

Information for neighbors of 60 Forge Village Road
(location of the Westford Water Department)
from the 35 Town Farm Road Task Force

May 14, 2020

The purpose of this letter is to let you know that the Fire Department training activity, which has been located for twenty years at 35 Town Farm Road, will be relocated within a year. The proposed new site is on one acre of Water Department land at 60 Forge Village Road. Below is a comprehensive explanation for this relocation.

Background:

In April 2019 the Selectmen appointed the 35 Town Farm Road Task Force to explore and make recommendations for re-use of the Town Farm property at 35 Town Farm Road. The committee met for the first time on May 6th of last year, and after considerable study, voted on August 19th to recommend to the Selectmen that the property and the 1837 and 1903 buildings be re-purposed for 100% truly affordable senior housing, plus a new home for the Westford Food Pantry.

The Task Force determined that the housing project would not be economically feasible unless the Fire Department Training Facility, located next to the Town Farm, could be moved to a different location. A sub-committee of the Task Force, which I head, has been searching for a feasible location since July 2019. The best solution we have found is on the Westford Water Department property at 60 Forge Village Road, about 100' off of Forge Village Road, just east of the National Grid right-of-way.

The training facility will include a small structure that simulates a building where search and rescue and hose training are done, and an area set aside for Jaws of Life training. Several times a year, live burning exercises will take place using a) Class A fuels – wood pallets, straw, and Masonite, and b) Class B propane-fueled fire within the enclosure. Experience at the current training site is that the Class A fires create smoke and odor similar to a neighbor burning brush in the spring.

Current Activities:

The Fire Department and Water Commissioners are discussing the conditions under which the Water Commissioners will agree to have the training facility located at their site. A Memorandum of Agreement that spells out activities, hours of operation, materials to be used, etc. is expected to be signed this month or next.

The Cemetery Commissioners have expressed concerns about noise and traffic that might disturb the quiet of the abutting Pine Grove Cemetery, particularly during funeral services. The

Fire Department has agreed not to conduct training during scheduled funerals at the Pine Grove Cemetery. The Cemetery Commission has worked with the Fire Department to conduct sound level testing, during which the Fire Department operated the equipment that would be at a typical training session. The Cemetery Commission concluded at their May 12th meeting that the Fire Dept. training would not have any adverse effect on visitors to the Pine Grove cemetery.

The Task Force sub-committee plans to have a virtual “meeting” with abutters and other neighbors of 60 Forge Village Road who wish to have input into the decision process. Following these steps, the Task Force will vote on their fire training site recommendation to be forwarded to the Selectmen.

Abutters/Neighbors Meeting:

Because of the Corona Virus Pandemic, in-person meetings are currently prohibited. We will utilize “Go to Webinar” to answer questions and concerns that you may have about the proposed location and activities planned there in a “virtual” format.

Because virtual meetings may be a new activity for some people joining the webinar, we’re planning a practice session on the 18th for those who may need some assistance downloading and setting up the software. Mike Wells, Westford’s Director of Technology, will be providing coaching and help getting set up. If you’re familiar with virtual meetings, you can just log in on the 20th. Only questions about setting up for the webinar will be dealt with on the 18th.

To join the test meeting at 7PM on 18th May please register using this URL or QR code

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/1346597586191399952>



On the 20th, we’ll conduct the actual meeting. Submitting your question(s) in advance will allow us to respond efficiently and to deal with as many topics as possible.

To join the live meeting at 7PM on 20th May please register using this URL or QR code

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/7448389041580901648>



Please note that these are two distinct meetings so be sure and use the correct links to join the correct meeting.

People who attend the meeting using a computer or smartphone app will be able to ask questions during the meeting. If you will only be joining by telephone you can submit a question that will be answered during the meeting by using this URL or QR code

<https://westfordma.gov/60fvr-questions>



If you intend to log in to the abutters' virtual meeting, I'd very much appreciate your responding to this letter to me at murraygeorge41@gmail.com. That will give us a count of the expected attendance and a means to contact you later. If you still have questions or concerns after the virtual meeting, a member of the Task Force sub-committee will be happy to meet with groups of 2-3 at the site, or I will be happy to follow up on your questions by phone or email.

The Town Farm Task Force website, <https://westfordma.gov/1229/35-Town-Farm-Road-Task-Force>, will include a map of the site, the latest draft of the Memorandum of Agreement, descriptive literature about the planned structure, and the sound study at the cemetery. Reviewing the website content in advance may help you formulate the questions you want to ask. Thank you in advance for your participation in this feedback effort. The Task Force looks forward to hearing from you.

George Murray, Chair

Marilyn Day, Deputy Fire Chief Dan Britko, Linda Moore, Andy Bergamini, Paul MacMillan

~ Fire Training Facility Site Selection Sub-Committee

Lynn Cohen, Nancy Cook, David Gutbrod, Ellen Harde, Scott Hazleton, Diane Hendriks, Pat Louch, Roberta McGuire, Bob, Waskiewicz

~ other members of the 35 Town Farm Road Task Force

