

June 11, 2020

To: Westford Board of Selectmen

From: 35 Town Farm Road Task Force

Status Report

On page 6 of our November 12, 2019 Recommendations for the Future Use of the Town Farm, the Task Force made ten recommendations for moving the Town Farm project forward and on pages 7-8, identified the remaining constraints and limitations of the Town Farm site that need to be resolved before an RFP can be issued for the Town Farm to be re-purposed for truly affordable senior housing and the Westford Food Pantry.

Both of these sections of the November 2019 report can be found at the end of this status report.

At this time, the Task Force is pleased to make our final recommendations re:

1. A new site for the Fire Department training facility
2. Fate of the School Department and Fire Department storage sheds
3. Size of the lot to be conveyed to the developer of Town Farm
4. Viability of the site for a new septic system

1. A new location for the Fire Department Training Site

Following our January 28, 2020 meeting with your board, three Graniteville residents joined the Task Force Site Selection Subcommittee. New metrics were established for evaluating a site and fifteen sites were evaluated using these metrics. The School Maintenance Garage site at 30 Beacon Street and Water Department land at 60 Forge Village Road both met the new criteria. At the April 13th meeting of the full Task Force, the 60 Forge Village Road site was reported as “virtually ideal” by subcommittee chair George Murray and it was unanimously voted “to direct [Deputy Fire Chief] Dan [Britko] to continue to reach out to the Water Commissioners to work on the Memorandum of Agreement as soon as possible and to encourage them to meet remotely [to vote on the Memorandum].”

Town Engineering staff subsequently surveyed the proposed area at 60 Forge Village Road. ([Appendix A](#))

At a May 11th meeting, the Water Commissioners voted to support the draft Memorandum of Agreement ([Appendix B](#)) with the Fire Department and to forward the Memorandum of Agreement to Town Counsel for review. Town Counsel reviewed and returned the MOA with no suggested changes. At its June 10th meeting, the Water Commissioners discussed possible changes to the MOA and decided to continue its discussion at its next posted meeting on June 20.

The Site Selection Subcommittee also reached out to the Cemetery Commission whose members did sound-level testing at the Pine Grove Cemetery in cooperation with the Fire Department. At their May 6th meeting, the Cemetery Commission agreed that a fire training site at 60 Forge Village Road would have no negative impact on Pine Grove Cemetery.

On May 14, 2020 letters were sent to fifty-four families (18 abutters and 36 other homeowners) living near the Water Department inviting them to a May 20th remote

meeting. Four residents, including two abutters, joined five members of the Site Selection Subcommittee at this meeting, along with Hugh Maguire and Steve Cronin from the Water Department, Fire Captain David O'Keefe and Cemetery Commissioners Lisa Groves and Paul Murray. No abutters, and only two non-abutters stated opposition to the plan.

Recommendation: We now ask the Selectmen to vote your support for 60 Forge Village Road as the site for the relocated fire training facility and to sign the Memorandum of Agreement when it is approved by the Water Commissioners and the Fire Department and reviewed by Town Counsel.

2. Fate of the School Department and Fire Department storage sheds

In our November report, the Task Force recommended that the Fire Department shed be demolished and the School Department shed be preserved. After further review and discussion with the School Department, we voted on Dec. 16 to recommend that the School Department shed also be demolished. The removal of both sheds **will allow the Westford Fire Department the permanent easement** they have asked for to give access to the parking area behind the Rogers Fire Station.

Task Force member Diane Hendriks took on the task of determining if there was salvage value to the 19th century carriage shed. Finding there was limited salvage value to the fire department carriage shed, Diane relayed the following information from Eric Heideman, Assistant Town Manager, that **the chosen developer would own the both the barn and the carriage shed on the property and could dispose of them as they wish according to town bylaws and at their own expense.** Task Force member David Gutbrod confirmed that only the fire shed, not the school shed, will be subject to the Demolition Delay Bylaw. Previous authorization from the Westford Historical Commission and the Building Department to take this shed down has expired.¹

3. Size of the lot to be conveyed to the developer

In our November report, the Task Force recommended **“that the Town Farm lot be enlarged** to extend the northerly boundary to include the Fire Department storage shed (which is under the care and custody of the Board of Selectmen), and to move the southerly boundary all the way back until it intersects with the northerly edge of the railroad right of way.” The attached map ([Appendix C](#)) titled “Town Farm Property 35 Town Farm Road Parcel Concept” dated April 24, 2020 reflects this recommendation and further expands the lot to include the land where the school storage shed now stands. This plan was “accepted by consensus” at our April 13th meeting.

Enlarging the Town Farm parcel from .68 to 1.68 acres (plus or minus) addresses the requirements and concerns raised by the Fire Department, by the developer who

¹ Amended wording to this paragraph, inserted on June 28, 2020, corrects inaccurate text that was in the report discussed at the Board of Selectmen's meeting on June 23, 2020. In the second sentence of the original Status Report, the words, “... Diane recommended that the developer chosen for Town Farm be authorized to demolish both buildings and that this be the developer's responsibility and expense, not the town's” have been deleted and replaced with, “... Diane relayed the following information from Eric Heideman, Assistant Town Manager, that the chosen developer would own the both the barn and the carriage shed on the property and could dispose of them as they wish according to town bylaws and at their own expense.”

responded to the earlier RFP for Town Farm and by the builders we met with last spring and summer who have shown interest in creating truly affordable senior housing on this site. With an expanded lot size to work with and the relocation of the fire training facility, the successful bidder will have the most design flexibility and will be able to include a new septic system (see 4. below) and the parking for residents required by our zoning bylaws. **We ask the Selectmen to accept this lot map.**

4. Viability of the site for a new septic system

It will be the responsibility of the developer to design a septic system that will meet with Westford Board of Health approval, but the Task Force was pleased to learn from Deputy Fire Chief Dan Britko, who worked on the siting and building of the Rogers Fire Station, that the soils at 35 Town Farm Road are highly adequate for the septic system that will be required for senior housing. One of the developers we met with last summer had his engineers review the site and they too saw no impediments to a new septic system at 35 Town Farm Road that will meet Title V requirements.

Other Progress

Since November 2019, the Task Force has also:

- cleaned out the buildings at 35 Town Farm Road
- developed a list of historic elements that are desirable to be retained when the buildings are renovated
- worked with the Museum Director to identify historic elements that might go to the Museum
- drafted an Historic Preservation Restriction
- worked with the Asst. Town Manager to begin writing an RFP

A June 23, 2020 vote by the Board of Selectmen to support the recommendations in this Status Report will allow the 35 Town Farm Road to move on to finalizing the RFP to be issued in late summer or early fall.

Respectfully submitted,

Deputy Fire Chief Dan Britko, Lynn Cohen, Nancy Cook, Marilyn Day, David Gutbrod, Ellen Harde, Scott Hazelton, Diane Hendriks, Pat Louch, Roberta McGuire, George Murray and Bob Waskiewicz



From the November 12, 2019 “Recommendations for the Future Use of the Town Farm”

Constraints and limitations of the site

Being aware of several issues that may have limited response to the 2017 RFP issued by the Town, the Task Force established subcommittees to find solutions to each of these issues.

Fire Department Training Site – Task Force member and Deputy Fire Chief Dan Britko was invaluable in helping the Task Force understand his department’s training needs and to find a new location. Lt. Mike Denehy provided the information that the current burn tower, constructed when the Rogers Fire Station was built in 2001, was not constructed with the proper concrete and therefore is not used. It would not be necessary to replicate this burn tower on a new site.

Working with the Deputy Chief, George Murray and Marilyn Day, GIS Coordinator Chris Coutu identified over 50 town-owned parcels that could meet Fire Department training needs. The Task Force subcommittee chose four. Two of these, land abutting and/or part of the 12 acres at 30 Beacon Street and 15 vacant acres at the Highway Garage, appear to be the most viable. Richie Crocker, School Department Maintenance head, is willing to consider sharing the existing School Maintenance property (the former Highway Garage) with the Fire Department. In George Murray’s report, Highway Superintendent Chip Barrett is “desirous of using [the Highway Garage] parcel for materials storage....There may be enough useable land on this 15-acre site to accommodate both operations.” (See Appendix E, page 24.)

The CHOICE housing concept includes an offer to secure funding to replicate the current fire training area. In discussions with Mr. Gaudet, funding was not discussed.

School Department and Fire Department storage sheds – The one developer who responded to the last RFP and both the present potential developers of housing at 35 Town Farm Road have cited these buildings as both visual and practical impediments to their plans. The Task Force agrees. A decision to demolish the Fire Department storage shed was previously made, Demolition Delay Bylaw approval and a bid for tearing down the building received. However, the demolition was put on hold during the RFP review process but should be revived. The School Department storage shed is newer and currently houses surplus furniture and desks. This could remain and access to the back of the property and to the back entrance of the Rogers fire station would still be possible even with housing and the Westford Food Pantry in the Town Farm and an addition, as proposed by CHOICE, in the back.

Size of the lot – In 1971 the 7+ acre Town Farm parcel was subdivided leaving only 29,400 square feet with the Town Farm building. (See Alan Engineering survey on page A.01 of the Mills Whitaker report, which was emailed to the Board of Selectmen on October 30, 2019.) Care and custody of the Town Farm building was then transferred to the School Department for their administrative offices. The Task Force recommends that the Town Farm lot be enlarged to extend the northerly boundary to

include the Fire Department storage shed (which is under the care and custody of the Board of Selectmen), and to move the southerly boundary all the way back until it intersects with the northerly edge of the railroad right of way. (See Appendix F, page 26.)

Septic system – Roberta McGuire contacted Rae Dick, Director of Environmental Services, about the Town Farm septic system. The system, which is a cesspool, has not failed but Rae suggests, “My recommendation would be to request a complete Title 5 report on all the systems at the property.” During further discussion, Rae suggested that the system be pumped since Board of Health records show this was last done in 2007. (See notes and email Appendix G, page 28). This information has been forwarded to Paul Fox, Director of Facilities.

From the November 12, 2019 “Recommendations for The Future Use of The Town Farm”

Complete list of Task Force recommendations, all voted unanimously

1. Preserving historic elements and integrity, re-purpose both the original 1837 Town Farm building and the 1901 ell as 100% truly affordable senior housing and as a home for the Westford Food Pantry.
2. The Selectmen take no action to either demolish the original 1837 Town Farm building and the 1901 ell or allow these buildings to be lost by neglect.
3. In 2019, issue an RFP seeking an individual or corporation to carry out the Task Force recommendation to re-purpose Town Farm for senior housing and the food pantry.
4. Make the transformation of the Town Farm to affordable senior housing and the food pantry a top priority for Town officials and staff, supported and moved forward on an expedited permitting track by the Selectmen, the Land Use and Permitting Offices, the Board of Health, the Facilities Manager, the Fire Department, and the Housing Authority.
5. On the north side of the property, include a common driveway for access to the Rogers Fire Station meeting room parking area and for the new senior housing.
6. Initiate the process to increase the size of the Town Farm parcel from the current 29,400 square feet.
7. Maintain the existing septic system until the restoration begins.
8. Demolish the Fire Department storage shed.
9. Work with the Director of Facilities to complete clearing out the buildings, then work with the Economic Development Committee to identify individuals or companies who will rent as-is office space in the building until restoration of the Town Farm begins. (See Appendix D, page 23.)
10. Revise the charge to the 35 Town Farm Task Force to allow the members to continue their work with stakeholders through both the RFP process and the renovations to transform the Town Farm to affordable senior housing and a new home for the food pantry. The stakeholders will include but are not limited to the Council on Aging, Westford Food Pantry, Affordable Housing Committee, the Fire Department, Historical Commission, Historical Society, and the Economic Development Committee.



**PRELIMINARY
DRAFT**

SCALE: 1" = 100'
0 10 20 30 40 50 60

NOTE: THIS CONCEPTUAL TRAINING FACILITY SHOWN IS INTENDED FOR REVIEW AND DISCUSSION PURPOSES ONLY. ANY CHANGES TO THE FACILITY, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO, THE LOCATION, SIZE, OR SHAPE OF THE FACILITY, AND OTHER SITE IMPROVEMENTS THAT WOULD BE NEEDED TO SUPPORT THE LAYOUT SHOWN.

NO.	DATE	DESCRIPTION	SCALE	DATE	PROJECT
			1"=40'	5/29/2020	FIRE TRAINING FACILITY
					PROJECT: FIRE TRAINING FACILITY
					DESIGNED BY: J.A.D.
					DRAWN BY: J.A.D.
					APPROVED BY: P.H.S.
					REVISIONS



**TOWN OF
WESTFORD, MASSACHUSETTS**
ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT
28 North Street • Westford, Massachusetts 01886
(978) 692-5320

FIRE TRAINING CONTEXT PLAN WATER DEPARTMENT PROPERTY	SHEET #
FORGE VILLAGE ROAD WESTFORD, MASSACHUSETTS	2 OF 2

Appendix B

Draft Memorandum of Agreement between the Water Department and the Fire Department, to be signed by the Board of Selectmen

**DRAFT
MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT
BETWEEN THE WESTFORD FIRE DEPARTMENT
AND
WESTFORD BOARD OF WATER COMMISSIONERS
REGARDING INSTALLATION AND OPERATION OF A FIRE TRAINING
FACILITY AT 60 FORGE VILLAGE ROAD**

On this ____ day of _____, 2020, the Westford Fire Department (WFD) and the Board of Water Commissioners of the Town of Westford (BOWC) do hereby agree as follows:

Whereas the WFD has proposed installation of a Fire Training Facility (FTF) located at the Westford Water Department's 60 Forge Village Road property,

Whereas the WFD will conduct live burn and vehicle extrication training at the proposed FTF,

Whereas the Water Department of the Town of Westford (WWD) is being asked to provide indefinite use of a portion of its 60 Forge Village Road property for WFD training burns and vehicle extrications at the FTF,

Whereas the proposed FTF is located just outside the Zone I and within the Zone II for WWD public water supply wells, and

Whereas the WWD wishes to reserve the right to reclaim use of this land in the future to accommodate changes to regulatory requirements,

Therefore, the parties do hereby agree as follows:

1. The FTF will be limited to installation of portable (or easily re-locatable) modular container(s) on a hard surface foundation, and other small temporary structures (such as an equipment shed). Permanent structures are prohibited.
2. The FTF must be constructed with a runoff collection system to prevent water used for training fires from leaving the site.
3. The WFD is responsible for maintaining the runoff collection system and disposing of system contents off site.
4. The WFD is responsible for maintaining the FTF site and cleaning up as necessary after use (no later than 14 days after use).
5. The WFD must provide a portable chemical toilet on site for use during training events.

6. Use of the FTF is restricted to the WFD or WFD-joint training use.
7. Class A training burns will be limited to 7 (seven) separate events per calendar year (each day representing an event).
8. Burn materials are limited to:
 - a. Un-treated wood
 - b. Straw
 - c. Un-treated wood pallets
 - d. Masonite
 - e. Propane
9. Requests to burn alternate materials must be made to the WWD Superintendent at least 30 days in advance of the event, and Safety Data Sheets must be provided as applicable. Approval of any alternate burn materials is up to the discretion of the WWD Superintendent.
10. Class B, C, or D fire training burns are prohibited at the FTF site with the exception of propane which is an allowed burn material.
11. Use of fire-fighting foams and/or chemicals is prohibited.
12. Chemical storage is prohibited at the FTF site.
13. The WFD must provide the WWD at least 1 (one) business days' notice of training events utilizing water from hydrants at the site.
14. All fire training run off must be fully containerized, secured, and transported off site for disposal. The WFD is responsible for all of these duties.
15. Vehicle burning is prohibited at the FTF site.
16. Vehicle extrication training is allowed at the FTF site, but vehicles used for training must be free of gasoline, coolant, motor oil, transmission fluid, brake fluid, power steering fluid, and windshield washer fluid prior to delivery to the site.
17. Vehicles used for extrication training may not be indefinitely stored at the FTF site. Accordingly, no more than 2 (two) extrication training vehicles may be present at the FTF site at a time and may not be present at the FTF site for more than 30 (thirty) days.
18. On site storage of vehicles used for extrication training must be accomplished in a manner which allows for easy clean up and prevents any leakage from leaving the site (such as use of positive limiting barriers).

19. Should the WWD require use of the property at any time, The WWD will provide the WFD 1 (one) year to close the facility, remove all structures, foundations, roadway materials, equipment, and training vehicles.
20. Soil spoils created during construction of the facility shall be stockpiled on site in the event use of the land is returned to the WWD.
21. This MOA will be reviewed by the BOWC on an annual basis, and renewed as is, cancelled, or revised accordingly. Should the BOWC decide not to continue to allow use of the property for the FTF the WFD will be provided 1 (one) year to close the facility and restore the site as stipulated under #18 of this MOU.
22. The BOWC must approve the location at 60 Forge Village Road and design of the FTF prior to installation.
23. No training activities (including parking) are allowed outside of the approved FTF site.

BOARD OF WATER
COMMISSIONERS

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

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Andrea Peraner-Sweet,
Chairperson

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G. Thomas Clay, Vice
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Chauncy Chu, Secretary

Mark D. Kost, Clerk

Tim Hall, Alternate

J. Scott Hazelton

Joseph Targ, Fire Chief

Elizabeth Almeida

Appendix C

Town Farm Property 35 Town Farm Road Parcel Concept

created by the Town of Westford GIS Department 4/24/2020

