

Report of the Police Station Study Committee

November 2, 2010



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Background Information

On August 2, 2010, the Waterville City Council voted to appoint a committee to study the need for a new police station (see Appendix A). It was noted that this topic was considered at many times in the past, but a comprehensive analysis was never completed.

The Committee purpose listed the following assignments:

1. Review prior studies, reports, etc, on the need for a new police station.
2. Examine the space requirements for the Police Department and determine where deficiencies exist, if any.
3. Discuss options for renovating, expanding or building new.
4. Evaluate the costs, both short and long term, of all identified options.

Membership on the Committee included the following:

Committee Members

Mary-Anne Beal

Fred Stubbert

Dan L'Heureux

George Coleman

Sam Shapiro

Allan Rancourt

Cathy Taylor

Ex Officio

Mayor

City Manager

Fire Chief

Police Chief

City Engineer

Between September 7 and October 19, the Committee met nine (9) times. Tours were completed of the current police station, the fire station and the former Social Security building near City Hall. Gregg Perkins, a commercial real estate broker, and Rick MacKenzie, of the Sheridan Corporation, were both interviewed to assist the Committee in the discussions of purchasing existing buildings or building new.

In addition, the Committee had the benefit of meeting with Scott Teas, architect, regarding expansion of City Hall and renovating other building options.

Assessment of Current Facility

The Waterville Police Department has occupied the basement of City Hall for approximately 40 years. This basement space was not designed as a police station when City Hall was completed in 1902. The department moved from the main floor of City Hall to the basement in the late 1960's and has been there since. The basement was extensively remodeled in 1996 as an effort to improve conditions for the Police Department.

The Police Department has more employees (38) than any other department and has the second largest departmental budget in the City. There are 13 police vehicles and many other pieces of equipment which are stored in various locations.

Committee members conducted a tour of the facility and had numerous discussions with Chief Massey about the adequacy of the current space. It was clear from the walk-through that, not only is this space less than adequate, there are serious public health and safety concerns to be addressed.

Chief Massey reminded the Committee that there are State and Federal mandates that we must comply with including:

- State audit of our juvenile holding areas.
- State audit of the Communication Center both technical and physical security to protect confidential criminal justice information.
- FBI audit of the Communication Center both technical and physical security to protect federal confidential criminal justice information.

Because of our inadequate Communication Center facility, these audits present serious challenges for us to meet State and Federal audits standards that allow us continued access to their criminal justice data bases. An example is the difficulty we currently experience in quality control audits. An improved facility would allow us to conduct quality control at a designated work station instead of the Sergeant's work station.

What follows are other areas of concern, both minor and major, of our current police station:

- No enclosed, secure area to use for persons under arrest;
- Substandard reception/visitors entry area, including safety concerns
- Lack of site and sound separation of females and juveniles arrestees
- Lack of bathrooms and locker rooms for male and female
- Inadequate booking area

Assessment of Current Facility Con't.

- Cramped dispatch center
- No adequate interview rooms
- Not enough work stations for officers to complete reports
- No evidence processing room (fumigate for fingerprints)
- No room for training purposes
- Lack of storage areas
- Inadequate evidence room
- Inadequate parking for police vehicles and visitors
- Lack of proper ventilation in almost all work areas

Unfortunately, police work has not gotten any easier over the past 20 years. In fact, it has become more dangerous and the need for security has increased.

The current police facility is not adequate to meet the demands of modern law enforcement going forward and the longer the City waits, the higher chances are that there will be a major security problem at the present facility.

Review of Options

In consideration of the need for a Police Station, the Committee outlined the following options for review:

1. Expand the basement of City Hall
2. Relocate the Police Department to the Fire Station
3. Purchase and renovate an existing building
4. Build new

Estimated costs for all four (4) of these options can be found in a table at the end of this section.

Basement Expansion – City Hall

Initially this was a very attractive option for the following reasons:

- Lowest cost of all options and least disruptive to the Police Department.
- Police Department remains close to headquarters of city government and to the downtown area.
- With the expansion possibly including an additional floor at the main City Hall level, there would be substantial savings in rent for space at the WRACC building.

The shortcomings of this option quickly became evident as the Committee researched it further. Fortunately, the Committee was able to meet with Scott Teas, architect for the Opera House project. Scott was able to prepare detailed plans for renovating and expanding the basement area. He reviewed the space requirements for all aspects of the Police Department and proposed an addition of approx. 2,500 sq. ft. extending out into the parking lot area. With this expansion and a re-configuration of the existing basement space, this option met the space needs for a police department of our size except for storage needs.

Recommendation — On August 24, the committee voted to recommend against pursuing this option for the following reasons:

- ⇒ In order to proceed with this option, it would have to be coordinated with the Opera House project and would require immediate initiation of the design phase which was deemed impractical for timing reasons.
- ⇒ The Police Department would still be in a basement area without natural light and adequate ventilation.
- ⇒ Expansion of the basement would result in a substantial loss of parking to the lot between City Hall and the former Social Security building.
- ⇒ The new entrance would not be visible to motorists on Front Street.
- ⇒ After spending over an estimated \$1,600,000, the Police Department would still be in a cramped basement area with no room for expansion.
- ⇒ This plan did not address the need for additional evidence storage which is currently largely off-site.

Review of Options Con't.

Relocate to Fire Station

This has been the most extensively studied of all the options.

Review of this option began in 1999 when the City was planning for an expansion of the Fire Station. The architect at the time was asked to provide cost estimates for combining the police and fire departments. The City rejected this option at that time due to cost. Part way through the project the architect was again asked to explore this option as explained further in the September 10, 2010, memo found in Appendix B. Again, the City rejected this proposal due to cost concerns.

In 2007 the newly created Facilities Review Committee investigated this option again and reached the following conclusions:

- That because of issues with dampness, required excavation, and occupied space, that the basement of the old fire station cannot be utilized in any significant way by the Police Department.
- The basement of the new building is the most likely potential space to convert to police use.
- The Police Department needs to have a Sally Port — an inside space where a person under arrest can be processed.
- It is essential that the following police functions all be on the same level: -Sally Port -Booking -Sergeants -Dispatch -Patrol
- These functions need to be on the same floor that the general public would use to enter the facility because of the location of the dispatch center.
- It was understood that space for other police uses (administration, records, detectives, etc.) would be required and could be located on one of the upper floors.
- Parking and public access are major issues that have to be incorporated into any re-use plan.
- The front of the building cannot serve as the point of access for the general public.
- Consequently, there is a need to acquire the property located at 14 Union Street to create a parking lot for the police cruisers, employees and public parking. This property is a 7-unit apartment building currently assessed at \$115,000.
- There is a need to create secure areas for both fire and police functions. Secure from each other and secure from access by the general public.

Review of Options Con't.

- The present fire department dispatch area is not large enough to accommodate the police dispatch center.
- The estimated cost to move the police communications center to the fire station would be \$250,000 (since revised to \$150,000)

Recommendation — Although attractive from a cost point of view, this option was eliminated for the following reasons:

- ⇒ After more than 40 years in a basement area, the Police Department would be going back into one.
- ⇒ Access and visibility are not good. Motorists would only be able to see the Police Station from Union Street. Police cruisers exiting this property would have a difficult time making left turns onto College Avenue and Main Street.
- ⇒ There is a threat of petroleum contaminated soil at the site which proved very expensive to remove with the Fire Station project.
- ⇒ There would be a need to purchase an adjoining property(ies).
- ⇒ The basement area to be converted has approximately 6,000 sq. ft. The Police Department needs about 11,000 sq. ft., so the remaining space would have to be on a separate floor where the Fire Department offices are now.
- ⇒ This option would not provide all the storage space needed which is currently provided by 2 or 3 off-site buildings.
- ⇒ Substantial security measures would have to be implemented to separate some of the police and fire department spaces within the building.
- ⇒ An additional building would have to be constructed to house all of the equipment and vehicles currently in the basement of the Fire Station.
- ⇒ The existing basement floor has radiant heat elements which would be damaged and probably rendered useless by converting this area for the Police Department.
- ⇒ Having the Police Department in this building would eliminate the possibility of this building becoming a regional fire station.

Review of Options Con't.

Purchase and Renovate

In addition to the Fire Station, the Committee spent considerable time reviewing other buildings as possible homes for the Police Department. This included the former Social Security building adjacent to City hall, the former Boys & Girls Club building and the American Legion building on College Avenue.

What follows is a quick summary of each building.

Social Security Building — This building was the most attractive one, given it's proximity to City Hall. Building size is also very favorable as it has approximately 10,000 sq. ft. The inside space is also very open which would help to reduce renovation costs, however this is a 60 year old building.

The most significant problem with recommending this option is that it removes a viable commercial building from the tax rolls at a tax loss of about \$10,000/year. In addition, a sally port would have to be added. However, this building was the preferred option amongst the available buildings surveyed.

Boys & Girls Club Building — With this building being vacant for a number of years, there were serious questions about its interior and exterior conditions. It was the consensus that the land was more valuable and that the building should be removed.

There are serious problems with this location however, as there is no public street at present that leads to this site. In addition, there are residential properties nearby, which could be affected by a Police Department in the neighborhood.

American Legion Building — At 28,000 sq. ft. this building is more than twice the size we need. The interior configuration is not ideal for what we are looking for which would make for some costly renovation work. In addition, it is a 50 year old building so there are concerns about the roof, electrical and heat. The positive aspects to this building is its location and ample parking lot. There is probably no better location in the City than this site, but after the purchase price, renovation work and the addition of a sally port, you would still have a 50 year old building.

Recommendation — Although some of these buildings had positive attractions, the consensus is that the cost of converting an existing building was close enough to the cost of building new so that it was not a sound long term investment.

Review of Options Con't.

Building New

The Committee had the benefit of exploring this option from discussions with an architect (Scott Teas) and a builder (Sheridan Corporation). This allowed the Committee the benefit of better understanding the cost difference between new construction and renovation.

Building costs were calculated for a 10,600 sq. ft. structure at \$190/sq. ft. This seems to be a very generous rate since the two examples of recent new construction cited by Mr. MacKenzie were at \$150 and \$173 per square foot. Building a secure building like a Police Station would result in higher costs than regular commercial /institutional construction.

Available building sites were examined with the understanding that at least one (1) acre was required near the downtown area at a location which provided for easy traffic flow.

As shown in the following section, the cost to finance a new Police Station would be approximately \$172,500/year or .3 mil increase in the tax rate. This is for an estimated total project cost of \$2,500,000 financed over 30 years with variable rates of 1% to 5% over the term of the loan.

Recommendation — As shown on the following page, the cost of building new is not substantially more than renovating an existing structure - especially when one remembers that a renovated building is still an old building that was not designed for the purpose in mind.

Viewed from a long term perspective, building what is required for operational purposes is the most cost effective approach. It can also be stated as long term gain versus short term savings.

Financial Considerations

The examination of the need for a new Police Station has to include an analysis, however brief, of the City's financial picture.

As with the national and state economies, the City has struggled the past two (2) years to maintain a stable tax rate in the face of declining revenues. We expect this current year (2010-2011) to be more of the same.

The primary culprit is the loss of state revenue sharing funds. From a high water mark of \$2.9 million in 2007-2008, the City is now expected to receive \$1.65 million in this fiscal year. That's a decrease of \$1,250,000 or 1.9 mils in a three (3) year period. That situation is not expected to improve for the 2011-2012 tax year unless our state leaders decide to ease the burden on property taxes by providing more state revenue sharing.

The other big source of revenue is from motor vehicle excise taxes. While experiencing a decline in 2009-2010, it appears that this revenue may be stabilizing in 2010-2011. While this revenue source will not help mitigate the revenue shortfall in the current year, it should also not add to it.

The City's present tax rate of 24.15 is lower than it has been in twelve (12) years. The rate decreased or remained stable for the past seven (7) years — a total decrease of 12% since the 27.40 rate in the 2003-2004 tax year. Is the current rate sustainable given the economic realities and ever increasing fixed costs?

The only way the City avoided a tax increase in each of the past two (2) years was through the use of surplus. The City used \$1,500,000 this current year and \$1,327,800 in the prior fiscal year. It appears that there will be approximately \$627,130 for use in 2011-2012. This would leave a fund balance of \$5,645,370 which would satisfy the requirement of a surplus size of 16% to total budget.

The good news regarding all this use of our surplus is that the City had it to spend. A fund balance of over \$10 million was available, and it proved essential in helping us stabilize our tax rate.

If revenues don't rebound by 2012-2013 however, the difficult decision will be to raise taxes or eliminate programs and services.

How can we consider therefore, spending \$2.5 million on the construction of a new Police Station? This would add about \$170,000/year to our debt service load.

The City's debt service at 7.9% of budget is about average for a community our size. In addition, the City will be retiring two bonds in the next three (3) years for an annual savings of \$123,000. Should the City restructure some of our current debt with a new bond issue in 2011, there will be a savings of about

Financial Considerations Con't.

\$60,000/year. See Appendix C for a complete record of the City debt load and estimates for additional borrowings.

With these savings, the City could finance a new police station without an increase to the city side of the debt service ledger. However, the City will be incurring a total of approximately \$10 million for High School repairs which must also be factored in to any discussion about future pressures on the tax rate.

A final consideration should be any other capital improvements that would impact the City's debt service in the future. With repairs completed at the public works, library and fire station sites, there are no other major capital improvements on the horizon. The City has done a good job maintaining equipment and buildings, so the police station is the last major capital improvement remaining.

Financial Considerations Con't.



	New Bldg.	Fire Station	City Hall	SS/Ferris Bldg.
Land/Bldg Purchase	\$125,000	\$165,000	\$0	\$650,000
Site Prep	\$160,000	\$135,000	\$100,000	\$40,000
Building Cost New or Renovate	\$2,215,000	\$1,476,000	\$1,375,000	\$1,329,000
Comm Center Relocation	\$155,000	\$155,000	\$150,000	\$155,000
TOTAL:	\$2,655,000	\$1,931,000	\$1,625,000	\$2,174,000

Other Considerations

Operations and Maintenance	\$22,950	\$13,700	-\$13,150	\$26,200
Lost Taxes	\$1,500	\$2,750	\$0	\$10,620
TOTAL:	\$24,450	\$16,450	-\$13,150	\$36,820

Summary Recommendations

The police function in any town or city is arguably the most difficult and dangerous municipal service provided to its residents. Police personnel are at risk daily, having to confront the most violent elements of our society while providing aid and comfort to victims.

Having a facility that is safe for the victims and secure for the criminals is essential. There is no area of municipal responsibility that has more liability concerns.

Waterville's use of the City Hall basement as a Police Station is barely adequate today and certainly not adequate going forward.

We understand the current financial pressures that the City is facing but are encouraged by the improvements completed by the City over the past few years without substantial increases in the tax rate. The fire station has been expanded, buildings at Public Works replaced and repaired and repairs to the High School planned in the near future.

The construction of a new Police Station is the last major capital improvement listed in the City's strategic plan.

Although there will be budgeting consequences by adding a new building, we are of the understanding that there will be no requests for major capital improvement projects into the foreseeable future.

What follows are the major findings from our work over the past two months:

- ⇒ In addition to serious safety concerns, the present Police headquarters is inadequate in many ways and cannot continue to serve the residents of Waterville into the foreseeable future.
- ⇒ Moving the Department into an existing City building (Fire Station) or expanding the City Hall basement are not viable long term solutions – financially or functionally.
- ⇒ The Police Station must be located near the commercial center of the City.
- ⇒ There are no attractive options for renovating any existing commercial buildings within or near the downtown area.
- ⇒ The cost of building new versus renovating an existing structure is a better financial option when viewed from a long term perspective. Also, a new building will be designed for the special operational needs of a Police Dept.

Summary Recommendations Con't.

⇒ Given the discount construction prices over the past two (2) years and the historically low interest rate environment, the City should seriously consider building new in the next two (2) years.

While we cannot fully evaluate all of the financial considerations of adding more debt to the City's balance sheet, we believe that the needs of the Police Department are best served with a long term perspective. It is too important a function for a short term fix.

We believe that the following question should be the key to addressing the question of what to do about a new Police Station.

“What option will work best for our residents and for the Police Department for the next 50 years?”

Respectfully Submitted,

Date: _____

Allan Rancourt

Mary-Anne Beal

Dan L'Heureux

George Coleman

Cathy Taylor

Fred Stubbert

Sam Shapiro

Appendices

Appendix A

Purpose Statement

Background & Purpose:

The Waterville City Council has appointed a study committee to assist the Council in reviewing the need for a new police station. There has been some study work conducted in the recent past, but there has not been any comprehensive analysis completed regarding the need for a new police station.

The Waterville Police Department has occupied the basement of City Hall for approximately 40 years. This basement space was not designed as a police station when City Hall was completed in 1902. The Police Department is now a 30+ member department and has the second largest budget of any City department.

The purpose of this Committee will be to:

Review prior studies, reports, etc, on the need for a new police station.

Examine the space requirements for the Police Department and determine where deficiencies exist, if any.

Discuss options for renovating, expanding or building new.

Evaluate the costs, both short and long term, of all identified options.

Hopefully the Committee can report to the Council by October 1, 2010. It is understood that the Committee's role is advisory only and that the City Council reserves the right to make final decision.

Membership:

Mary-Anne Beal

Fred Stubbert

Dan L'Heureux

George Coleman

Sam Shapiro

Allan Rancourt

Cathy Taylor

Ex Officio

Mayor

City Manager

Fire Chief

Police Chief

Greg Brown

Appendix B

September 10, 2010 Memo



MEMORANDUM

TO: POLICE STUDY COMMITTEE
FROM: MIKE ROY, CITY MANAGER
SUBJECT: BACKGROUND INFORMATION
DATE: SEPTEMBER 10, 2010

As promised, I will attempt to provide you with some background information regarding prior work on the question of locating the Police Department in the Fire Station.

After reviewing this information, it should be clear that the City has spent enormous time and a fair amount of money examining the suitability of the Fire Station as a future home for the Police Department.

1. In 1999, the Request for Proposals (RFP) for the construction of the Fire Station had the following statement:

"A preliminary/cursory design of the future Police Department must be provided early in the design phase to address common use issues and design compatibility."

Once the architect was hired, an item was added to his contract:

"...to provide options for the future addition of a Police Station at the site."

The architect, Mr. Malm, produced a report detailing:

- ⇒ the deficiencies of the current Police Station
 - ⇒ the space needs for a fully functional Police Station
 - ⇒ a design for converting the Fire Station for police use; and
 - ⇒ an estimated cost (\$1,982,813) for this conversion
2. Near the completion of the fire station project, the City paid the architect an additional \$15,000 to investigate the option of purchasing and renovating the Ken-a-Set building next door (\$2,257,294). An estimate for building new was also developed for a total of \$3,383,200. This work was completed in September 2003.
 3. In 2007, the City's facility Review Committee again tackled the question of moving the Police Department to the Fire Station. The Committee interviewed Mr. Malm and worked with Sheridan Corporation to develop design plans and cost estimates. Renovation was estimated at \$1,125,000 and an estimate of \$1,465,000 was developed for new construction. The renovation cost listed above does not include any funds for property purchases for parking purposes.

Appendix B Con't.

September 10, 2010 Memo

4. At the February 21, 2007 meeting of the Facility Review Committee, the Committee agreed on the following key findings:
- That because of issues with dampness, required excavation, and occupied space, that the basement of the old fire station cannot be utilized in any significant way by the Police Department.
 - It was agreed to that the basement of the new building is the most likely potential space to convert to police use.
 - The Police Department needs to have a Sally Port — an inside space where a person under arrest can be processed.
 - It is essential that the following police functions all be on the same level:
 - Sally Port
 - Booking
 - Sergeants
 - Dispatch
 - Patrol
 - This needs to be the same floor that the general public would use to enter the facility because of the location of the dispatch center.
 - It was understood that space for other police uses (administration, records, detectives, etc.) would be required and could be located on one of the upper floors.
 - Parking and public access are major issues that have to be incorporated into any re-use plan.
 - The front of the building cannot serve as the point of access for the general public.
 - Consequently, there is a need to acquire the property located at 14 Union Street to create a parking lot for the police cruisers, employees and public parking. This property is a 7-unit apartment building currently assessed at \$115,000.
 - There is a need to create secure areas for both fire and police functions. Secure from each other and secure from access by the general public.
 - The present fire department dispatch area is not large enough to accommodate the police dispatch center.
 - The estimated cost to move the police communications center to the fire station would be \$250,000.

Present at the meeting were Rick Malm, Mike Roy, Paul LePage, Tom Longstaff, Fred Stubbert, John Morris, Bill Page and Josh Grant.

The suitability of this site has been thoroughly examined over the past 10 years and the benefits and shortcomings are well known.

The main question remains, “What option best suits the needs of the Police Department and the residents of Waterville of the next 25 years and beyond?”

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Appendix C

Debt Service Chart

City of Waterville Bond Repayment Schedule - Actual and Projected for Fiscal Years 2011 to 2020

		Fiscal Year to be Paid				
		2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
	Bond Year Issued	Total Payment	Total Payment	Total Payment	Total Payment	Total Payment
City	1997	101,160.00	96,727.50	92,250.00	-	-
	1999	234,645.00	226,725.00	218,725.00	210,685.00	202,525.00
	2001	111,617.00	108,332.00	105,047.00	101,689.00	98,331.00
	2002	324,575.00	318,625.00	312,462.50	300,975.00	294,375.00
	2005	423,966.26	408,816.26	398,841.26	388,866.26	378,891.26
	Gilman St Bond	45,620.00	45,620.00	-	-	-
City Total		1,241,583.26	1,204,845.76	1,127,325.76	1,002,215.26	974,122.26
TIF Downtown	1997	76,837.50	-	-	-	-
Total Known Payments		1,318,420.76	1,204,845.76	1,127,325.76	1,002,215.26	974,122.26
Library, et al (Estimated)	2011	-	305,196.00	303,274.00	300,398.00	297,506.00
Police Station	2013	-	-	-	44,792.00	172,500.00
Savings on refinancing 1999/2001 Bond	2011	-	(62,275.00)	(66,285.00)	(61,560.00)	(56,835.00)
Total Payments Known and Estimated		1,318,420.76	1,447,766.76	1,364,314.76	1,285,845.26	1,387,293.26

		Fiscal Year to be Paid				
		2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
	Bond Year Issued	Total Payment	Total Payment	Total Payment	Total Payment	Total Payment
City	1997	-	-	-	-	-
	1999	184,542.50	176,780.00	168,980.00	156,310.00	148,770.00
	2001	94,900.00	91,250.00	87,600.00	83,950.00	80,300.00
	2002	287,775.00	281,175.00	274,368.75	267,356.25	259,931.25
	2005	303,560.00	295,310.00	287,060.00	278,810.00	270,560.00
	Gilman St Bond	-	-	-	-	-
City Total		870,777.50	844,515.00	818,008.75	786,426.25	759,561.25
TIF Downtown	1997	-	-	-	-	-
Total Known Payments		870,777.50	844,515.00	818,008.75	786,426.25	759,561.25
Library, et al (Estimated)	2011	293,662.00	289,816.00	285,492.00	281,166.00	276,360.00
Police Station	2013	171,458.00	170,208.00	168,750.00	167,083.00	165,313.00
Savings on refinancing 1999/2001 Bond	2011	(52,042.50)	(47,250.00)	(42,997.50)	(38,745.00)	(34,492.50)
Total Payments Known and Estimated		1,283,855.00	1,257,289.00	1,229,253.25	1,195,930.25	1,166,741.75

