

## 10. PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES

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Planning for municipal expansion is a necessary and responsible way to address all the new space needs forced upon Bolton due to continued population growth. In response to growth in the 1980s and 1990s, Bolton built Florence Sawyer School, expanded the regional high school and rehabbed half of Emerson School, but the growth of the student population has led the MPC to recommend that land be bought now for a site for the next school or other municipal facility. In June of 2005, the MPC recommended the formation of

a School Needs Assessment Committee. In the interim, this committee has completed its task and has presented its findings to the Board of Selectmen.

In addition to more school space, the library requires expansion, the town offices have spread beyond the Town Hall, and the police station requires updating. The MPC has not been able to reach consensus regarding the best recommendation for all facility needs. Instead, this report recommends a few leading alternatives for each building. The MPC strongly recommends the formation of a Capital Planning Committee, to be charged with long-term planning of the scope and fiscal feasibility of the various municipal projects currently under consideration. This work should include alternate solutions, including budgetary impact, for consideration by voters.

### 10.1 Strategic Land Acquisition for Municipal Needs

As discussed further below, if Bolton is to have options for its future schools, municipal facilities, and wastewater needs, land must be acquired to provide for these facilities. Therefore, a first priority is to identify, acquire, and then land bank key properties to allow for these future demands. Potential sites may already be under town control – such as the Cell Tower site (south of 117, west of 495). Private sites that may be considered for acquisition to meet facility needs include the Taggart land on Forbush Mill Road, the Lamson property (near Cell Tower site), and the Powers, Smith and Mardirosian properties, all on Main Street.

**Responsible Entity** – Board of Selectmen and proposed Capital Planning Committee

### 10.2 Municipal Facilities

#### 10.2.1 School Facilities Strategic Expansion Options

In order to plan for school expansion, student enrollment must be projected for the next 20 years. In September of 2005, Bolton's Selectmen sponsored a Bolton School Needs Assessment Committee to determine the short and long-term building needs for Bolton's K-8 students. This

committee will determine the amount and type of school space needed and the year in which the need is projected. They will also provide their recommendations on ways to meet these needs. A thorough evaluation of the most cost effective way to meet these needs must follow. There are two primary options to meet the new school needs: renovate Emerson and wait to build a new school, or build a new school in the near term and reuse the Emerson School for Town Hall offices or other municipal use. The MPC recommends that either the School Needs Assessment Committee or an alternate committee consider the options to meet both the school space needs and the Town Hall space needs, and the financial implications of each.

The Bolton School Needs Assessment Committee recommended in May 2006 that the town should meet its next K-8 school space need by renovating the 1952 and 1922 portions of Emerson, and returning them to classroom use for the 2009-2010 school year. They predict that this should provide enough capacity for Bolton's K-8 needs until new construction of a school of about 1400 students in the 2015 to 2021 timeframe.

Option 1- Three School K-8 System:

Option 1 would provide Bolton with a three school system for K-8 students: the Florence Sawyer School (650 existing capacity), an Emerson School with the 1952 section and potentially the 1922 section renovated to increase capacity (up to 385 students), and eventually a new school for 500-600 students.

Recently, Bolton renovated the 1972 portion of the Emerson School, creating new classrooms for up to 225 students. Renovating the 1952 portion of Emerson would bring the total school capacity to 385 students. This strategy would defer the need to construct a new school for some time. Eventually, yet another new school facility would be required to meet continually increasing enrollments. An expansion of Emerson School is an 'interim' measure.

Option 2- Two School K-8 System:

Option 2 would provide Bolton with a two school system for K-8 students: the Florence Sawyer School (650 capacity), and a new school for 650 to 750 students. In this option, the Emerson School would be entirely replaced.

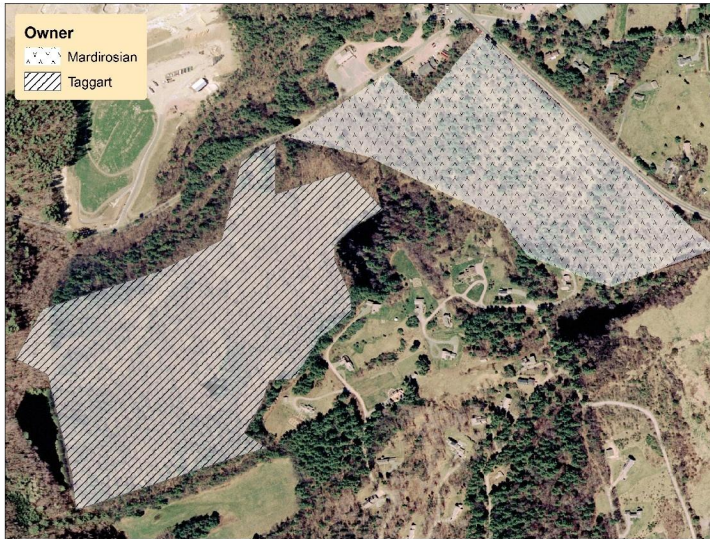
Bolton could begin planning for an entirely new school today with a capacity of 650 to 750 students to meet longer-term projected enrollments. Such a school would open between 2010 and 2015. That new school would both accommodate new enrollment until approximately 2020 to 2025 and replace Emerson School. Florence Sawyer School would remain in operation at its design capacity of 650 students.

Under this option, Emerson School could then be converted for reuse for other municipal purposes – such as a Town Administration Building which would host Town Hall, NRSD Administrative offices, and perhaps additional municipal functions.

Possible sites identified for a new school the Lamson site, abutting the school campus, or the privately-owned Taggart land on Forbush Mill Road.

***Responsible Entity*** – Selectmen and School Needs Assessment Committee

Land Bank a Site for a New School:



Under either of the options discussed above, a new site of approximately 20- 25 acres will be needed, sooner or later, to accommodate a new school. The suitability of unoccupied town-owned property including the Horse Ring site and land behind and beside the Sheep Show Field and Florence Sawyer School should be determined. If those town-owned sites are not viable, a new privately-owned site should be identified and acquired as soon as possible to avoid ever-increasing land sale prices. The

primary privately-owned sites identified to date are the Taggart and Mardirosian properties near the High School on Forbush Mill Road and Main Street, respectively, and the Lamson property, a large parcel abutting I-495 near the cell tower site.

***Responsible Entity***–Board of Selectmen, proposed Capital Planning Committee, School Building Committee, Conservation Commission, Planning Board and Board of Health.

***10.2.2 Establish Permanent School Building & Capital Planning Committees***

Establish School Building Committee:

The Board of Selectmen should form the permanent Bolton School Building Committee to finalize the cost benefit analysis of the options to satisfy the school space needs and implement the final recommendations as approved by a town meeting vote.

Establish Capital Planning Committee:

The Board of Selectmen should establish a Capital Planning Committee (CPC) to assess all municipal facility and siting options. This Committee would work with other previously established committees, including those working on the Library and Police Station projects, as well as the Selectmen, Planning Board, and Master Plan committees. The Board of Selectmen will define the roles and responsibilities of the CPC, which may include assessment of the interrelationships amongst projects, analyzing debt service, and prioritizing municipal projects.

**Responsible Entity** – The Board of Selectmen should formally appoint and establish these committees.

### **10.2.3 Police Station**

The Police Station is currently housed in the Houghton building on Main Street. This historic building was originally a school, was then used as town offices and, since 1994 has served solely as a police station. Although the station is an attractive one, it is one of the smallest in the area and various elements are not consistent with or compliant with current law enforcement standards and “best practices.” Previous Police Station facility study committees and task forces have determined that the current facility is inadequate and that a new facility to include a holding cell, a secure booking area out of public view, heated and secure car garage and work-out area with locker rooms is needed. The Police Department has prepared plans for a new 6,500 square foot facility to be located preferably in the public view. Several siting options include:



#### Site Option 1 - Cell Tower Site:

The Police Station task force’s preferred site is at the town’s Cell Tower site which would provide more than sufficient room and good access to Route 117 and I-495. This site is currently encumbered with uncertain septic possibilities. The septic issue may be resolved at the completion of the installation of the new wastewater treatment facility in the vicinity of the Florence Sawyer and Emerson schools.

#### Site Option 2 – Smith Property:

An alternative site choice is at the rear of the Smith property on Main Street if the Smith property is acquired by the Town. This site would provide sufficient room and retain the Police Station in the center of town to help reinforce an active Town Center. Easy access in and out of the Smith property to Route 117 may be difficult unless the intersection is improved and traffic signals installed.

#### Site Option 3 - Fire Station Site / Combined Public Safety Building:

A new Police Station could be constructed on Wattaquaddock Hill Road, adjoining the existing Fire Station to create a Public Safety complex. The two functions could share common facilities such as the dispatcher, conference rooms, employee lounge, training room, locker rooms, and restroom facilities. Due to police security issues, questions have been raised as to how many functions could actually be shared. Again, access to Route 117 may be considered difficult, unless the intersection of Main Street and Wattaquaddock Hill Road were improved and traffic signals installed.



Site Option 4 - Town Administration Building / Police Station at Emerson School Building:

If the Emerson School were no longer a school building as part of Bolton's school facility expansion program, there may be sufficient space to accommodate all the Town Hall functions as well as a Police Station.

The disadvantage of this option is that the future of the Emerson School is not now known; and, even if it were converted to a "Town Administration Building / Police Station" in the future, it would not be available for such use for at least another five or more years. Also, the Police Department has expressed reservations about this option due to possible safety conflicts between patrol cars entering and exiting the site and school children at the nearby Florence Sawyer School.

**Responsible Entity-** Board of Selectmen, proposed Capital Planning Committee, and advice of the Police Department

**10.2.4 Library**

The Library is a stone building given with specified use as a library to the town by the Whitney sisters in memory of their father in 1903. Now over 100 years old, it is attractive but has become outdated and inadequate in size. The Library Trustees have developed a plan for an expanded 13,000 square foot facility at the present Library site based on a needs assessment of the Library's current and anticipated needs of a target population of 7,500 residents. The existing historic building would be renovated and a two-story expansion would be added to the east side and rear of the existing Library.



Assessment of the existing library identified a shortage of storage space and a reading room insufficient in size to meet the needs of Bolton's population in accordance with state standards. Additionally, from surveys of its patron community, the Library Committee identified a strong desire to provide more than just a collection of books. The Library's patron base desired a facility that is a 'destination and place to go for activities – lectures, readings, exhibits, classes, meetings ... a community living room'.

As a result, the Library's expansion plan includes meeting and multi-purpose space designed to accommodate up to 75 people. . It is proposed that the Library's septic fields would be located on adjoining Fire Department property at the rear of the Fire Station.

The November Special Town Meeting vote narrowly defeated the 13,000 square foot expansion, even with a state matching grant on the table for its construction. The library Trustees obtained an extension of the grant from the state and increased the amount of pledges for donations. At

the May 2006 Annual Town Meeting, and subsequent Proposition 2 ½ ballot question, the town voted to proceed with the proposed library addition and renovation project. As the project moves forward, the Capital Planning Committee needs to carefully assess the town's debt capacity and timing of other capital expenditures.

**Responsible Entity-** Library Trustees, Board of Selectmen and proposed Capital Planning Committee

### **10.2.5 Town Hall**

Town Hall was built in 1853, replacing the original structure that was destroyed by fire. A two-story addition was added to the back in 1914. The first floor was renovated in 1972. In 1992, the second floor was remodeled to house the Town Offices. At present, Town Hall lacks an elevator, does not have a state-required records storage vault, and lacks sufficient meeting space. Office space is insufficient and some town hall staff are now located off-site in the 1922 wing of Emerson School. This dispersal of staff hinders communication between staff members and complicates public access to Town Hall services.

#### Site Option 1- Additional Space at Town Hall Site:

An addition to the Town Hall would be required to meet all these space demands and should include some space for expansion. Although there is adequate town-owned acreage at the Town Hall site, the hilly and rocky terrain poses a challenge for the location of an addition. The First Parish Church has expressed interest in developing shared parking space with the Town Hall, including some on church land. With Town Hall use primarily on weekdays and First Parish use primarily on weekends, this could be a beneficial partnership. The existing level parking area behind the Town Hall could then be used for an addition or annex.

#### Site Option 2- Move Town Hall to Renovated Space:

Alternatively, Town Hall functions might be relocated in their entirety to a new 'Municipal Building' if a site or building can be identified. One possibility is the Emerson School as a possible site for Town Hall functions. The 1998 Building Space Use Committee report indicated that the Emerson School could comfortably house all the town hall offices and storage. However, the Bolton School Needs Assessment Committee has recommended that the 1922 and 1952 sections of Emerson School for renovation for educational use. The MPC recommends that the Capital Planning Committee oversee a thorough evaluation of the optimum way to reconcile the needs of the Town Hall and additional school space.

**Responsible Entity-** Proposed Capital Planning Committee and advice of Town Hall employees

### **10.2.6 Community, Senior and Teen Center**

With the completion of Bolton's first senior housing facility, the Senior Center was moved from the Town Hall to the new facility, Bolton Country Manor. Parking has been a serious problem and the senior citizens have expressed an interest in programs and facilities that exceed the

available community space at Bolton Country Manor. As Bolton's population ages and as additional over-55 housing is built in town, the needs for senior facilities, services (such as transportation to shopping and the like), and activities are likely to increase.

At the MPC public meeting, many residents expressed interest in developing areas in Bolton that



*Houghton Building*

will help create a greater sense of community, i.e. a gathering place. The MPC suggests that the Capital Planning Committee assess the cost and potential benefit of creating a Community, Senior Center and Teen Center in the Emerson building once it is no longer serving as a school, or in either the Houghton building or Town Hall if these facilities are vacated by their current occupants. The town should consider the need for facilities for these groups when building or renovating municipal spaces.

**Responsible Entity** – Board of Selectmen, Council on Aging, and proposed Capital Planning Committee

### **10.2.7 Playing Fields**

Bolton's recreational fields are overseen by the Parks and Recreation Committee (P&R) and maintained by Bolton's Department of Public Works (DPW). The P&R coordinates field usage for public events and organized sports groups. P&R does not collect any funding from private groups in order to use the fields.

The current inventory of playing fields is: Memorial Field (baseball, softball, volleyball, basketball, playground), Forbush Mill Field (soccer, Ultimate Frisbee), Derby Field (soccer, lacrosse), Emerson Field (soccer and lacrosse practice, T-ball), and the Cell Tower Field (lacrosse practice). Some Bolton youth sports organizations also utilize the facilities at Nashoba Regional High School when available. In addition to private group and camp use, Derby, Emerson and Memorial fields are used for recess and school sports.

As Bolton's population increases and interest in team sports continues to grow, the demand for additional playing fields will continue to increase. Likewise, as the enrollment at the schools grows, the need will increase for space for physical education, recess and school sports. During the height of the Spring and Fall seasons there is not enough field space to fully meet the requests received by the P&R. Soccer and lacrosse programs are gaining popularity; these games require sizable areas for their regulation fields. There is a short-term need for an additional full-size baseball diamond and a multi-purpose field sized to accommodate a regulation lacrosse field.

**Responsible Entity** - Parks and Recreation Commission and the proposed Capital Planning Committee



**Soccer game at Forbush Mill field**



**Bolton Town Beach**

### **10.3 Wastewater Solutions**

In 2005, the town of Bolton entered into a revised administrative consent order with DEP to develop an appropriate wastewater treatment plant to serve Florence Sawyer and Emerson schools. In August 2005, the Selectmen appointed a Wastewater Treatment Plant Committee to oversee the project and competitively hired an engineering firm to design the wastewater treatment plant. A timeline was agreed to with DEP that calls for completion of the installation of the treatment plant by April 2008 and the project is currently on schedule. The leach field for the wastewater treatment plant will be located on the northeast portion of the “sheep show” field with the building housing the treatment equipment nearby, away from wetlands but situated to maximize the size of post-construction playing fields at the site. The building is expected to be about 30 feet by 30 feet. Testing during April 2006 found that the leach field will support 25,000 gallons per day. This is considerably more than twice what DEP approved for Florence Sawyer and current (no kitchen or showers) Emerson Schools, which means additional school capacity can be added in the area.

At the May 2006 Annual Town Meeting, and subsequent Proposition 2 ½ ballot question, the town voted to proceed with the funding to design and construct the wastewater treatment plant project. The treatment plant is an important addition to the school campus because without it, there would be no possibility of any additional school space, even at a renovated Emerson School.

**Responsible Entity** – Board of Selectmen, Wastewater Treatment Plant Committee, Advisory Committee and proposed Capital Planning Committee