

Town Offices Project

Frequently Asked Questions

March, 2015

The Select Board and Budget Committee recommend funding Article 6 at the 2015 Town Meeting, which would raise and appropriate \$172,360 to design and seek bids for a new Town Office Building (including a police station) which would be built on the site of the current police station. If approved, it is planned to return to the 2016 Town Meeting to seek voter approval for a bond to construct the facility, based upon the construction bids to be received late this Fall. Listed below is information to questions frequently asked about the project.

What is the recommended project? – The Town proposes to construct a new Town Offices Building and is seeking voter approval of design funding at the 2015 Town Meeting.

Why this project? – For a number of years, the Town and the Select Board have asked citizen committees to look at the condition, functionality and life expectancy of town buildings in order to prepare for their renovation/replacement. Additionally, the Town hired a professional construction management/engineering firm in 2007 to conduct an evaluation of all town facilities. The consultant, H.L. Turner, Inc., advised that the Town Office building, located on Goodnow Street, was deficient in a number of areas, lacks adequate space for the public, citizen committees and staff, and should be considered for replacement in the 2013-2014 timeframe.

The Town Offices have occupied its current building since 1995; the building was originally used as a storage building for a lumber/hardware store, then converted to office use by a bank and medical offices.

What specifically is wrong with the Building? Turner identified 32 deficiencies, some of which are significant and expensive. Turner identified aging and inefficient heating systems, no handicapped access to the second floor, inadequate space for employees to work, the public to conduct town business and committees to meet.

Are there other concerns with the Building? The Town Offices lacks security for a number of important functions, including IT systems and property and other records. Currently, due to necessity, these systems and files are located in meeting and common areas which are accessible and used by members of the public.

So what action has been taken? Town Meeting appropriated \$35,000 in 2013 to undertake a study to identify potential sites and uses for the Town Offices Building. The warrant article required that the location for a replacement building be “at or near the Goodnow Street property”. The Town proceeded to hire an architect who helped identify potential sites for a new Town Office and determine the appropriately-sized building.

What sites were considered? The Town cast a wide net to identify a number of properties to consider; as you look at the list, some will seem unrealistic, however, the Town began the process by including a large number of properties which are proximate to the current Town Office:

- Town Common
- TD Bank Building, Parking Lot or Drive-Thru
- Jaffrey Civic Center
- Jaffrey Library Lawn and/or Building (addition on the rear)
- Dancause Building on North Street
- Multi-Family Building at 15 North Street
- Multi-Family Building at 17 Goodnow Street
- Community Field on Blake Street
- Elite Laundry, Laundry Way
- Police Station
- 24 Main Street

How were locations eliminated from consideration? There were a number of factors which contributed to potential sites being removed from consideration, such as:

- 1) Use of private property – In addition to budget and other required public meetings and hearings, the Select Board has held two informational meetings on this process; concerns from citizens about taking private property for this project were particularly strong at the August, 2013 meeting.
- 2) Maintenance of Green Space/Preservation of Main Street – Sites such as locating on the Town Common or the Library Lawn were discounted almost immediately as taking away from the character of the Downtown and eliminating green space.
- 3) Unavailability of property – Owners of two properties in particular, TD Bank and the Dancause Building on North Street, made it known that they were pleased with their presence in Jaffrey and would not entertain offers.

But there are two properties on the list, Community Field and Elite Laundry, which are not close to the Goodnow Street property and made the list? – As both are Town-owned, the Town felt an obligation to include these properties in its preliminary review. Both were ultimately discounted:

- 1) Elite Laundry –
 - a. The property is located behind a multi-family building which has recently undergone significant renovations by its new owner, and would require acquisition of that private property;
 - b. It is quite certain that subsurface construction would be discouraged as the property is undergoing pollution remediation;
 - c. Access to Peterborough Street would need to be examined for a high volume use such as the Town Office;
 - d. The MainStreet/Goodnow Street area is adjacent to other civic and institutional uses which are seen as more compatible with a Town Office.

2) Community Field –

- a. This property was acquired for municipal use for recreation and other related uses such as a community center;
- b. Depending upon the final design and construction of the Rtes. 202/124 project by NH Department of Transportation, the site could serve as a gateway to the community or be far removed from activities;
- c. An organization is seeking to construct a privately-funded community center on this site;
- d. The MainStreet/Goodnow Street area is adjacent to other civic and institutional uses which are seen as more compatible with a Town Office.

Why is the Police Department proposed to be included in the project? – Recognizing that the construction of a new Town Office will serve the community for 50+ years, the Town felt an obligation to investigate a comprehensive space solution to the voters. The proposal would involve building a multi-purpose facility where traditional Town Offices and the Police Department would occupy one building and could share central facilities such as conference rooms, mechanical and other systems, common areas, etc...

Is the Police Department functional? The building can continue to serve the needs of the Department for the near term, however, space considerations, poor layout, and necessary improvements to certain functions and activities will require some investments in the not too distant future.

Specifically, what are the concerns about the Police Department building?

1. Handicapped entrance, which is an uncovered exterior entry ramp with tight corner at the top and the uncovered area at the entry door. It enters the building in a very tight area just inside the door, into the conference room.
2. Minimal storage areas.
3. Locker room - limited space with no separate accommodations for any future female officers. Bathroom off of locker room is small and cramped.

4. Boiler room and adjacent storage area. Cramped/inadequate space.
5. Utility room - adjacent to boiler room storage area. Very cramped. Bad mixture of electronic equipment (computer/servers and various telephone/internet related equipment) and main water supply for the building.
6. Record storage - boxes piled in one office area; remainder being stored in off-site rental facility with monthly fees.
7. Sally port/garage area – cramped, with less than secure method (as space necessarily serves as a storage area) to bring prisoners into the building for processing.

What are the advantages of proceeding with a project which includes the Police Department? The Town's architect has estimated that constructing one building compared with two separate buildings would save \$300,000-\$500,000 in construction costs. It should be noted that the Town is not considering the construction of a separate police station at this time. It can be anticipated that the police station will need to be addressed certainly within the debt service repayment period on the Town Offices project, thus, the Town believed that it is responsible to present this solution to the voters. Due to shared spaces, a combined facility would be smaller than two separate facilities.

So, this proposal would have the Town Offices located on Main Street? Yes, this proposal would return Town Offices to a Main Street location, with the Police Department occupying the rear of the structure. With the Library, TD Bank and resurgence of the Park Theatre, the return of the Town Office to a spot which was originally donated to the Town for that purpose creates a strong core of economic activity and civic pride. It is anticipated that a greater emphasis of community involvement will occur once the Rte. 202 improvements are completed (scheduled for 2020), and siting the Town Office at its first, dedicated location will help strengthen our downtown for years to come. Downtown areas thrive with more activity generators, and the presence of the Town Offices will provide additional foot traffic and a stable, permanent fixture. Additionally, a combined facility may also result in additional parking available to the public as the Goodnow Street lot layout would be reviewed with the footprint of the current Town Office building repurposed for parking.

How large is the building? The Town commissioned several space analyses in the past with square footage estimates for a Town Office without a Police Department at between 8,841 and 9,143 s.f. The Town has completed an internal review and recommend an 8,000 s.f. Adding the Police Department will increase the building size to approximately 12,500 s.f.

What are the adverse consequences of a comprehensive building project? The initial cost outlay will be greater. It is difficult to accurately predict the cost of the project without a completed design and project bid (which is the purpose of this year's budget request), however the Town's architect estimates a total project cost (including construction, contingency and other costs such as material testing, borings, construction supervision, utilities, etc...) at between \$3.3 - \$3.6M; A stand-alone Town Office is estimated at \$2.0 - \$2.3M.

Where would the Police Department work from during construction? If design funds are approved in 2015, and construction funding receives voter approval in 2016, the Town would have to find another location for the Police Department for a one-year period. The estimated cost for that portion of the project is \$100,000 and is included in the estimate shared above.

What about the Town Offices? It is planned to construct the new building on the footprint of the current building and the police parking area between the police station and the Town Offices. The Town Offices would remain in its current location until the new building is constructed.

Any Alternatives? Yes. The Town owns the parking lot adjacent to the current Town Offices and has negotiated with TD Bank for the relinquishment of TD Bank's easement over the travel lane between the parking spaces and the Drive-Thru. A Town Offices without the Police Department could be built there, facing Goodnow Street. The design costs for this option is \$114,180.

How does the Town pay for this project? The Select Board and Budget Committee recommended and Town Meeting approved a budget at the 2014 Town Meeting which embraces the Town's goal to prioritize and limit capital expenses to a base amount equal to that approved by the voters for these purposes at the 2013 Town Meeting. A copy of the Town's Capital Budget Strategy is available on the Town's website (www.townofjaffrey.com ; please follow the "Information for 2015 Town Meeting link"). The Select Board is further recommending that the Downtown TIF Fund pay for up to 50% of project

costs; the Town's current projection is that virtually all of project expenses associated with the Town Office/Police Department building will fit within the Capital Improvements funding "bucket".

What's the next steps? Listed below is the projected timeline based upon voter support for the project:

March 14, 2015	Town Meeting vote on Design Funds
April – Oct., 2015	Design, Public Input Meetings
Nov. – Dec., 2015	Bid project to finalize project costs
Jan. 14, 2016	BudCom mtg. on Capital Projects
Feb. 6, 2016	Budget Public Hearing
March 12, 2016	Town Meeting Vote on Construction Bond Issue
April 1- May 15, 2016	Temporarily Relocate Police Department
May 15, 2016	Construction Begins
May 15, 2017	Occupancy

How can we receive additional information? – There is a link on the Town's home page (www.townofjaffrey.com) to a site where all information on this project has been assembled and is available (Please follow the "Municipal Facilities Proposal" link). You can also direct any questions/comments to Town Manager Dave Caron at dcaron@townofjaffrey.com.