

Report of the
Meredith Space Needs Study Committee

To the
**Board of Selectmen
Town of Meredith, New Hampshire**



Space Needs Study Committee:

**Steven K. Stokes, Chair
Miller C. Lovett, Co-Chair**

December 6, 2004

Town of Meredith, NH

Space Needs Study Committee

INTENT

It is *generally* understood that the Town of Meredith has several public facilities that may be at or above their respective capacities. It is the intent of the Board of Selectmen to appoint a Space Needs Study Committee to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of *specific* facility needs and make recommendations relating thereto. The process will be community based, consensus driven, and will rely upon the many skills and talents of our citizenry, taxpayers and professional staff.

CHARGE

The charge to the Space Needs Study Committee shall be as follows:

1. **SCOPE.** The scope of the Committee's study shall include: All Town Hall Departments and functions (Town Manager, Board of Selectmen, Tax Collector, Town Clerk, Finance, Assessing, Recreation, Planning and Code Administration, Information Technology), Fire Department, Police Department, Public Works Department, and the Water and Sewer Department.
2. **INVENTORY OF EXISTING CONDITIONS.** Inventory all spaces available to departments, the current utilization of these spaces and associated staffing levels. Identify deficiencies in terms of needed space, deficiencies in terms of facility functionality, deficiencies in terms of the building structure and/or plant elements.
3. **PROJECT FUTURE SPACE NEEDS.** Identify existing space needs together with a projection of future space needs that can be reasonably anticipated.
4. **RECOMMENDATIONS.** Develop a Comprehensive Community Facilities Plan that will enable the town to meet current and future space needs over the short term (5yrs +/-) and the longer term (20 yrs +/-). Recommendations should (1) be based on an analysis of alternatives, (2) be prioritized, (3) reflect consistency with the 2002 Community Plan and (4) demonstrate fiscal responsibility.

Space Needs Study Committee Charge

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

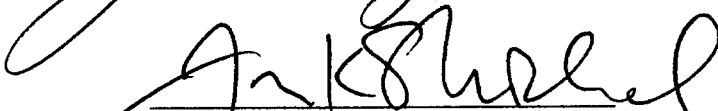
1. The Space Needs Study Committee is an advisory Committee appointed by the Board of Selectmen. As such, the Committee is subject to the provisions of RSA 91-A commonly referred to as the Right-To-Know-Law.
2. The Board of Selectmen shall have a liaison representative on the Committee. The Board of Selectmen has appointed Selectman Robert Flanders to serve in this capacity.
3. The Committee will consist of not less than nine (9) members and not more than fifteen (15) members, including the Board's representative.
4. The Committee will elect its Chairman and Vice Chairman from its members.
5. Administrative staff support will be made available to the Committee for purposes of coordinating the week to week affairs of the Committee, i.e. meeting notices, postings, meeting agenda, meeting minutes, copying/distribution of materials etc.
6. The Department Heads will be available to the Committee to provide information, input, technical support etc. as requested. Department heads will be encouraged to attend Committee meetings as appropriate.
7. The Committee will keep the Board of Selectmen, Planning Board and Capital Improvements Program Advisory Committee informed of its progress on a periodic basis.
8. The Town Manager or the Board of Selectmen must approve the use of contracted professional services. Requests from the Committee for disbursements must be made to the Town Manager or his/her designee. The Town Manager or his/her designee may refer requests for disbursements to the Board of Selectmen as necessary.
9. It is anticipated that the work of the Committee will take 12 months or longer to complete.
10. Other facility-related considerations may include, but not necessarily limited to energy efficiency, climate control, operations and maintenance costs, handicap accessibility, parking and information and communications technologies.
11. See Appendix A for additional considerations.

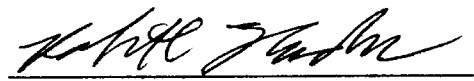
Space Needs Study Committee Charge

Approved by the Board of Selectmen:

Date: November 17, 2003


James Hughes, Chairman


Frank Michel


Robert Flanders

Town of Meredith, NH

Space Needs Study Committee

APPENDIX A

Review and Consider the Following:

- Consider the Pros & Cons, Why and Why Not
- The numbers of Departments in the building:
Management, Tax Collector, Finance, Town Clerk, Welfare, Assessing, Parks & Rec., Computer technology, Planning, Zoning, Code Enforcement, Public Works, Supervisory, Secretarial, Lunch/Break room, Mechanics, Drivers, Equipment Operators
- How much office space for each plus public area, computer, phone, lighting, storage, long-term storage, paper, disc, tape, photos
- Air, climate control, ease of access, plugs, shelves, equipment, copier, fax, scanners, printers, folder mail, postage machine
- Privacy for interviews or consulting, Selectmen space, book shelves for manuals, reports, maps, drawings
- Consider first what we need, then what we have
- What about buildings, adaptable, expandable, accessible, adjustable
- Restrooms and coatroom facilities, employee, public location and accessible, adequate parking
- Space for meetings and conferences 50 to 100 people
- Handicap use, employees and public
- Consider Town Hall, Fire, Police, Public Works, Parks & Rec., Water and Sewer
- Maintenance Department- equipment facilities
- Look forward 5 years- 20 years
- Will current Town Hall stand only temporary attention as a quick fix?

Meredith Space Study Needs Committee

The following Committee members were appointed by the Board of Selectmen:

Brian Allen
Bob Ambrose
Ron Brienza
Mark Chase
Hank Denison
Miller C. Lovett
Jeff Parks
Kevin Peverly
Ann W. Sprague
Steven K. Stokes

Bob Flanders, Selectman
Vikki Fogg, Town Office
Carol M. Granfield, Town Manager

The Committee selected the following officers for the Committee:

Steven K. Stokes, Chairman
Miller C. Lovett, Co-Chairman
Vikki Fogg, Secretary
Ann W. Sprague, Secretary Pro Tem

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Executive Summary

The Committee's Process

The Meredith Space Needs Study Committee first met on December 5, 2003 for an organizational meeting. The *intent* and *charge* were presented by Selectman Robert Flanders. The charge, in summary, was to study the facilities of all Town departments, inventory existing conditions, identify deficiencies in space, structure and function, and to specify future needs, for five years into the future (2009) and twenty years into the future (2025). We were also requested to prioritize needs for next steps in the planning process.

It was determined that the following buildings and departments were to be included in this study:

Municipal Office Building, i.e., Town Hall office facilities for:

- Town Manager
- Board of Selectmen
- Tax Collector
- Town Clerk
- Finance Officer
- Assessor
- Parks and Recreation Director
- Town Planner and Zoning
- Code Administration
- Information Technology
- Welfare Department

Water and Sewer Department (The Space Needs Study Committee in Fall 2004 requested the Board of Selectmen to eliminate these departments from the Committee charge. See Water and Sewer Department report that follows.)

Public Works Department

Sign Shop

Building and Grounds Maintenance Building

Cemetery Office and Maintenance Building

Solid Waste

Fire Department

Police Department

Parks and Recreation

Prescott Park

Leavitt Beach

Waukewan Beach

The Committee agreed to meet on the first and third Tuesday each month and, for the most part, has done so throughout the 2004 calendar year.

The first task was to review all Town facilities identified in the charge by on-site visits and written reports from department heads, and to assess the working conditions in and space requirements for each department.

Further, we visited facilities in other towns, specifically Derry and Moultonboro. We also attended a workshop on “Achieving Better Municipal Project Performance” given by the New Hampshire Municipal Association and led by Dave Provan, P. E.

It was decided to post minutes of all meetings on the Meredith Town web site, so interested citizens could follow the progress of the Committee.

The next task was preparation of a questionnaire which was forwarded to all department heads, giving departments an opportunity to identify present problems and make suggested changes. The returned questionnaires were reviewed by each Committee member.

As a Committee, we discussed each department report and compared observations from on-site visits. Additionally, we met with several department heads. The Committee formed into subcommittees, each charged with producing a written report on a department. The preparation of these subcommittee reports involved further meetings with department heads. Each subcommittee report was reviewed by the Space Needs Study Committee as a whole, and approved for this comprehensive report.

The Space Needs Study Committee chairman met with the Meredith Capital Improvement Program Committee in June and September of 2004 to give an update on the Committee’s progress. The Board of Selectmen was kept informed of our Committee work through the Selectmen’s representative.

The conditions we observed, during our site visits and conversations, ran the range from surprise, “How can some departments get the job done in the available space?” to “A very good and efficient operation with relatively few needs.”

Departments as well as town employees were extremely cooperative in their responses to questionnaires, and in providing plans and data needed by the Committee. We express our appreciation and extend our thanks to all.

The Committee’s Conclusions

In several meetings there was discussion about facilities obviously needing more land area. The Committee concluded that “site selection” was probably outside the scope of its work. We requested the selectmen to rule on this issue; and they concurred it was *not our responsibility* to be searching for sites.

Prioritizing projects took considerable time and discussion, and the criteria changed several times during late summer and early fall. Issues included space, health, and safety. Finally, we settled on space, leaving health and safety to the Town administration and future building committees. Health and safety were important criteria when reviewing present Town facilities and short-term improvements may be in order to meet current standards; and certainly all new construction must meet current and future standards.

In regard to the Water and Sewer Department, the Committee recognizes three factors: (1) the Town has commissioned an expert consulting study to be available shortly; (2) safety and health will be the criteria for determining the priority of upgrading the water system; and (3) the Water and Sewer Department is heavily funded by its own revenue stream and grants. The Committee then concluded that the urgency for Town funding of Water and Sewer will be decided by the consultant’s report, and the Board of Selectmen’s response to it. It is possible that the priority will supercede anything in our report recommendations, but presently we cannot determine that possibility. Therefore, the Committee has asked the Board of Selectmen to remove consideration of the Water and Sewer Department from its charge to the Space Needs Study Committee.

We also determined that the Parks and Recreation Department has its long term needs in the process of being met, since the 2003 Town Meeting had approved a bond issue for a new Community Center. Further, the Committee concludes that other Park and Recreation Department facility needs can be met through the normal Town budgeting process for years to come.

The issue that may generate the most attention is that the Committee concludes that the previously Town Meeting approved trust fund for a Public Safety Building (i.e.: Fire & Police Departments in one facility) should be abandoned, and expanded separate facilities should be built for each. This conclusion is based on several factors, including a possible reconfiguration of the Fire Department building in its present location, ISO radius guidelines (distance from the Fire Station to most businesses), traffic considerations for

implementation of services by both Fire and Police, and scarcity of available, appropriate, and affordable real estate.

A proposal brought forth by the Fire Department convinced the Committee that the existing Fire Station could be expanded and improved on the present site, at a considerable cost savings to the town, rather than funding a new combined Public Safety Building. Thus our efforts took the path of maintaining the separation of public safety departments, as is presently the case.

A review of Town buildings, especially when the new Community Center is constructed, indicates that there will be adequate meeting space for groups of 10 to 100 persons. These include space at the Town Hall Annex, Police Station Harold J. Wyatt Conference Room, Fire Station training room, and the Meredith Library.

The Space Needs Study Committee concludes that details of building and facility design is beyond the scope of its work. While the Committee discussed such issues as energy efficiency, climate control, maintenance costs, handicap accessibility, communication information technology, and facility configuration, we have largely left these matters to Town officials and to committees that may later plan for new or renovated facilities.

Finally, the Committee has determined that the Town has inadequate storage capacity in all locations, especially storage of large items such as motorcycles. In building new facilities, provision must be made in each building for items relating to that department. Alternatively, the Town may want to consider a separate storage building, perhaps at the Public Works facilities, to accommodate, as is the present case, large items from various departments.

The Committee's Recommendations

The Committee has complied with the requirements of the Board of Selectmen's charge. We have reviewed alternatives, prioritized the projects as outlined below, maintained consistency with The Community Plan, and demonstrated fiscal responsibility. All our projections are based on short term (five years) and long term (twenty years) goals.

In summary, our prioritization is as follows, number one being the most urgent need and number six the lowest:

1. **Police Department:** The Police Department needs approximately 9,316 square feet of new space and they need it *now*. In twenty years, it is projected that the department will need approximately 11,200 square feet. The Committee recommends that the long-term space be constructed now in an effort to minimize future costs. The 11,200 square feet reflects the projected population growth in the Master Plan of 9,000 residents in about 20 years. It factors in the summer "bulge" that this community shares with some of its lake neighbors.

2. **Fire Department:** The Fire Station needs approximately 7,000 square feet of *additional* space bringing the total need to approximately 13,000 square feet to accommodate the needs of the Town for the next twenty years. The Committee recommends that the Town adopt the Fire Department proposal to expand the existing downtown structure and preserve the department's present location.
3. **Public Works Department:** The Public Works building is in poor shape and there is poor air quality in the office areas, and, perhaps, elsewhere. There are issues with the roof snow load and heat loss due to inadequate insulation that cannot be remedied since the heat is required to melt the snow. The recommendations of the Committee include looking at alternatives for improving air quality with perhaps a small office addition in the short term (five years), with plans to replace the existing facility with a newer more energy efficient building, and providing space necessary for the long term (twenty years).
4. **Town Hall:** The Town Hall probably would have been higher on our list of priorities had it not been for the purchase of the Town Hall Annex, approved by vote of the 2003 Town Meeting. The annex relieved burgeoning pressure in the Town Hall, essentially doubling the space to approximately 10,000 square feet. We feel, however, that the Town Hall has other significant issues which need to be addressed in the future such as parking, energy savings and solutions to the now separated town functions. It is estimated that the Town will need approximately 12,000 square feet to meet 20 year growth projections, and that studies should begin in about 5 years to look for longer range solutions.
5. **The Parks and Recreation Department:** The Parks and Recreation Department benefits from the 2003 Town Meeting approval to construct the new Community Center. This facility will house the Parks and Recreation staff and alleviate space at the Town Hall. In reviewing department work projects, it is the Committee's view that most if not all were Town budget items for maintenance, upkeep, and so forth. and no significant long term needs were identified. The selectmen's representative to the Committee and the Town Manager agreed. Therefore the Parks and Recreation Department has not been included in our prioritization.
6. **The Water and Sewer Department:** The Water and Sewer Department provided a well laid out report of their plans, needs, and goals. It was detailed and included cost estimates where available. Their plans were also presented in detail to the Meredith Capital Improvement Program Committee. Due to state and federal mandated water quality standards, we found it nearly impossible to give Water and Sewer a prioritization. Further, we believed that the state and federal mandates will take precedent over non-mandated projects of other departments. Also this department has its own revenue stream and

grant sources. Thus the Committee recommended to the Selectmen is that we *exclude* Water and Sewer from our prioritization.

Following are the subcommittee reports as presented to, reviewed, and adopted by the Space Needs Study Committee. The documents received by each subcommittee are in the appendices of each section. The review of and adoption of these subcommittee reports preceded the formulation of the recommendations in the Executive Summary.