

SITE LIMITATIONS

The three largest town facilities (other than the school) are the Town Offices, Town Meeting Place, and Fire Department. They are all located in Middlesex Village. The principal limitation factors on any expansion or new construction for all these functions are aspects outside the buildings themselves; wastewater treatment capacity and parking. Some aspects of building development can be resolved by spending more money, but parking requires flat land, and septic requires suitable permeable soils. Both are scarce in the village, and these will probably be the hardest aspects to solve.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR SHARING

The clearest opportunity for long term savings to the town are to plan for facilities which can provide for a wide variety of uses. The possibility that seemed most worth pursuing as a result of meetings with the various groups, is shared meeting space. The Fire Department, the Town Selectboard, the Planning Commission, and the Historical Society all have needs for meeting space periodically, and of course the Town Meeting Place has a need for a larger space than they have now, even though it is infrequent. Therefore, there is an opportunity for avoiding duplications of meeting space, but that will require careful planning. The opportunities for cost savings are obvious.

Discussion should continue on the needs of each department, as well as the opportunities for sharing space between departments. Both have a direct impact on costs. Although the cost estimates included in this report are necessarily rough at this phase of discussions, they should be useful in helping the community balance needs with the associated costs of the options available to the Town for solving these needs. It will not be an easy process.

The town should be commended for taking the step of looking at all the facility needs and for taking a long range view. Too often we see communities construct one building at a time without considering either the opportunities to create a town center or the opportunity for shared use. Creating spaces that can accommodate a variety of uses by the community is the surest way to realize construction cost savings and long term operational savings.

Hopefully this report will be of assistance when Middlesex investigates the broader planning goals for the following topics:

- village center commercial and other development
- municipal wastewater system feasibility
- fire and rescue needs
- the school as a community center
- updating the zoning plan

