

MIDDLETON MASTER DEVELOPMENT PLANNING COMMITTEE

INFORMATION SHEET

Introduction

The following information is intended to inform voters about the Public Facilities Project proposed for 105 South Main Street. The Project is Article 22 for the June 5, 2021 Annual Town Meeting and on the ballot of the Annual Town Election on June 12, 2021.

This page summarizes the project. It includes links to various reports, documents, photos, and videos. Links to these reports, documents, photos, and videos are presented here; they can also be viewed within the text of this page.

Meetings

Please see the link below to view previous Master Development Planning Committee meetings and presentations.

[Master Development Planning Committee Meeting Minutes](#)
[Master Development Planning Committee On Demand](#)

BASIC FACTS

At the March 19, 2019 Special Town Meeting the town voted to buy the Middleton Golf Course for \$3.8M. The express intent of the purchase was to construct town buildings as part of a public facilities complex. The sale included 51.576 acres. 22.85 acres are for non-municipal use with 9.6 acres as conservation restricted and 13.25 acres for passive recreation. This land will have at least a 100-foot buffer around the development and provides a unique opportunity to the Town of Middleton because of its size, location, convenient access, layout, and ease of adaptability. A facilities study in 2017 found that Middleton's Fire Station, Police Department, Senior Center, and Town offices had exceeded their useful lives and needed to be replaced, or substantially renovated, expanded & modernized.

FACILITIES INFORMATION – THE NEED

Fire Station: The Fire Station was built in 1954 as a combined Fire-DPW building. The second floor was added in 1985 using volunteer labor. The total size is 9,246 sq. ft. There is low headroom clearance by today's standards and it cannot house all the vehicles that the town owns. It is too small for the apparatus and equipment. It has air quality issues, lacks adequate space for firefighters, has no separate male and female space, and lacks training space. There is no lobby or entry for the public and the building is not handicap accessible. The traffic pattern through the Flint Public Library parking lot poses a safety concern for the Fire Department, Library patrons, and the general public. Click [here](#) to see photos of the Fire Station. Click [here](#) to see a video of Fire Station.

Police Department: Built in 1946 in Danvers as their Police Station, Middleton bought the building in 1982 for \$1.00; it was relocated to its current site in Middleton. In 2012 the building was expanded by adding used modular classrooms. It is 10,496 sq. ft. The booking and holding areas don't meet today's standards and overnight guests are transported to the regional jail. A recent 'guest' set off the sprinkler system which required a creative electrical solution. Additional renovations will be needed to meet certification requirements and ADA regulations. Click [here](#) to see photos of the Police Station. Click [here](#) to see a video of the Police Station.

Senior Center/Council on Aging: Built in 1848 and known as "Old Town Hall" because it was the former Town Hall, it is 4,489 sq. ft. The elevator is unreliable and handicapped access throughout the building is sub-standard. There is a lack of multiple rooms for simultaneous activities and inadequate parking. The growing senior population of Middleton will not be able to be served by this building. Click [here](#) to see photos of the Senior Center/Council on Aging. Click [here](#) to see a video of the Senior Center/Council on Aging.

Town Hall aka Memorial Hall: Built in 1860 as a school for the town it is 9,975 sq. ft. We utilize about 80% of the space due to accessibility and structural concerns. There is no second-floor handicapped access and is therefore unable to offer space for public meetings or functions. File storage is inadequate, all building systems need to be replaced, and there are unacceptable levels of sound transmission and virtually no energy efficiency. There is no central ventilation or air conditioning and the heating system is beyond its useful life, seriously compromised, and inefficient. Other town offices are located at 195 North Main Street. The land-use departments (Building, Planning, Health, Conservation) are located at the DPW Building. The remote location of land use departments creates operational inefficiencies. Click [here](#) to see photos of Memorial Hall. Click [here](#) to see a video of Memorial Hall.

Town Common/Green Space: Middleton does not have a traditional New England green or common. Community events like Chief Will's Day, Winter Festival, Vehicle Night, and the Pumpkin Festival are held at Emily Maher Park off Natsue Way, Richardson Green, and the schools. All of these areas provide inadequate space and parking for large town events. There is sufficient space at 105 South Main Street to have a Town Common.

THE MASTER DEVELOPMENT PLANNING COMMITTEE (MDPC)

The Master Development Planning Committee, or MDPC, was established in May 2019 to plan the future development of 105 South Main Street. The members were appointed by the Middleton Board of Selectmen. The Committee's mission reads, in part: "The Committee's work will include laying out the general locations of buildings, parking, access/egress driveways, underground utilities, and common/green spaces. An extensive outreach process is anticipated to ensure broad public participation and input leading to a consensus of how the site should be laid out and developed. The Committee members will serve through the end of the master development planning process at which point it is anticipated that the committee will be dissolved and a permanent building committee will be appointed. During its deliberations, the Committee shall be mindful of the municipal facilities planning principles described in the Master Plan Committee bylaw, chapter 53-2(C) of the Middleton Code."

Our work included selecting a master planning consultant. We chose a team led by HKT Architects of Charlestown. We worked with the consultant team to plan the future of the former

golf course. A robust community engagement component was undertaken to gather as much public input as possible.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

We recommend that a municipal facility is developed on the site of 105 South Main Street (the former Middleton Golf Course). The municipal facility will include a Public Safety Building with the Fire Department and Police Department, a combined Community Center and Town Hall, and a Town Green. This municipal facility will provide major town services for the next 30-50 years and will provide indoor and outdoor meeting spaces for all generations of residents. Shared facilities allow for substantial cost savings while meeting the needs of both groups.

The cost is estimated to be \$61.7M in 2021 dollars. This assumes approval in May 2021 and construction beginning in 2022 and lasting approximately 24 months.

PROJECT COST

The cost of the project is not lost on the Committee. We understand the significance of the proposal. Delaying or phasing the project will drive the costs higher. With the following in mind, the Committee recommends voting on the entire project in 2021.

Interest rates on long-term debt are at historic lows. If we were to borrow now we would expect interest rates below 2%. Over a 30 year term, the interest savings are substantial. Delaying the project is certain to result in higher borrowing costs.

Construction prices escalate at around 4% every year. COVID is estimated to have temporarily slowed this escalation; we do not know how long this escalation will remain depressed. Delaying the project or building it in phases will result in higher total costs. The Howe Manning School can be used as an example. When construction started in 2009 the construction was \$25.2M; the price per square foot cost was \$228.14. Due to price escalation that project today is projected to be \$50.1M with a per square foot cost of about \$500. That is a difference of \$24.9M over 12 years. Other Funding Sources: Additional funding sources have been identified. These other funding sources will directly lessen the impact of the project on taxpayers.

We strongly support the pursuit of grants to offset costs. Members of Middleton's legislative delegation have committed to trying to secure funding. The Committee supports selling town-owned properties and dedicating the proceeds to offset the cost of the land, design, and construction costs.

FUNDING

We know cost is a concern. A project like this is costly. However, it is far more costly to do nothing. We have formulated a plan to minimize the impact on taxpayers.

The total cost of building the four elements now – Fire, Police, Community Center, Town Offices – in two combined buildings is \$61.7 million. We will finance it over 30 years. And we will structure the debt in order to take advantage of debt that is coming off the books. The most

significant of these is the Flint Public Library which comes off in 2027 and the Howe Manning School debt which is fully retired in 2033. The debt for the facilities project peaks after the Howe Manning debt comes off. That reduces the impact on taxpayers.

We have been planning for this project for years and have optimized the Town's financial position. We recently received an upgrade to our bond rating. We are rated by S&P Global Advisors as AA+ with a stable outlook. AA+ is the second-highest rating possible. This will save on the interest charges.

Interest rates are near all-time lows. Taking advantage of these low rates provides additional savings on interest. Less interest means a reduced impact on taxpayers.

Finally, we have identified other sources of funds we can use to offset the impact on taxpayers. We propose to sell or lease several Town-owned parcels. The proceeds from the sales will go into a dedicated fund that will be applied to the annual principal and interest payments. Furthermore, after we sell these properties they will generate property tax revenue. This tax revenue will be kept separate and will also be applied against the principal and interest. In addition, we have received a donation of \$225,000 from a developer, the first of what we expect will be several grants, and the first of what is anticipated to be regular contributions from the Community Preservation Committee. We also plan to solicit donations from benefactors that will offset the impact on taxpayers, particularly residential taxpayers. In total, we project being able to apply between \$300,000 and \$500,000 per year toward the debt service. This reduces the impact on every property taxpayer.

The impact on the average single-family home is estimated to be \$352 in the first year – less than a dollar a day. It will peak in 2034 at \$1,152 for the average single-family dwelling – about 3 dollars a day. After that, it will decline each year.

We do not propose this undertaking lightly. We understand the significance. Doing nothing will cost us more.

TIME TABLE

We are currently promoting the project and will seek approval in 2021. We will ask the 2021 Annual Town Meeting for its approval. Because we are borrowing funds, a 2/3 majority is required. The project also requires a debt exclusion override vote under Proposition 2 ½. That vote will be on the 2021 Annual Election ballot and requires a simple majority.

THE PROCESS

We reviewed 12 firms who submitted qualifications for design from our RFP and we interviewed 4 firms. We decided on HKT Architects Inc. from Charlestown, MA, and their associates because of their vast experience with municipal buildings, their past design work, their LEED status, creative support of land use and preservation, low maintenance sustainable solutions, and their enthusiasm for the project. We had 4 outreach community and community design meetings for citizen input, a town-wide survey, and over 15 meetings that were all open to the public. HKT Reports: [Volume 1](#) and [Volume 2](#)

TRAFFIC

The initial assessment by Pare Corporation is that S. Main Street appears sufficient to handle existing traffic volumes with few accidents and low severity. The trip generation from the buildings is expected to be minor. Three of the four buildings presently exit onto Route 114; the trips they generate are already on the road network. The Council on Aging is just off Route 14 on Maple Street. Its traffic generation will be distributed throughout the day and generally does not overlap rush hours.

WHO IS THE MASTER DEVELOPMENT PLANNING COMMITTEE?

The members are Bill Renault, Chair, George Dow, Ken Lisiak, Frank Twiss, and Annie Wilton. Amy Karas was a member until October 2020 and Tom Schank was a member until January 2021. Among the original members, we have 246 years of living in Middleton with the longest being 78 years. We are or have been members of the Middleton School Committee, Finance Committee, Master Plan Committee, and Friends of the Library. We have a variety of work experiences including engineering, civil engineering, commercial & residential building, business, finance and the former Middleton Fire Chief. Other active participants in meetings and community forums were: Tom Martinuk, Fire Chief, Jim DiGianvittorio, Police Chief, many public safety staff, and Andy Sheehan, Town Administrator. Our first meeting was on May 16, 2019. The reports and plans are available on the Town's website.