

TO: Joseph Colangelo, Town Manager
Select Board
Advisory Committee
Conservation Commission
Planning Board
Zoning Board of Appeals
Design Review Board
Jason Cavallaro, Fire Chief

FROM: Michael & Emma Coronella

Mark & Ann Higgins
Jeff & Margaret Knight
John Lazzaro
Tony & Anne Manna
Kurt & Marcey Mohrman
Ken & Carla Murphy
Dr. Kristin Penza
Theresa Seeyle
Roseanne Waldron
Rich & Teresa Wisnes

RE: Neighbors of 611 Webster - Hanover Fire Department Substation Proposal

Neighbors of 611 Webster Hanover Fire Department Substation Proposal

Introductions:

The Neighbors of 611 Webster Street is a community activist group that has been formed to oppose the construction of the proposed Hanover Fire Department substation in the residential location at 611 Webster Street and to educate Hanover town residents about this proposal. The intent of this group is to support the Hanover Fire Department, while suggesting alternatives to the construction of the 611 Webster Street site. This group has 25 core members from both the public and private sectors and is growing with support from other Hanover town residents who oppose the construction.

Town of Hanover's Proposal – Hanover Fire Substation:

Construction of a Fire Department Sub Station at the 611 Webster Street Location. This Land's ownership was transferred to the Town of Hanover due to lack of tax payments in 2022.

The description of this facility is as follows. (from the Report of the Fire Station Study Planning Committee – 11/2/20 - Feasibility Study Submitted by Roger A, Leslie)

- Three Bay Station
- Large Area to overhaul tall equipment after a call
- Space for sleeping quarters for male and female firefighters including shower and bathroom facilities
- Essential decamp rooms
- An area where training can take place for the entire department
- Office space for business and operations
- An area for "call fire fighters" to park their cars when responding

Note: Not mention in this report but discussed in Selectboard meetings was the request of Hanover Police to have office space in this facility as well.

No dimensions have been shared to date on this proposed facility, only that it would be two stories tall with the objective of meeting all the above requirements. In 2014 this site was identified as a potential site for the substation given the property circumstances.

Response to this Proposal by the Neighbors of 611 Webster Street Group:

- 1) This facility should not be located in a residential location.** This facility, if needed, should be located in a commercial / business zoned area.

Other sites (Amos Gallant Field – Main Street) were not considered for this reason. Quote from Factors in Considering the Location for a Sub Station in North Hanover (submitted by Ruth Lynch). "Since the property is in a residential section of North Hanover, the Committee considered this site not ideal."

The 611 Webster Street location has 12 abutters, and 4 houses will be completely enveloped by this facility. The Gallant field location has 6 direct abutters and is considerably less residential than the Webster Street location.

Also, in Site visit notes with Chief Blanchard and Amy Walkey (Conservation Agent) Dated March 12, 2014.

To: Files From: Chief Blanchard

Re: Fire Station Sites -

Visit with Amy Walkey from Conservation At approximately 10:45 this date Amy Walkey (Conservation Agent), Deputy Chief Stone and myself visited the 3 sites that the Fire Station Study Committee identified in their findings. Webster Street. This site is located across the street from Hackett's Pond. The Town does not currently have possession of the site but it is in tax title and should be able to be acquired fairly easily. The site is irregular in shape but there it provides almost 200' of frontage and close to 500' in depth. Two irregular portions just off of the back of the lot and would be unsuitable for development. There are some wetland concerns associated with this site. Amy said that she felt the site could support a fire station. Percolation testing and engineering studies would need to determine the extent of design that would be required to address storm water, septic, etc. This site is mostly wooded and could be developed as a park.

Curtis School Site (a.k.a. Amos Gallant Field) - Main Street. This site is rectangular in shape and is almost completely cleared. It is the most ideal site from a conservation standpoint as the land is already "disturbed." It might lend itself to dual usage with a fire station located to the front of the property and a small park to the rear. From a conservation standpoint the site is suited to locate a fire station.

Note: We are not proposing that the Amos Gallant Field – Main Street site be reconsidered, this too is a residential area and not ideal.

Based on this site visit by Chief Blanchard, Deputy Chief Stone and Amy Walkey (Conservation Agent) this site appears to be more suitable for a Fire substation than the 611 Webster Street site (lot already cleared, conservation suitable for fire station, less abutters, potentially less access issues to main versus Route 123/Webster Street with traffic volumes). Why was this site dismissed in favor of the 611 Webster Street site?

- 2) Building located at 59 Old Webster Street This building is for sale for approximately 2.5 million dollars and is located on a piece of land zoned for business in North Hanover, very close to the border with Norwell. After visiting the site, the Committee recognized that the property would need considerable renovation including the drainage system as well as the entrance and exit sites. The size of the bays is considerably smaller than needed. Also, the size of the property would not meet the needs of the Fire Department in the future and would necessitate the building of a third station.

Was the cost of drainage and other renovations to the 59 Old Webster Street site priced?

Based on the site visit notes with Chief Blanchard and Amy Walkey (Conservation Agent) Dated March 12, 2014. The 611 Webster Street site design would need to address storm water, septic, etc. as well as clearing the site and any potential wetlands consideration. The Old Webster Street site is .49 miles from the Norwell border versus .74 miles for the 611 Webster Street site.

Considerable renovations versus a projected \$10-12 million-dollar (estimated) construction project at 611 Webster Street must be considered. Was a cost / benefit analysis performed on both sites before the 59 Old Webster Street site was dismissed? This must be considered in light of the potential reduced scope of the 611 Webster Street site due to wetlands.

- 3) Response time has consistently been provided as the reason for a new fire substation. **Response time may, or may not, be improved.** The committee report stated that the response time in the area between Webster Street and Whiting Street *may* be improved by building the station at 611. May does not mean will. A think tank report* on the subject found that placement of firefighter squads is not as important as the number of personnel on duty. It concluded that doubling the number of squads only cuts about 10% of the response

time. Therefore, a 10 minute response time might improve to 9 minutes. The report suggested that 11 times as many squads would make a significant impact in times. Even with two squads in two locations, one squad could be out on a call, when another call comes in, perhaps further away. **The plan presented at the 2020 Town Meeting was to split the on-duty squad to cover both stations.** That would do little to improve response time, perhaps even make it worse.

*<https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/reports/2007/R1853.pdf>

The 611 Webster Street site or any location north of Target on Route 53 is considered too close to Norwell's Route 53 station to build a Hanover station. The committee report rejected another site for this reason.

Also, the justification for this new facility is primarily related to response time. Only medical response was referenced in the documentation provided. Additional details on specifics of response time questions are pending with Town Manager.

- 4) The notification process of the Webster Street construction was discussed at the Selectboard meetings. The 611 Webster Street assessment was approved at Town Meeting during Covid, when most residents were concerned with the health of themselves and their families. This Covid event was a once in a lifetime medical emergency and it is the feeling of the 611 Webster Street group that additional communication methods should have been employed by the town in this national medical emergency. For many in the neighborhood, the first time they discovered details about this project was when surveyors were walking their property and were questioned by the residents. Later in a Selectboard meeting Selectboard Chair - Rhonda Nyman acknowledged that the communication process for such projects needed to be reviewed.
- 5) Residents in the area of the 611 Webster Street site have brought up concerns of water levels in the area and flooding of land after brief rain showers. There is a concern that if constructed that this facility will drive additional water levels to abutters properties and increase flooding of residence. This is on the list of outstanding questions that have gone unanswered to date by the Selectboard and town manager.

Based on the contradictions in the conclusions reached above it is difficult to understand the decision making / analysis process to evaluate the 611 Webster Street site. Perhaps responses to the outstanding questions submitted by The Neighbors of 611 Webster Street group will shed additional light on the decision-making process, but these questions have been pending with the Town Manager (Joseph Colangelo) for over a month with no responses.

This is a small portion of the concerns/open questions submitted by the Neighbors of 611 Webster Street group. The concern of this group is that while our questions go unanswered, the project continues to move forward.

Alternate Solutions

The discussed cost to taxpayers for this facility would be a projected \$10 – 12 million estimated. The belief of The Neighbors of 611 Webster Street group is that due to construction material cost and supply chain issues as the result of Covid project cost have risen an estimated 40% over these originally estimated costs.

Regionalization:

Maybe it is time to consider working with other towns towards regionalization. Some town has to make the first step to get started. If started previously, why was this option abandoned?

Norwell has a large station on Route 53 that is close to much of North Hanover. One squad funded by both towns, working a 12-hour daytime shift out of that station, would be good both financially and for the residents of the two towns, providing better coverage.

Fire Headquarters Focus:

Some comments in this section were provided by Hanover Fire personnel.

The main fire headquarters is inadequate and need improvements.

This facility is not a co-ed facility, lacks training facilities, needs additional storage and staffing. In short it needs investment.

Co-ed Facilities: Without co-ed facilities at this location its difficult to hire female firefighters.

Other Alternatives:

Training: Leverage existing town facilities for classroom training (Sylvester building, Selectboard room, high school facilities)

Storage: Leverage existing town facilities for storage. If insufficient storage, build additional storage facilities or look for commercial space options to satisfy this need.

Medical & Fire Response from existing Town Owned Substations:

Leverage existing substations located at 1160 Main St., 188 King St., 925 Circuit St. If these sites are insufficient to house medical response and minimal footprint fire apparatus modify to accommodate. The existing structure at 188 King Street appears to be in business / commercially zoned location. Unclear on the Circuit Street location since it's near retail and office facilities. 1160 Main is in a residential area (not ideal), but all abutters were well aware of this facility prior to moving into these areas.

The proposal would be to sell two of these locations to fund the renovations at the selected two locations. The sale of the current two unused substations would probably not cover all renovations, so the difference would need to be covered by taxes, but the amount most likely would be more cost effective than the current estimates for the 611 Webster Street site. Additional cost / benefit analysis would be required.

Improved Communications:

Create a better communication process for abutters of Proposed Town projects. Not all town residents have the time / capacity to monitor all town initiatives, especially in a time of a national medical emergency. This may require some extra effort from elected officials, but isn't this the responsibility of these officials to represent the residents of the town and their best interests? The Neighbors of 611 Webster Street group would like to assist in this effort and work with elected officials to enhance current town communication to facilitate residents' engagement.

The Neighbors of 611 Webster Street group is willing to work with the selectmen, fire chief and the town manager, but the existing proposed 611 Webster Street option is simply unacceptable to this group.

Appendix:

Outstanding Questions Collected and Posted to Hanover Town Manager and Selectboard.

Additional questions have been added to this list that are underlined in italics. The Town Manager will have the responses to these questions prior to the meeting on December 8th. We are requesting responses to these questions 2 weeks before the December meeting to allow attendees to review and craft follow up questions to allow for a more interactive discussion.

1. Neighbors feel they should have been given more notice and a chance to properly vote on the project.
2. Questions asked about traffic management, traffic study, tree conservations, wildlife management, etc. All of which will need to be addressed in the feasibility study.
3. Acreage required for a FD station is 2-3 acres of upland.
4. What will be done with the N Hanover station?
5. Are there opportunities or things to explore than can make the footprint of the proposed new building smaller?
6. Water run off and storm water calcs are of concern. There is a brook that abuts the site that flows into Hackett's Pond. This site must have the appropriate safeguards to protect these wetlands. What are these safeguards?
7. Light pollution is a concern. (see above).
8. Best way for neighbors to be informed moving forward?
9. Keep up with webpage and current notifications before work is to start.
10. Wetland flagging will be next week.
[Wetlands map provided](#). What are the implications of these wetlands on site?
11. Traffic controls may be needed for the project.
12. Will training be completed at the new station?
13. What are protocols when the FD leaves for a call?
14. Neighbors in the area of the proposed FS should have been properly made aware and noticed when the feasibility study and land taking went to Town Meeting.
15. Is there anything that can be done with the existing Main Street station to avoid building such a large new station?
16. What is the plan for the existing station once the new station is built?
[Discussions of selling the existing station on Main Street if the construction of the Webster Street station is completed](#)
17. How can the programming be reduced at the proposed site?
18. What will the building look like? Will it be one or two stories? How small can the footprint be?
19. Will a traffic study be completed for the proposed site and surrounding areas/nearby intersections? Will it include the intersection, Pleasant Street and surrounding schools?
20. How close is the proposed project to the "Historical Village"?
21. What happens if the feasibility shows that the proposed site is not viable, and/or not the best choice?
22. How can taxpayers and neighbors be better informed/notified moving forward?
23. Concern was voiced with the location; wetlands issues the potential the project will have on adjoining properties due to high groundwater levels.
24. What type of training will be conducted on site?
25. *If classroom training, why can't other town facilities be used? Where selectman's meeting is being held? Or high school facilities?*
26. What are the setbacks required for wetlands resources?

27. How will the noise levels be controlled?
28. What are the lighting requirements for this facility? If built how will site lighting be controlled?
29. Can screening be introduced between the neighboring properties?
30. Why are not other properties in Town being looked at such as Rt 53 and other commercial areas?
31. Where is the actual population growth in Town? Population density maps and projections?
32. Can the Town rely on mutual aid (regionalization of fire coverage) to avoid building the new FS, or at least scale it down?
33. How many acres of land are needed for the proposed building?
34. Response time considerations. When discussing response times, what response times are being discussed? Medical, Fire other? Can you provide specifics on response calls for the past year? The assumption is that the majority are medical responses which require ambulances responding.
35. In the Report of the Fire Station Study Planning Committee (11/20/22). Storage at main HQ was noted as issues. What other facilities could store fire equipment? Shared resources more cost effective than building new.
36. If new facility is being built at 611 Webster, do we have Fire personnel to staff this facility currently? If not, with the construction of this facility will there be a need to hire additional full time fire fighter?
37. When was the last time regionalization coverage with other towns was considered? If not being considered, why is this not being considered and what are the roadblocks to consideration?
38. What is the cost to bring the existing HQ up to code with co-ed facilities? Has this effort been discussed / funded? This was identified as an existing issue with the current HQ in a selectman's meeting.
39. What other site locations are being considered for the North Hanover substation?
40. Is the \$500k requested for the property assessment and shovel ready plans sufficient to create these plans? If so, when will final plans be available for review?

Answers to Questions from “Neighbors of 611 Webster – Hanover Fire Department Substation Proposal

1. Information, presentations, deliberations and decisions associated with the project have been done openly and transparently dating back to the early 1990’s when a fire station in No. Hanover was first considered. As the project moves forward this trend will continue.
2. Traffic Management / study, tree conservation, and wildlife management will all be addressed in Phase II of the project. These will also be address through town permitting.
3. The team has constructed fire stations on as little as $\frac{3}{4}$ of an acre.
4. The intention, at the end of this project, is for the Town to sell the current North Hanover Fire Station, located at 1160 Main Street.
5. As part of the ongoing design process, every effort is being made to reduce the footprint of the proposed new building to a size that is both reasonable and ensures the functional needs of the department are met now and into the future.
6. All construction will be compliant with state and local wetlands requirements.
7. Light pollution is a concern of ours as well. A photometric lighting plan will be part of the scope. All lighting has to conform to the towns standards.
8. The Town website. <https://www.hanover-ma.gov/north-hanover-fire-substation>
9. The Town will keep the website updated. <https://www.hanover-ma.gov/north-hanover-fire-substation>
10. Wetland flagging and boundaries are part of this Phase I scope and will be reviewed with the town. The civil engineers are working on the final plan.
11. Traffic controls are being considered/discussed as an option for this project.

12. Training is conducted at every fire station across the country. The type of training, however, is limited based on several factors. One factor is the space and resources available at the facility. The Fire Department will conduct in-house training at this substation. This will include hands-on training with various tools and other equipment, both inside the station and outside the station. There is NO intention (nor is will there be an ability) to conduct live-fire training or similar types of training at this substation.
13. Policies and Procedures will be put into place to eliminate, or limit, the use of sirens when leaving this substation.
14. Information, presentations, deliberations and decisions associated with the project have been done openly and transparently dating back to the early 1990's when a fire station in No. Hanover was first considered. As the project moves forward this trend will continue.
15. The current fire station on Main Street has several limiting factors that make it difficult to utilize as a modern fire station. These factors include, but are not limited to: 1) the building cannot currently fit modern fire apparatus; 2) the building is located on a significantly small lot which eliminates the ability to expand the size of the structure and 3) the parking situation does not allow sufficient space for off-duty callback response. Further, this building does not allow for the department to "solve" its space needs.
16. The intention, at the end of this project, is for the Town to sell the current North Hanover Fire Station, located at 1160 Main Street.
17. As part of the ongoing design process, we are making every possible effort to narrow and reduce the programming needs at the substation.
18. Updated building options will be reviewed on 12/8. The design process is ongoing.
19. A traffic study will be completed in Phase II as part of site plan permitting.
20. The site is 2.5 miles from the historic district on Main and Hanover St.
21. We don't believe that to be the case but if so, it will not be used.

22. The Town's website is the single best source of up-to-date information on all projects and activities associated with Hanover's local government. We will keep the fire substation portion of the website up-to-date. <https://www.hanover-ma.gov/north-hanover-fire-substation>
23. This will be reviewed with the town in this phase with the wetlands mapping. The project will comply with all federal, state, and local wetlands requirements.
24. Training is conducted at every fire station across the country. The type of training, however, is limited based on several factors. One factor is the space and resources available at the facility. The Fire Department will conduct in-house training at this substation. This will include hands-on training with various tools and other equipment, both inside the station and outside the station. There is NO intention (nor is will there be an ability) to conduct live-fire training or similar types of training at this substation.
25. There is no training classroom in this plan.
26. 50' and 100' buffer zone required for wetlands.
27. Policies and Procedures will be put into place to reduce noise pollution wherever possible.
28. All lighting has to conform to the towns standards.
29. Screening is something that can absolutely be discussed, we would hope to keep this as natural vegetation.
30. At this point in time, we are looking at this site and this site only on account of an affirmative vote from the 2021 town meeting.
31. The town has not done a population growth study. The location of this station was based on response time studies.
32. The Fire Department currently utilizes mutual aid when necessary. The Department has already put plans into place to call on neighboring communities for help. Regionalization has been and continues to be discussed, however, this is not a concept that can quickly (or easily) be put into place.

33. Please see #3.
34. Response times include all fire department calls for service – which include medical, fire and “other” type responses. The majority of calls for the Hanover Fire Department are for medical emergencies which require an ambulance.
35. We are looking at alternative ways to increase storage at headquarters to lessen the burden at the new substation.
36. Appropriate staffing is a critical component to providing safe, effective and efficient services. Based on current factors, Chief Cavallaro has indicated that the Hanover Fire Department would benefit from additional staffing now, regardless of whether a substation is built or not.
37. This is not a realistic solution when it comes to life safety.
38. Plans are being discussed, both as part of this project and outside of this project, to address the current needs at Fire Headquarters. A renovation of the existing administrative area is nearing completion. As part of the Capital Budgeting Process, funding is being sought to address additional needs. The Town is moving forward on some of these necessary upgrades with current ARPA monies.
39. At this point in time, we are looking at this site and this site only on account of an affirmative vote from the 2021 town meeting.
40. The Town is confident, at this time, that the funds allocated to make this building “shovel ready,” as directed by Town Meeting, will be sufficient.