

Wareham Public Safety Complex Study Committee
Report to Town Meeting
June 12, 2021

The existing Wareham Police Station was completed in 1971 and is approximately 6,856 square feet. When it was built, the Town reduced the size of the building to accommodate the concern regarding the cost of the construction leaving no room for growth. There have been four previous studies done, but no substantial improvements to the building ~~or~~ upgrades and there have been ~~a~~ lot of changes to policing and technology during these 50 years.

In 2005 still after several earlier studies, it was apparent to many that the Police Station needed updating and the Town awarded Reinhardt Associates a contract for a feasibility Study. On June 5, 2007 they issued a report entitled Part II Building and Site Feasibility, recommending the following:

- a) ~~The use of~~ Utilize Town owned land, of 25.8 acres on Minot Ave.
- b) ~~Sale of~~ Sell the existing Rt 28 Police Station at a 2006 appraised value of \$1,115,000.
- c) ~~A Build a~~ 32,000 to 34,000 sq ft Police structure on six to seven acres of land.

Although the study made a good case for building a new Police Station 15 years ago, the project was never funded.

Recognizing that funds are still tight in Wareham, the April 2019 Spring Town Meeting voted to allocate 25% of all marijuana revenues and fees for Municipal Facility use, and specifically called out the need for a new Police Station. That was followed by a vote in the 2019 Fall Special Town Meeting to utilize some of those reserved funds. (Article 1 “Feasibility Study: To see if the Town will vote to raise, appropriate, transfer or borrow a sum of money for a feasibility study and/or a preliminary design for a new Public Safety Complex, and to pay for an appraisal of the value of the current facility, or take any other action relative thereto.”)

A month or so later a Wareham Public Safety Complex Study Committee was formed to implement the fall 2019 Town Meeting mandate. In addition to the police, it was essential to include input from all public safety functions in Town, including the Wareham Fire Department, Emergency Medical Services, Department of Natural Resources as well as other Town, County and State services. The committee members included:

~~Chief John Waleek and Lt Chief~~ Walter Correia ~~(now current Chief)~~, Retired chief John Waleek and Lieutenant John Gerard - from Wareham Police Department
Asst. Chief John Kelley, ~~from the~~ Wareham Fire Department
Charles Klueber, ~~Onset~~ Water and Fire District
David Evans, Director Wareham EMS
As well as Derek Sullivan, Town ~~Manager~~ Administrator; Patrick Tropiano, Selectman; and John Foster, Town Finance Director.
Citizens included Claire Smith, Paul Gerard, ~~Paul Girard~~, David Heard, and David McClure.

Committee members ~~undertook a tour~~ toured of the existing station and noted the deficiencies of the building at 2515 Cranberry Highway which have become more obvious since the last study.

According to the assessor's records the existing station is a 6856 sq ft building on 3.03 Acres of land which was built in 1971. The Committee confirmed the previous recommendations that the existing building is outdated and no longer meets the needs of a modern Police force. Reusing the existing site was discussed, however as explained in the 2007 study, the site is too small to accommodate a new building without tearing down the existing structure; and the cost of moving the entire operation to temporary quarters during construction would be very expensive and could have an unacceptable negative effect on policing effectiveness in Wareham.

The Committee, which has tried to meet several times a month, was affected by Covid, and like everybody has had to adapt to Zoom meetings. Prior to Covid, the Committee held meetings in Town Hall to gather as much information as possible; and also met with the Fire Chief of the Wareham Fire District and the Prudential Committee at the West Wareham Fire Station.

Members have also visited newly built combined Police and Fire complexes in the towns of Sandwich, Duxbury, Dartmouth, Scituate, and conducted Zoom meetings with the Carver Police building committee. Several meetings were also held with the Plymouth County Sheriff, who has a close working relationship with Wareham due to an agreement to house female prisoners for the Sheriff when needed. In addition, the Committee anticipates discussions with the Eversource Emergency Response team and Wareham's Emergency Manager, Patrick McDonald to talk about the need for an Emergency Operations Center within the Police station in the event of a major disaster such as a hurricane. In addition to normal police functions, the committee found that other towns have successfully incorporated Centralized Dispatch and Emergency Operations Centers in their new Police Stations.

As discussed above, a single police building needs more than the three (3) acres of the existing site to allow for future growth or modifications to the building. The 2007 study recommended 6 to 7 acres. For a true Public Safety Complex with Police, Fire and EMS at least 10 acres is more appropriate. The Police officers are on patrol throughout the community at all hours, so a central location is not as critical for the Police as it is for the Fire Department or EMS who must be able to reach any call in their service area in the quickest time possible

The Committee sought input from Wareham's Assessor (Jacqui Nichols) and Town Planner (Ken Buckland) as well as others to investigate and recommend any town owned property greater than 5 acres. The Committee also reviewed private properties that met size and location requirements. The Decas School property and a property owned by South Coast Hospital, as well as the Minot Ave property met the requirements as the top sites. South Coast is not interested in selling its property, and the Town has other goals for the Decas site. In the end, the Decas School site and South Coast property were eliminated and are not being considered, leaving the Minot Ave site that was selected in the previous study as the a candidate.

The committee is continuing to investigate financial incentives including Public Grants from the Federal Government, the State of Massachusetts and SRPEDD.

The Committee developed a Request for Proposal (RFP) to hire an engineering firm experienced in Public Safety studies to develop ~~the a~~ feasibility study along the lines of the 2007 report.

The next phase will be to award an RFP to an architect/ engineer who will help finalize the site selection, determine the scope of the project, perform a project needs analysis, spatial studies, and culminate in a preliminary design and new construction cost estimate for the project which will be taken to Town Meeting for authorization to proceed.

Thank you,

Respectfully,

The Public Safety Complex Study Committee