

CHAPTER VIII

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Introduction

Deep cuts in Local Aid to cities and towns that were made by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in 2003 and 2004 have placed a severe strain on the ability of local communities to deliver core governmental services that residents want and expect. The Town of Abington as well as all other cities and towns was forced to make extreme cuts in manpower and to reduce the level of some services to balance local budgets. Since the property tax is the chief source of revenue for local communities, municipalities were forced to raise taxes and use debt exclusions and tax over-rides to fund needed community facilities and to maintain a reasonable level of governmental services. Although Abington is no exception and has struggled mightily to deal with the cuts that it has received in local aid, it has done remarkably well to provide a reasonably high level of services in these difficult times.

A population projection of twenty years is commonly used in the Master Plan to anticipate the needs for community facilities to serve the future population of the community. The Old Colony Planning Council, the regional planning agency serving the Town of Abington has estimated that the population of Abington is expected to reach a level of 17,038 by the year 2025. This would be a 16.66 percent increase in the population from the 14,605 level in the year 2000. The Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) in its planning activities for the Boston metropolitan region also made a population projection for the Town of Abington, but to the year 2030. MAPC has projected that the population of Abington will reach 16,082 persons by the year 2030, an increase of 10.51 percent. Both of these future population estimates are based upon past trends of population growth; population migration; local land development policies, and migration into the community and assumptions of what is reasonably expected to occur in the future. The two population estimates are fairly close in number and a Town of Abington population of 17,000 persons was deemed to be a reasonable population estimate for the year 2029. For future planning purposes, a population level of 17,000 was used in evaluating the need for community facilities.

With a future population estimate in hand, it is possible examine the present state of existing community facilities and to determine their adequacy for serving future needs. The Master Plan process is also a way of inviting dialogue in the community on the need for community facilities and should be of assistance to community leaders in prioritizing when and how these facilities can be made available to the public. Additionally, the Master Plan serves as an important and useful means of taking stock of the community's resources and provides a useful source of information for assessing the Town's goals and objectives and in improving communication between the public and its elected and appointed officials.

The Community Facilities section describes the current condition of the public facilities and municipal services and compares these services to future needs. A map of the Community Facilities is on the following page and includes the facilities listed below:

- Public Schools
- Town Offices/Services
- Public Library
- Police
- Fire
- Streets/ Highways
- Water Supply
- Public Sewerage
- Senior Center

Public Schools

Schools and public education are considered by most residents to be one of the most important core services provided by a community and it is usually the largest single expenditure item in almost every municipal budget. A good school system is often the most important factor in determining where families with school age children want to live and it is often used as a key determinate in assessing the desirability of a community. Abington continues to demonstrate the high value it places upon education and its commitment to excellence in its schools through its financial support in the annual budget. Recent and proposed school infrastructure improvements demonstrate Abington's commitment to its current and future residents. As a result, Abington is a community where people with school age children want to reside.

The Abington School Committee and School Department maintain six school buildings including: the Early Childhood Center (Pre-School, Kindergarten, Grades 1&2); Center Elementary School (Grades 3-6); North Elementary School (Grades 3-6); Woodsdale Elementary School (Grades 3-6); Frolio Middle School (Grades 7&8); and, Abington High School (Grades 9-12). The School Department in 2002 commissioned a "Long Range Master Plan for School Facilities" and retained the firm of Strelakovsky, Hoit and Raymond, LLC (SHR) to "evaluate existing conditions and identify options to address current deficiencies and future needs." The Plan identified educational program needs; conducted an existing condition analysis of each school; defined future space needs; developed costs and conceptual designs to address needs; and provided criteria for evaluating options and recommendations consistent with the Strategic Plan, Education Reform Act and other legislation. These were presented to the School Committee and School Department as a series of 39 different options were suggested to address the future projected school building needs for the Town.

The preferred development option ultimately selected by the School Committee and the School Building Needs Subcommittee after considerable deliberation was Option G.2. The G.2 Option reconfigured the district with five schools in a new PK-1, 2-4, 5-8, 9-12 arrangement. It proposed closing the Center and North Elementary Schools and

constructing a new grade 5-8 Middle School, and renovating or adding onto its remaining schools as the main features of the plan. Under the plan, the Early Childhood Center would be renovated and house the school administration function and Grades PK-1; the Frolio and Woodsdale Elementary Schools would accommodate Grades 2-4; a new Middle School would be constructed to house Grades 5-8; and the Abington High School would be renovated and expanded to accommodate Grades 9-12.

Recent efforts have focused on the need to construct a new Middle School. In 2005 a Middle School Site Selection Committee was formed to locate a suitable site of 20-25 acres for the school building. After 18 months of meetings and evaluating its research the Middle School Site Selection Committee voted “to recommend to the School Committee that the Town of Abington pursue the construction of a new Middle School on the 60+ acre parcel of town-owned land situated on the east side of Plymouth Street (Route 58).” The appropriate documentation has been submitted to the Massachusetts School Building Authority for project selection and state reimbursement. Once selected by the MSBA, the School Committee will establish a Middle School Building Committee to prepare preliminary designs for the school building and to pursue a state school building construction grant and necessary funding authorization from the Town. Through the implementation of the Long Range Master Plan for School Facilities the Abington School Committee should have sufficient facilities to serve the future school population.

Town Offices

The Abington Town Offices Building located at 500 Gliniewicz Way is a relatively new structure that was completed in 1997 at a cost of \$2.5 million. The building has approximately 17,000 square feet of space and houses the offices of the Town Manager, Phillip L. Warren, Jr.; Assistant Town Manager, Dori Jamieson; Administrative Assistant, Nancy Hurst; Conservation Commission; Zoning Board of Appeals; Town Clerk, Linda Adams; Acting Assessor, Jack Pistorino; Town Treasurer, Leo Provost; Town Accountant, Anthony Sulmonte; Board of Health Agent, Michele Roberts; Building, Wiring and Plumbing Inspectors Offices; Planning Board Secretary, Elizabeth Shea and Town Planner, Daniel Crane; and, Veteran’s Agent, Joseph Colantoni.



There are four meeting and/or conference rooms in the building. The Hon. Martha Ware Room; the Susan S. Meier Room; and the Thomas H. Buckley Room are all about the same size and can each accommodate approximately 30 people for a meeting. The Shawn P. and Robert J. Cotter Meeting Room is the largest meeting space and can accommodate as many as 100 people. The Cotter Room is used regularly by the Board of Selectmen

for its meetings and other Boards and Commissions use it for larger meetings and public hearings. The Abington Town Offices Building is an attractive and functional structure that is more than adequate to serve the long term needs for town government services.

Library

The Abington Public Library is located at 600 Gliniewicz Way and is architecturally compatible with the nearby Town Offices Building. The Abington Library is a member of the Old Colony Library Network (OCLN); maintains a small Library Outreach Center at the new Abington Senior Center; and, has an extensive collection of reading material, data and resources for all members of the public. The OCLN is a cooperative network of 28 member libraries located on the South Shore of Massachusetts and includes 26 town and city libraries and 2 academic libraries.



The library building together with the Town Offices Building forms a small civic center complex and the end of Gliniewicz Way. The Library Board of Trustees took occupancy of the 17,000 square foot building in December of 1997. The building cost \$3.5 million to construct with more than half of the cost of construction

financed through a state grant of \$1.34 million. The remainder of the library cost of construction was financed through local fundraising efforts by The Friends of the Abington Public Library and through town bond funds. The library has ample space to accommodate reading and research materials; space for library patrons to read and conduct research; 6 public internet computer stations and wireless internet availability for individuals to access the internet; and meeting rooms for groups to conduct meetings.

The Abington Public Library Board of Trustees recently appointed Deborah Grimmert, as Acting Library Director following the retirement of Janet Meagher. The Abington Public Library is a great resource in the community and in the year 2007 the library had a collection of 68,007 books, with a circulation of 109,552.

Public Safety/ Emergency Management

Public safety and emergency management is primarily a responsibility of the police and fire departments although other town departments may be called upon in an emergency to provide assistance. It is the police and fire departments that respond to calls to assist in an emergency. Emergency management has taken on a whole new meaning for local public officials and members of the police and fire departments since September 11, 2001 because of the ever present threat of a terrorism attack. The state emergency response

system is coordinated by the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency. Each of the 351 Massachusetts cities and towns are required to prepare an Emergency Management Plan which spells out the procedure that the local public safety personnel in the community would use to coordinate the local response to a large scale emergency in order to best protect the public health and safety. In Abington, the Police Chief, David Majenski is the local Emergency Management Coordinator for the town and in this position coordinates the local program. The town of Abington Emergency Management Plan is on file with the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency and is updated periodically to respond to changing conditions and circumstances.

Police Department

The Abington Police Department is headed by Police Chief David Majenski who is assisted by a Deputy Chief, Christopher Cutter; Lieutenant Kevin Smith; and 25 full time police officers. The Police Department is centrally located and operates out of the recently constructed 16,000 square foot, \$6.3 million Police Station facility located at 215 Central Street. The new police station is a one story building, built on the site of old station and includes: six cells; a holding cell; training room; a public interview room; a non-public interview room; male and female locker rooms; a roll call room; and, a reports/specialist area. The new Police Station facility was constructed to serve the long term needs of the town for the foreseeable future.

The Department conducts a number of programs to increase the effectiveness of its public safety efforts and to insure the safety and security of Abington residents including providing advice, guidance, direction and programs on; Senior Citizen Safety; Crime Prevention; Emergency Preparedness; Child Safety; and Rape Aggression Defense (RAD) classes for women.

Fire Department

The Abington Fire Department is ably led by Fire Chief Arthur Pelland and provides fire suppression, fire prevention, fire rescue and emergency services out of two fire stations in town; the Central Fire Station at 1040 Bedford Street (Route 18), and the Rockland Street Station near Route 123. All properties in Abington are within 3 miles of a fire station with the exception of property along North Quincy Street on the Brockton line and the western part of the Ames Nowell State Park. The strategic location of these stations enables the fire department to respond to calls within the maximum response time of 6 minutes with the exception noted above.

The Central Fire Station opened in 1964 serves as the Department's administrative headquarters and as an operational fire station. The station has 3 equipment bays, offices, a communications room, lounge and recreation room, kitchen, shower and locker rooms, equipment and sleeping quarters.

The Rockland Street Fire Sub-Station built in 1973 has 2 equipment bays, a communication room, sleeping quarters, a lounge, lockers, showers and a kitchen.

As the Town of Abington has grown and developed, the Fire Department has added more larger and improved vehicles and equipment to keep pace with its needs. As a consequence, the Fire Department has outgrown its space and now experiences acute space deficiencies. With population growth there has also been a marked increase in responses for both medical and emergency assistance. There is an obvious need in the long term to overcome these deficiencies by; replacing the two fire stations with one large centrally located fire station or to upgrading the present fire stations. The need to put a second ambulance on the road for emergency responses may have a further impact. Another impact is the challenge of providing quick and efficient responses throughout the town. Additional personnel as well as full time dispatchers are an immediate and future need that hopefully will be addressed in any future study. It is anticipated that a study will be done in the near future to determine which alternative is the best to pursue in order to best serve the needs of the Town of Abington.

Streets/Highways

The Streets/Highways Department's regular work includes sweeping, road repairs, roadside mowing, line striping, sign repair/installation, drainage maintenance, traffic lights, tree care, ditch clearing, crosswalks, sidewalk repairs, snow and ice removal, and equipment and vehicle maintenance, etc. The Department maintains 60 registered town vehicles and more than 40 pieces of smaller off road equipment. It also turns over the compost at the Groveland Street compost site four to five times a year.

The Streets/Highway Department is located on Central Street north of Island Grove Pond and next to the Police Station. The complex consists of the main building, built in 1948 with an addition in 1976 which houses the Department's offices, a garage that holds approximately 12 vehicles (mainly the large dump trucks), another garage that holds approximately three vehicles, a town maintenance garage, and Parks and Recreation Department storage area. There are also two salt sheds built in 1978 and 1997 at the rear of the site. In addition, there are storage trailers used by the Highway, Parks and Recreation, and Police Departments; gas pumps for town vehicles; and open storage of snow plows, sand, and other department materials. In the year 2000 the Department built with chapter 90 funding a new 60' x 100' vehicle maintenance facility which is used to repair all Town owned equipment. The older shop was converted to storage and indoor parking garage. In 2008 the construction of a new Police facility and storage garage reduced available highway department storage yard space by approximately 2 acres.

The Streets/Highways Department under the direction of Streets Superintendent Kenan Connell has been able to use Chapter 90 road program funds to the maximum and has demonstrated that the Department is innovative, self sufficient and able to adjust to changing times and conditions with limited budget resources. The capital improvement needs include improvements to the storm drainage system; streets and sidewalks; and the need to restore or replace the roofs of the original main building (1948) and the building addition built in 1976.

Water Supply

The Town of Abington obtains its water from the Abington/Rockland Joint Water Works (ARJWW) established in 1885. The ARJWW is governed by a board of six commissioners, three from each of the two towns. They hold office for a term of three years. The joint board manages the water supply sources and the pumping and filtrations systems. The Towns operate and maintain their distribution systems individually. ARJWW determines annual operating, maintenance and require capital expenses each year and apportions these expenses to each town. The system has 10,917 hook-ups serving 15,047 residents in Abington and 17, 599 residents in Rockland. In addition, there are customers in Hanson, Hingham, Weymouth and Pembroke which raise the total population served to just fewer than 33,000 customers.

The ARJWW water sources include the Great Sandy Bottom Pond in Pembroke, the Hingham Street Reservoir in Rockland and ground water wells in Abington. The Great Sandy Bottom Pond Treatment Plant in Pembroke has a designed capacity of 6 MGD. The John F. Hannigan Water Treatment Plant in Rockland was recently renovated and has a treatment capacity of 2 MGD. Both of these facilities are surface water sources and the Hannigan Reservoir was recently expanded and stores up to 380,000,000 gallons of water. The Harrison Witherell Treatment Plan in Abington can treat up to 2 MGD and is a groundwater (wells) source.

The average water consumption for the ARJWW system is 2.93 MGD, but it varies seasonally from a low of 2.75 MGD in February to a high of 3.50 MGD in August. As a result of a highly successful ARJWW water conservation program, per capita water consumption by all uses, residential and non-residential, was down to 66 gallons per capita per day (g/c/d.) through 2007 from a level of 93 g/c/d in 1999. The per capita rate of water consumption is expected to remain constant to the year 2020. As a result, overall consumption is projected to reach 3.1 MGD by 2010 and 3.16 MGD by the year 2020 which is well within the ability of the system to meet the anticipated increased future demand.

The ARJWW and its Superintendent, Daniel F. Callahan, have been actively engaged in long-range planning for the system. Proposed capital improvements scheduled for the ARJWW include the provision of a new 400,000 gallon elevated water storage tank on Chestnut Street and a 1.2 million gallon water standpipe on Lincoln Street, both of which are located in Abington. These new tanks will replace the two existing 500,000 gallon standpipes on Lincoln Street. In addition, The ARJWW has as high priority the improvement of the Great Sandy Bottom Pond and Meyers Avenue Water Treatment Plants. Through their efforts to continually upgrade and improve the system they have developed an effective program and strategy to serve the needs and requirements of the projected future service area population.

Sewer Department

The Abington Sewer Department offices are located at 350 Summer Street. The Department is headed by Superintendent John Stone and operates under the auspices of a five member elected Board of Sewer Commissioners. The Sewer Commissioners provide the staff of the Department with policy guidance, oversight, and direction. The Commission currently provides municipal sewer service to approximately 5,500 residences and/or businesses in town and maintains approximately 90 miles of sewer pipes, 2,000+/- manholes and 13 satellite pump stations.

The Town of Abington has inter-municipal agreements with the City of Brockton to treat 1 million gallons of sewage per day and with the Town of Rockland to treat 110,000 gallons of sewage per day to serve specifically designated areas of the town. Abington presently sends on average 950,000 gallons of sewage per day to the Oak Hill treatment plant in Brockton and an average of 68,000 gallons of sewage per day to the Rockland treatment plant. Because of the limitation imposed by these agreements and of other restrictions on sewerage capacity of the Town of Abington by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, there is no likelihood that public sewerage capacity will be increased or extended to new developments in Abington, except in instances where there is entitlement to tie into the system or where previous service was available.

Senior Center

In November, 2007 the Town of Abington voted to acquire the former Flame of Fire Covenant Church located at 441 Summer Street for use as a Senior Center. The Council on Aging (COA) staff, headed by Mary Beth Lawton was previously housed in the Town Offices and was limited to a small office and had to out source its programs. Because of the limitations of space the COA was prevented from offering many of the programs that are customarily available at senior centers in other communities in Southeastern Massachusetts.

The new Senior Center with 13,544 square feet of space will enable the Council on Aging to expand its programs and services to the elderly. The COA was previously limited to coordinating and providing transportation for shopping, medical appointments and personal care trips through the use of the COA van or by BAT bus; offering the meals program that provided meals to home-bound seniors or through the congregate lunch program; outreach and advocacy services for seniors with special needs and concerns; and coordinating volunteer services.

The COA communicates with the Abington seniors through its monthly newsletter, "The Senior Informer." The Abington Council on Aging is dedicated to serving the needs of the senior citizens of Abington and the new senior center is expected to serve the present and projected needs for programs.

Community Facilities Goals and Objectives

The Town of Abington has done a great deal in addressing the community facility needs set forth in the 1999 Master Plan and in providing for the future needs of the community. The significant community facility accomplishments over the past ten years since the Master Plan was developed include: the development of a Senior Center facility to serve the senior citizens of Abington; the construction of a new Police Station facility; the acquisition of the former Carista property as Open Space; and improvements to the Town's water and sewer systems.

The goals for community facilities are as follows:

To provide for the efficient and effective delivery of local governmental services and programs and to provide adequate facilities to accomplish this goal.

As the population of Abington has grown in number, increased demands have been placed on town government to maintain the current level of service or to provide additional services to serve the growing population need. Fortunately, the Town of Abington made very significant and prudent investments in upgrading or providing new and improved community facilities and has therefore been able to keep abreast most of its present and future needs.

To continue to provide high quality level of education in Abington that provide all students with challenging educational experiences necessary to reach their potential and become informed, responsible citizens.

The most significant community facilities need facing the Town of Abington in the next twenty years is the need to upgrade public school. To a large extent, when and how the Town of Abington can pursue its school building program will rest with decisions of the Massachusetts School Building Authority concerning the amount of assistance that will be available. As of the time of the preparation of the Master Plan Update no clear long term policy on school building projects has been articulated by the Commonwealth. But Abington residents can be assured that public education quality is and will continue to be a priority with the community.

To provide facilities and services to meet the emergency management, police, fire public safety needs of the Town of Abington.

A study to determine to how best serve the long term needs of the fire department has been commissioned that will chart the course for accomplishing this important public safety/community facilities objective. The challenge for accomplishing this and other community facility objectives for the Town of Abington in the future will be to manage the limited financial resources available to the town to gain the maximum impact with the funding that is available.