

## **Article 5: \$350,000 for Schematic Design of a New DPW Facility**

The Department of Public Works/Fire Station Advisory Committee is requesting \$350,000 for site analysis, schematic design, and cost estimate for a new Department of Public Works (DPW) facility. Amherst has never built a DPW facility. Instead, in the 1940's, the town retrofitted a 1915 trolley barn at 586 South Pleasant Street. This building has seen very few significant improvements or modernizations even as Amherst's population has increased and DPW responsibilities greatly expanded.



The present DPW headquarters building

The DPW is an essential first-responder when snow, storms, or other disasters hit, for example, clearing the way for other emergency vehicles. This essential Town Department also constructs, maintains, and repairs roads and sidewalks (with less than adequate Town and Commonwealth funding), is responsible for the water supply, sewer collection and treatment systems, storm water drainage systems, traffic lights, snow removal, maintenance of DPW and other Town vehicles, Solid Waste Transfer Station & Recycling Center, as well as many town parks, recreation areas, shade trees, and cemeteries. The DPW currently is responsible for maintaining 130 miles of road, 122 miles of sanitary sewer lines, 114 miles of water lines, 21 pump stations, water and wastewater treatment facilities, five water supply wells, two reservoirs, three cemeteries, 80 acres of manicured turf playing fields/parks/Common, two pools, 90 miles of sidewalks and parking lots. For FY2017 the DPW's General Fund, Water Fund, Sewer Fund, and Solid Waste Fund budgets total \$11.1 million and employ 64 workers.

### **Why is a new DPW facility needed?**

Over Amherst's 257-year history, a public works building/facility has never been built. Due to the age and condition, the existing DPW headquarters has many problems and deficiencies including being undersized, inadequate layout, and antiquated mechanical, electrical and plumbing systems. There are unsatisfactory employee facilities and insufficient indoor space for equipment storage, care and maintenance. Safety, ventilation, and electrical operations do not meet industry standards. Locker rooms and restrooms are outdated, do not meet current code and are not appropriate for modern employee diversity. Valuable DPW vehicles and equipment must be stored outside and at various locations around Town due to a lack of indoor space. This both significantly shortens lifetimes and quickens depreciation of Town owned equipment and vehicles, which results in increased purchasing needs. Without shelter,

vehicles in winter are more difficult to start and must be cleared of snow, resulting in slower response times.

Due to the existing facility's insufficient size, DPW operations are dispersed throughout the Town, with the Trees & Grounds Division located on Mattoon Street, and traffic lights and signs stored at the wastewater treatment facility and the Ruxton storage building on Pulpit Hill Road. Consolidation of operations and storage would increase DPW efficiency and reduce operating costs. It is assumed that the wastewater treatment plant and the Transfer Station & Recycling Center will remain in their present locations.

**What did the DPW Feasibility Study include?**

In March 2016, a DPW Feasibility Study was completed by consultant Weston & Sampson at a cost of \$75,000. The study included assessment of current property and facilities, space needs, potential sites, basic building conceptual layouts and cost estimates. Nine potential locations were evaluated and ranked and the top three sites were recommended. Estimated cost of the facility is about \$37 Million, but the proposed schematic design would refine the estimate. It must be noted that the Fort River site is Town-owned but may require some demolition. The next two ranked sites on Old Farm Road and Ball Lane are not Town-owned and would need to be purchased. The study also evaluated costs for renovating the existing facility with no consolidation of operations or expansion of the building. The full report can be found at <https://www.amherstma.gov/documentcenter/view/34943>



Crowded and unsafe maintenance bay



Outdoor vehicle storage

**What is involved with this Schematic Design?**

Once funds are approved, the Town would contract with a consultant to prepare the schematic design for a new DPW facility. The schematic design phase would include site-specific analysis involving existing conditions, environmental and geotechnical investigations and a Traffic Impact Assessment. Actual schematic building design would include drawings of sufficient detail to show all interior spaces, exterior spaces and operational adjacencies. Drawings would be supported with narratives for civil/site, sewerage disposal systems, storm water collection systems, geotechnical/foundation, structural, mechanical (HVAC and plumbing), electrical and fire protection. Public outreach and education are included in this phase of work. A detailed construction cost estimate would also be prepared. The goal is to advance the design status so that Town Meeting could see a comprehensive plan and detailed cost estimate in 2017.