

January 5, 2023

via email to tprta@tprta.org

TPRTA (Truro Part-Time Resident Taxpayers' Association)
PO Box 324
Truro MA 02666

Re: Proposed New DPW facility

Dear Board Members,

I am a retired commercial real estate developer, and my company Dickinson Development Corp, formerly based in Quincy MA, has developed over 3 million square feet of commercial/industrial space for private and public entities. For years I was a Truro taxpayer with a home in North Truro and still have family and friends in Truro, with strong contact and connection with Truro. Hopefully, my comments below are useful to you as a taxpayer matter.

I have reviewed all the publicly available plans, proposals, and clarifications submitted by Weston & Sampson (W&S), a Massachusetts-based engineering firm, regarding the proposed new facility for the Dept. of Public Works (DPW) in Truro, MA. I have also viewed public recordings of meetings where this project has been discussed. My focus here is on the plans concerning the current location of the DPW, presently located between Town Hall Rd and Meetinghouse Rd in Truro, also referred to as "Town Hall Hill" (THH).

Site Considerations

The plans for a new DPW facility now propose a 29,608 SF facility including 16,958 SF for covered vehicle storage and maintenance with recommendations apparently prioritizing alternate sites.

I see no reason for a move to a new location, assuming that the existing Zone I area of approximately 30,000 square feet (SF) becomes available for development when the potable water well is installed at nearby Snows Field¹. The addition of that well on within-reach land makes a significant difference, making the project feasible and much more cost effective on the existing site.²

¹ A new well serviceable as a source of potable water to Town Hall is required by the DEP and Snow's Field is the nearest Town-owned source. A new well at Snow's Field would eliminate the Zone I around the existing well on the current DPW site, making that well available for a non-potable water source for DPW operations and allowing greater use of 30,000 sf of open space for construction on that lot. I have assumed a new DEP-required well for THH will be placed at Snow's Field in any case, accordingly.

² The Truro Conservation Trust has adjacent land located between THH/DPW and Snow's Field. Given the environmentally sound goals of retaining DPW at THH, the Trust could be approached for an underground easement for piping, further reducing cost even more than referenced within this document.

Based on my years of experience developing commercial and industrial real estate, I am confident that it is possible to implement a program that stages construction in two or more phases. With the availability of the additional 30,000 SF +/- on the ground due to the elimination of the Zone I, the project can be phased with minimized disruption or temporary relocation.

Some Operating Cost Considerations

In any project, long term operating costs are a key consideration. The largest cost category is often energy. With the trend toward electrification and away from fossil fuels this means electrical costs become key.

The easiest way to reduce energy costs is by not “conditioning” (A/C) all areas of multi-purpose structures. In the case of a DPW on Cape Cod, storage buildings for non-freezing materials (e.g., salt, etc.) and vehicle areas, if any, do not need conditioning, sharply reducing electricity usage.

Unconditioned structures can also have more simplified construction, which in turn reduces capital costs of construction. For example, many DPWs, even in severe climate regions, use a “greenhouse” type of structure, which is significantly less expensive, more flexible and faster to construct. These are available from several manufacturers, such as ClearSpan and Big Top Shelters, to name just two.

With respect to conditioned structures, other ways of reducing operating costs include building tighter structures. This is especially advantageous to a municipality that has capital financing costs lower than typical private projects and may qualify for grants.

One specific aspect to note is an area for periodically washing vehicles. Truro has a milder maritime winter climate, and so an inside wash area for a small number of vehicles seems unnecessary and cost-prohibitive. Harvard University, for example, with an endowment and a fleet many times larger than Truro’s and subject to a colder and snowier climate, utilizes an exterior wash area. In Truro’s case, this would greatly reduce operating and capital costs as well as the mass of the complex.

The declining cost of solar panels and increasing cost of electricity from the grid makes it imperative to design solar rooftops where possible. A project such as this should be able to produce much of its own electricity. It should also have its own backup power source (e.g., battery or generator) so public services can continue to be delivered during power outages.

Summary

- The new DPW can be built at Town Hall Hill in phases.

- It will not require the DPW to fully vacate the site during construction.
- DPW services can continue with manageable interruption during construction.
- It should cost considerably less than currently projected, particularly if local contractors are used in construction.
- It keeps Town staff co-located, as it is currently, thereby fostering management efficiencies.
- For the DPW, the THH site allows for the least impact of all sites proposed in terms of
 - cost to taxpayers
 - benefit to THH facilities (Town Hall and DPW) by the most efficient and appropriate use of wells (i.e., splitting Zone I well/water source at Snow's Field for potable water and existing well water source at THH for non-potable utilitarian uses)
 - ease of ultimate use, without new construction of roads, adverse impacts on Route 6 corridor traffic, and known safety impacts
 - sharply reduced adverse environmental impacts resulting from no new contamination from salt or chemicals at presently uncontaminated sites under consideration
- A phased development can be aligned with the Town's ability to provide capital over time for various aspects of the project, by not requiring a "big bang" approach to renovations.
- The THH site allows for a phased development over time which enables proper energy design considerations to be employed so that the end result meets the Town's net zero goals. The energy footprints for human-occupied structures are significantly different than for storage facilities, which naturally encourages a segmented approach.
- Developing a DPW that meets real service requirements in a manner that is well-designed, efficient, and scaled to community needs and resources is best achieved by keeping the DPW at Town Hall Hill, developing a new well at Snow's Field, building in energy economies in building and use, and storing/washing vehicles outside. These steps, among others mentioned above, will significantly reduce construction costs and maintenance costs long-term. This in turn benefits taxpayers and is a win-win for the community.

Upon request, I can provide additional detail to elaborate on my experience and my opinion.

Respectfully submitted,



Mark Dickinson, President
Dickinson Development Corp
PO Box 359, Scituate, MA 02066