

# *Burlington Union*

## **Selectmen take stock of priorities**

**By Arthur Katz/Correspondent**

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BURLINGTON - A very ambitious agenda of strategic planning priorities is facing the Board of Selectmen, based on the board's discussions in its October planning session. Monday night, Town Administrator Robert Mercier delineated the #1 priority issues chosen by the board. Of the five such issues, the Wildwood School disposition is furthest along.

**Wildwood School** - As was reported in the course of Monday's meeting, the request for proposals is ready to go out for deconstructing the building, getting rid of the asbestos, and preparing the site for whatever it's next use will be.

An article for paying for the demolition is expected to be on the warrant, and "future proposed uses for the site may be part of the May proposal(s)", according to Mercier's memorandum.

**Landlocked parcel** - In January, Town Meeting refused a request to fund an updated assessment of the value of the landlocked parcel of 270 acres across Route 2 from the Northwest Park, the former Sun Micro Systems complex, and the Gutierrez development east of Northwest Park.

There has been interest, according to Mercier, from developers, despite the probable high cost of gaining access to the property.

**Grandview Tavern Complex** - Sonia Rollins, the selectman who is liaison to the Grandview Use Committee, reported Monday night that no decisions have been made about the site, and it does not appear that decisions are forthcoming in the near future.

Although there is about \$900,000 available raised in various ways by the Committee, the issue of restoration versus replication remains unresolved. Selectman Gary Gianino urged that the building be secured in terms of its roof and foundation structure.

With estimates for total restoration exceeding \$2.5 million, and no firm plan for reuse, the project will probably not make it to the Spring Town Meeting.

**Operational review/financial stability** - This issue encompasses a general review of re-organization with Town Departments, consolidation and/or combining department functions, reviewing fiscal policies on long term debt, cash reserves, and position classification plans, among other issues.

This is an ongoing operation that will continue to be before the board and Town Meeting in various forms over the next two years.

**West Burlington development** - The already announced plans for redevelopment and new development along the Route 3 corridor has made it critical for the town to consider such things as “a new West Burlington municipal facility to accommodate the increased demand for services expected from this area as well as significant expenditures on necessary infrastructure to service the development.”

Priority 1A

On the next level of priority, labeled Priority Issues #1A, four projects were reviewed that are just below the most prominent issues.

**Re-Location Of The Highway Barn** - It was noted that the relocation of a facility like the highway operation is difficult at best, in any community. The Board in October discussed this initiative in concert with the West Burlington development.

**Disposition Of 42-44 South Bedford St. units and Carpenter House** - The lease on the Carpenter House expires in June, and the deeds to the other two houses are in hand or expected shortly. A possible action plan could embody retention, sale or a combination of both. Decisions will also need to be made as to how the proceeds will be used.

Action is expected at either or both of the May/ September Town Meetings.

**Mt. Hope (Meadowbrook) School** - The lessors have approached the town about a 20-year lease extension to make feasible the financing of an expansion of the facilities on the site.

Mercier suggested that a decision be targeted for the May Town Meeting.

**Ice Palace renovations** - The current management firm leasing the facility will seek long-term private financing for needed upgrades to the building and the equipment, if the town will provide a long enough lease to make the numbers work.

Mercier indicated the administration will attempt to have a proposal ready for Town Meeting in either May or September.

Lower priority

Finally, four issues were accorded lower priority:

**City Of Boston (Cummings) land** - “The board remains steadfast in its belief, with the City of Woburn, that the property should remain in its current state, and not be pursued as a potentially developable piece of real estate.”

**Cemetery expansion** - Short term, an expansion last year at Pine Haven helped alleviate the problem, but the board is faced with finding a longer term solution for residents who wish local burial.

**Long-term infrastructure needs** - This is an ongoing problem that the administration is attempting to address by identifying needs and looking for long-term debt schedules as well as identifying alternative funding sources.

**Possible short-term development moratorium** - The board discussed this as a possible fall-back position, depending on the success in addressing the items of greater priority.

Mercier emphasized in presenting the strategic goals that the way in which the initiatives were listed within categories was not indicative of their relative importance, and that needs to be sorted out by the board in the months ahead.