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TOWN OF STERLING
STERLING, MASS.

BUILDING NEEDS AND UTILIZATION COMMITTEE

FINAL REPORT

TO

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

TOWN OF STERLING

JUNE 1986

Building Needs Committee
Final Report

CONTENTS

Summary of Recommendations.....	p. 1
Recommendation I.....	p. 6
Recommendations II through VI.....	p. 9
Recommendation VII.....	p. 13
List of Documents.....	p. 14

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

- I. Begin immediately to take the steps necessary to add 5000 square feet of new construction to the 2000 square foot Conant Library building for a total of 7000 square feet for library purposes. The existing facility is inadequate for the provision of quality library services to a growing community and proposed legislation which will provide matching funds requires local commitment to funding for library building improvement.
- II. At a future date, consolidate the school facilities at the Boutelle Road site by adding ten classrooms to the Chocksett School to accommodate classes currently assigned to the Butterick School.
- III. Either at the same time or subsequent to such consolidation, renovate the Butterick School for other needs for space as identified in this report, such as the Police Department, Senior Citizens programs, and offices for town boards and committees.
- IV. At a future date, provide additional space for fire apparatus.
- V. At a future date, build an addition to the Town Hall containing a vault built to state specifications.
- VI. At a future date, take the steps necessary to acquire any available parcels of land in the center of town.
- VII. While the committee does not have a suggested timetable or priority order for recommendations II through VI, it strongly urges that the Building Needs and Utilization Committee continue working with those whose future needs are outlined in the report so that the various needs can be met in a logical and reasonable manner.

Building Needs Committee
Final Report

Formation of the committee.

The Board of Trustees for the Conant Public Library requested \$40,000.00 at the Annual Town Meeting in April, 1984, "for complete architectural plans for an addition to the Conant Public Library". Selectman Richard Conley, stating that there were questions about the advisability of an addition, recommended a vote to table and the appointment of a committee to address the town's future needs for building space. The Town Meeting tabled the article.

Subsequently, the Selectmen sent a notice to the Finance Committee, School Committee, Library Trustees and the Department of Public Works requesting that each select a member to serve on the newly established Building Needs and Utilization Committee, which they charged as follows:

" . . . to study the needs of the town. Its first priority will be the needs of the Library Trustees."

The following people were selected by their respective committees and boards to serve on the committee:

Jack Carlson, Department of Public Works
Gail Iacobucci, School Committee
Maryanne MacLeod, Library Trustees
John May, Finance Committee
Paul Sushchyk, Board of Selectmen

Janet Baker, Library Director, was also appointed to the committee. William Tuttle, Finance Committee, replaced John May in February, 1986.

Work of the committee.

At a meeting held on 27 September 1984, the members elected Gail Iacobucci as chairman and discussed the purpose of the committee. It was agreed that the committee should, one, look at the needs of all Town boards and committees, and, two, address Sterling's needs for library space. Preliminary discussion revealed that members had a number of alternative suggestions to investigate and a lot of unanswered questions.

Since that meeting, the committee has met eighteen times, consulted professional architects and professional engineers, compiled a list of "Building Space Needs" as presented by all Town departments, reviewed a number of sites, including visiting several, and requested funds at the Annual Town Meeting, April, 1985,

" . . . to conduct surveys and/or other such studies of appropriate sites for public buildings or of existing public buildings within the town . . ."

with the Board of Selectmen responsible for the expenditure of any such funds.

Building Needs Committee
Final Report

Committee members agreed that the existing library facility is inadequate and that the first priority should be an improvement to the library.

Library building.

The Conant Memorial Building is 100 years old and in good repair. The two-story building is not accessible to the handicapped. The first floor contains all library services except the children's room which is on the second floor. The total square footage of usable library space is 1800 square feet. Based on the American Library Association's recommendation of .7 square feet per capita, the library should have 4200 square feet to serve Sterling's present population. Any improvement to the library should be adequate to serve future population needs. Since Sterling is a growing community and there are no current indications that this growth will stop, the Library Trustees based their space requirements on an estimated population of 10,000 in 2005. The following chart details the present situation, what should exist for the present population, and the minimum required to serve a projected 10,000 population.

	PRESENT as is	PRESENT should be	FUTURE 2005
<u>Population</u>	est 6000	N/A	10,000
<u>Usable space</u>	1800 sq ft	4200 sq ft	7000 sq ft
<u>Seating*</u>	16	27	42
<u>Book coll.</u>	21,000	25,000	37,800
<u>Shelving</u>	1500 linear ft	2625	4725
<u>Work space**</u>	60 sq ft	500 sq ft	1000 sq ft

*seating includes study, leisure, and carrels

**work space includes circulation, administration, technical services, public service, and reference

Other considerations raised by the Library Trustees: the library facility should be energy efficient, economical, and easy to maintain inside and out; it should have ground level access or the equivalent; the plan should provide for future additional space; and it should be capable of being supervised by a single staff member. The proposed 7000 square feet would contain a browsing/reading area; a study area with tables and carrels; a circulation/reference area, near the workroom, which would have supplies storage; shelving for anticipated maximum collection of 37,800 volumes; space for current periodicals and backfiles; space and shelving for the display of library materials; space for public access to photocopier, typewriter, computers, and

audio-visual materials; a children's room; and a room for programs and meetings.

In a random sample telephone community survey conducted by a volunteer Library Improvement Committee and the Library Trustees in the spring of 1984, 415 surveys were completed. Of these, 299 people said they were users of the library (72%), and 319 rated the importance of a community providing quality library services as "very important" (77%). When asked whether they approved of a program which would result in increased space for library services, 362 said "yes" (87%).

Three essential points have been made:

1. The present facility is inadequate for future needs;
2. the Library Trustees have a well-thought-out building program;
3. they have demonstrated community support for their program.

Other departmental needs.

The committee talked with a number of people about the Town's future needs for building space and renovation. The list which follows details the requirements as given by the people contacted.

Elderly needs. Arthur McLean, representing the Council for Ageing, attended several committee meetings, and talked with individual committee members about the need for a meeting space for Sterling's elderly population. Their stated requirements:

- Building, approximately 80 x 100 feet, with a room which will seat 600;
- Tables to serve meals to 100 people;
- Kitchen adequate for the storage and distribution of meals (prepared elsewhere);
- Capability of minimal food preparation for social events (coffee and dessert, for example);
- Office for director of elderly programs;
- Toilets accessible to the handicapped;
- Space for storage of supplies.

He said this building would serve as a Senior Citizen Center.

Department of Public Works. In a note addressed to committee chairman Gail Iacobucci, the DPW said,

"The DPW Board and Supt. Cutler have no immediate needs, new construction, renovation, or otherwise."

They also suggested that the second floor renovation of the Town Hall be addressed, with the first priority being heat.

Town Hall. Committee member Janet Baker talked with Lois Seifert who stated that the greatest need is for storage for

Building Needs Committee
Final Report

Town records, including a new vault and perhaps other storage, and for Boards' and committees' materials, files, and meetings. The vault must be built to state specifications. The most likely site would be an addition on the back of the Town Hall. She noted that the second floor of the Town Hall had space for committees and boards to meet and have offices, but there is no heat. When Baker questioned Building Inspector Norman Clemence about access to the second floor, he said that stairs are all the access required, since boards and committees are not "general public".

Fire Department. Committee member Janet Baker talked with Fire Chief Stuart Johnson, who stated that the Fire Department will need either a satellite station or an addition to the existing building to accommodate additional apparatus within the next 2 - 3 years maximum. He suggested that a municipal building which serves several needs, including those of the library, is the way to go. He suggested that the existing library building should become a satellite town hall, for the use of boards and committees, for example, the Planning Board, the Fair Committee, the Conservation Committee.

Police Department. Committee member Janet Baker talked with Police Chief David Pineo, who stated that the present Police quarters are totally inadequate. A new police station with double the existing space is needed. It should contain a dispatch center on the first floor, three cells, and a 3 or 4 vehicle garage. He said that location is not important and it does not need to be in the center of town. It should be kept separate from other municipal needs for the best operation of a Police Department, however. He said that the space need is crucial now and that they would be looking for a new building within 5 years. He said that an addition to the present building is not possible, because of the proximity to lot lines and the swamp.

School Committee. Chairman Gail Iacobucci told the committee that the School Committee is "unable to provide information at this time".

It should be noted, however, that the School Committee has appointed a building needs subcommittee to address the issue of future needs for space. The consolidation of school facilities at the Boutelle Road site, which includes the existing Houghton and Chocksett schools, is one idea that they will consider. Architectural plans for two ten-room additions to Chocksett were included in the original design plans.

Selectmen.

Light Department. Neither reported any future building needs to the committee.

SYNOPSIS OF STATED FUTURE BUILDING NEEDS

1. 7000 square foot public library
2. 8000 square foot meeting and program room for elderly
3. Renovation and addition (vault) to Town Hall
4. Satellite Fire Station or addition to present Fire Station
5. New Police Station
6. Ten-room addition to Chocksett School

Advisors to the Building Needs and Utilization Committee.

In addition to the people already noted, the committee also had the advice of members of the Board of Health; Tim Nault, architect, of O. E. Nault and Sons, Worcester, and George Schneider of the same company, who met with us as friends of the committee; Debbie Robinson, engineer, of Charles A. Perkins, Co., Inc., who walked three sites with George Schneider and Janet Baker in preparation for a proposal for evaluating those sites; Robert Cutler, DPW Superintendant, who assisted with deep hole and percolation tests at the Conant Library building site and the Muddy Pond Road site and walked four sites with Tim Nault and Janet Baker. Suggestions and comments made by these advisors appear with any relevant discussion.

RECOMMENDATION I: ADD 5000 SQUARE FOOT ADDITION TO THE EXISTING CONANT LIBRARY BUILDING

In order to add on to the existing library, the Town will have to acquire the adjacent land from the owner, which is the First Parish Unitarian. The Unitarian Society has cooperated fully with both the Library Trustees and the Building Needs and Utilization Committee. It granted permission for any needed tests to be done on the site and voted to sell the land to the Town "for the sole purpose of making the library addition possible". The land has not been appraised or surveyed, and the Unitarian Society is unwilling to spend any money having it surveyed or appraised until it receives a proposal for purchase from the Town. The Town purchased the land on which the present building sits in 1973 from the First Parish Unitarian. The deed states the First Parish Unitarian may demand reconveyance if the building is used for a purpose other than a public library.

The Library Trustees have estimated the size of the lot at around 17,000 square feet (4/10 acre). Although the property has frontage on Main Street, it is not a buildable lot and is not useful to the town except for an addition to the library building.

In the past, the Board of Health and others have questioned whether this site can accommodate an addition and the accompanying required septic system. In April, 1985, a

Building Needs Committee
Final Report

deep hole test was observed by Health Agent Gerry Collins, Board of Health member George Fitch, DPW Superintendent Robert Cutler, and committee members Jack Carlson and Janet Baker. On 29 October 1985, Debbie Robertson (engineer for Perkins) visited the site and took copies of a topographical study done in 1979 and an architect's rendering of a proposed addition. On 14 January 1986, the Building Needs and Utilization Committee voted to request the Selectmen to spend \$300.00 from ATM April 29, 1985, Article 45, to hire Perkins to evaluate this site, using the results of the deep hole test, the drawings, Robertson's observations, and all legal requirements

"to evaluate the existing site with respect to the proposed addition utilizing office and document research resulting in a preliminary sketch plan detailing such research. This evaluation would not propose or include any subsurface explorations at this time." (Letter from Perkins, 12-26-85)

In a letter dated 28 March 1986, Deborah Robertson, R.S., of Perkins, stated

" . . . based upon the site plan and the topographic and location plan supplied to this office, it appears that 2,000 square feet of available area for a sewage disposal system is possible on abutting property. It must be recognized that this evaluation is based solely on these documents. It is the opinion of this office that soil tests would be advised and in all likelihood required to any approvals being granted. . . . The viability of this existing site is dependent on favorable soil testing, both deep hole and percolation rates."

On 15 April 1986, the recommended testing was done by Perkins and observed by Board of Health member George Fitch and Sterling Health Inspector Walter Irvine. The report states: Observation Hole Data: No. 486-1

0' - 1'6" top and subsoils
1'6" - 9' sand and gravel
Groundwater observed - 8'
No refusal

Percolation Test Data: No. 486A
2 min/inch

Thus the property is favorable for the design of a sewage disposal system.

Another major factor in this recommendation is pending legislation which will provide substantial state funding for the renovation and improvement of library buildings in Massachusetts. Communities which make successful application

for such funding may be awarded up to a three quarter match. The Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners, which would administer the grant process, requires that the local community own the property and that it make a local funding commitment. In addition, schematic drawings of the actual proposed construction must accompany the application.

Additional reasons for recommending an addition to the existing library building are

- Site is in preferred central location.
- New construction would add around 5000 square feet to existing building's 2000 square feet
- Deteriorating sheds (an attractive nuisance) will be removed
- Sterling is eligible applicant for state funding
- Only 5000 square feet of new construction costs; renovation costs are lower for the 2000 square feet
- Preserves existing historic building
- Preserves green space along Main Street
- First Parish Unitarian is willing to sell the land for the purposes of a library addition
- Building would have to be renovated anyway if it were to be used for other town needs; for example, handicapped access

The Committee retained Lindsay Shives of Lindsay Shives & Associates, 8 Newbury Street, Boston, as an advisor to the committee. We instructed him to address specifically the architectural feasibility of an addition to the Conant building and the architectural feasibility of the renovation of the Butterick School for other purposes, such as Police Department headquarters, elderly needs, and Town office space.

In respect to an addition he said,

- a. Site: Careful study will be necessary to work out an addition that attaches properly to the existing building, that will contain a septic system, that will conform to the zoning regulations, that will provide wheelchair access, . . .
- b. Design: The existing building is a masonry Victorian public building, . . . The opportunity of designing an addition to such a building calls for a sensitivity to designing a functional contemporary building in the context of the original building. . . . It would be incorrect to duplicate the Conant building, but it is common practice today for an architect with experience in adding to historic buildings

to work within that context, providing a total complex with a cohesive integrity.

Other alternatives for library space needs.

The Committee considered several alternatives for meeting the library space needs, ranging from new construction at one of several possible sites to moving the library to a renovated Butterick School. The Butterick School is not vacant and there is no guarantee that it will be in the immediate future. The library's need is pressing and should not wait for some indefinite future date. Furthermore, state construction funds for libraries may not be available again for many years. Finally, the cost of renovation and structural reinforcement required by the greater loading of a library would be considerable.

New construction, whether a library only or a "multi-purpose" building, is a more expensive recommendation which also does not utilize the existing building, located in the town center. Most authorities on library planning recommend that the library be located in the retail center, where most people go about their daily business.

RECOMMENDATIONS II THROUGH VI ADDRESSING OTHER STATED FUTURE NEEDS FOR SPACE

Consolidation of school facilities

While the decision to request funding for the additional classrooms must be made by the Sterling School Committee, the Building Needs and Utilization Committee makes this recommendation based on three factors:

that it makes sense to have the school facilities in the same area, rather than having some children and teachers separated from the rest of the system;

that the plans for additional classrooms are already in existence;

and that the Butterick School building could then be converted to other town purposes.

Conversion of Butterick School for other town purposes

There have been many suggestions that the Butterick School be converted to a library and Town offices or a meeting room for the elderly or a Police station. In 1985, deed restrictions regarding the school expired. School Committee representative Gail Iacobucci informed the committee that the School Committee would not be adverse to turning the Butterick School over to Town needs, but first they would need a 10-room addition to the Chocksett School.

She said that state restrictions will not permit another Houghton addition but plans for two 10-room additions are already drawn for Chocksett. The School Committee and many Sterling residents are supportive of having all school facilities at one location.

Both Tim Nault and George Schneider (O. E. Nault and Sons) responded to questions about renovating the Butterick School for other purposes, although they did not evaluate the building. Problems they foresaw relate to access for the handicapped, the need to remove interior walls, and the need to resolve drainage problems. Nault cautioned the committee that he believes it is unwise to convert an existing school building in such a way that it can no longer be used as a school. He referred to communities which had had to build new schools to replace space they had essentially given away and recommended that any renovation should not prevent a return to school use in the future.

Architect Lindsay Shives toured the Butterick School building and found it in good condition and well-constructed. He was unable to be specific about what modifications would be needed without knowing the purpose intended for the building, but his report states

The School . . . represents about 11,000 square feet of usable floor area for other Town functions. In addition, the access next to the building to the rest of the site offers great potential for construction for other uses.

Since the uses that might be assigned to the building are undetermined, the costs are not yet predictable. Factors influencing the costs, however, would be an elevator (\$70 - 90,000), site work (\$20 -30,000), and the desired degree of interior modifications ranging from minimal (\$60 - 80,000) to substantial (\$400 - 500,000). [Figures are 1986 construction costs.]

. . . no determination has been made about updating or replacing sewage disposal or water supply.

If the Butterick School were to be vacated by the School Committee, the Town should consider renovating it for other needs identified in this report, such as the Police Department, Fire Department, elderly, and Town office space.

Additional space for Fire Department needs.

This need was clearly identified to the Committee. No site evaluations were done for a possible location for space for fire apparatus, although we recognize that such will have

to be done in the future in order to meet this need.

Town Hall vault.

In a letter addressed to Ronald Kidd, then Chairman of the Board of Selectmen, dated April 6, 1978, Albert H. Whittaker of the Massachusetts Office of the Supervisor of Public Records, reports on a "survey of the public records and related storage facilities in the Sterling Town Hall", done by him on 29 March 1978. He is very complimentary about the effectiveness and good order of Sterling's record storage, but does state

The records storage building to the rear of Town Hall does present certain problems. While the building itself is of a fire-resistive nature, its exposure to the weather makes difficult, at best, the maintenance of an even environment. . . . The accessibility to records in this building necessarily is limited during periods of inclement weather. The long-range solution to these problems would be a storage vault within Town Hall.

. . . only records of a relatively short-term retention nature should be stored [in this building]. Records of a permanent character, where environmental degradation would be a serious consideration, should continue to be held . . . in Town Hall.

Specifications for vault construction are on file at the Town Hall.

Acquire available parcels of land in the center of Town.

When the Committee was considering new construction, a number of sites were considered by the committee and several were evaluated. [Note: because site numbers were assigned variously by our advisors, the following references do not match site numbers as used in committee notes and documentation]

Sites 1 and 2 were visited by Tim Nault, Bob Cutler, and Janet Baker on 13 March 1985.

Site 1. Land on the northerly side of the intersection of route 62 and route 12 (property of Thomas Flanagan). Although a good, visible location, the lot is small and Nault observed that it is partly "fill". The town owns adjacent railroad bed land which is considerably below ground level. Nault said the site is adequate for a single structure at the Route 62 elevation, but did not recommend any development of the railroad bed because of "inordinate cost". He did not see it as a practical consideration. Rita Tuttle, a Library

Trustee, talked to Flanagan who said that the 1/2 acre is valued by the Town at \$30,000, but he considered its market value to be considerably higher.

Site 2. Land on the southerly side of the intersection of Routes 12 and 62 (property of Jeffrey and Joann Drown). Nault said of this site:

Though there appears to be sufficient acreage available as a total site the actual usable area is very limited. The grade change from the intersection of Routes 62 and 12 is estimated to be in excess of thirty feet. Construction at this lower elevation is possible though not practical or recommended unless a substantial high rise structure is anticipated.

Bob Cutler suggested that the Drowns might be interested in a "swap", exchanging the Route 62 end of their property for town-owned, filled land on the corner of Maple and Bridge Streets. In addition, he and others suggested that, since the Town owns so little land in the center, this land should be acquired in any case.

There may be other suitable parcels which the Town might want to acquire in the future.

Other site evaluations.

The Committee also evaluated sites on Town-owned land. Sites 3 through 5 were visited by Tim Nault, Bob Cutler, and Janet Baker on 13 March 1985, and by George Schneider, Debbie Robertson, and Janet Baker on 29 October 1985.

Site 3. Land to the rear of the Butterick School (13 acres of Town land). The only feasible access to this land is from Meetinghouse Hill Road up a gradient of approximately 25 feet from the Town common. In a letter dated 3 April 1985, Nault said,

The site contains gentle to moderate cross slopes with visible ledge outcroppings. Usage would require careful planning to minimize site improvement costs. Sufficient land is available for development of library, council for aging needs, etc. Because of the obvious presence of ledge, sub-surface soil investigation for sewage disposal must be performed to determine suitability.

Site 4. Land on the corner of Muddy Pond and Boutelle Roads. Given the problems with available sites in the center, the committee agreed to look at this site for a possible new library construction. The School Committee

agreed to give the Committee approval to conduct a septic study in a letter dated 14 November 1985. On 11 March 1986, a representative from Charles A. Perkins conducted soil explorations. A report dated 28 March 1986 said, ". . . it is the opinion of this office that a sewage disposal system could be designed."

**RECOMMENDATION VII: BUILDING NEEDS AND UTILIZATION COMMITTEE
SHOULD CONTINUE TO WORK WITH TOWN DEPARTMENTS ON
FUTURE NEEDS**

The Committee hopes that the Library Trustees will be able to use this report in taking immediate action on the Library's need for additional space. The Town has other needs, however, and much of the information acquired for this report can be used to begin to address those needs. We believe that the Selectmen should continue to appoint representatives of the Towns Boards and Committees to an ongoing Building Needs Committee, charged with planning to meet those needs in a logical and reasonable manner. The Selectmen should ensure that there is wide ranging representation on the committee, including school, fire, police, library, finance, elderly, and someone to represent the interests of the Town Hall and the various boards and committees.

Building Needs Committee
Final Report

The following documents are included as part of this Final Report:

Board of Selectmen, Town of Sterling
charge to the committee

Building Needs and Utilization Committee
notes on meetings
correspondence
special article request

Board of Library Trustees, Conant Public Library
summary of results of user survey, February 1984
summary of results of community survey, April 1984
Intent to Apply for LSCA construction funds, letter
10 July 1985, application 30 August 1985,
letter 5 May 1986

First Parish Church (Unitarian)
deed, 6 September 1972
letter, 29 April 1984
letter, 18 November 1984
letter, 27 April 1986

O. E. Nault & Sons, letter, 3 April 1985

Charles A. Perkins Co., Inc.
cost proposals, 26 December 1985
agreement, fees and conditions, 12 February 1986
report, 11 March 1986
invoice, 15 April 1986

Lindsay Shives
proposal, 7 April 1986
report, 24 April 1986
invoice, 4 June 1986

Office of the Supervisor of Public Records
letter, 6 April 1978
specifications for safes and vaults