

TOWN OF WAITSFIELD  
FEASIBILITY STUDY  
FOR  
TOWN OFFICES AND RECREATION AREA

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	1
GENERAL METHODOLOGY.....	1
RECREATION FACILITY	
Recreational needs.....	2
Identification of sites.....	2
Recommended site.....	2
Suggested development plan.....	2
Estimated costs.....	3
Implementation.....	3
Preliminary Cost Estimate.....	4
TOWN OFFICES	
Space requirements.....	6
Identification of sites.....	6
Recommended site.....	7
Suggested floor and site plans.....	7
Estimated Costs.....	7
Implementation.....	7-8
Preliminary Cost Estimate.....	9
FINANCING.....	10-11
SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS.....	12

## INTRODUCTION

The following report outlines the work completed to assist the Town of Waitsfield in its efforts to identify the best potential sites and to prepare cost estimates for development of a comprehensive recreation area and a future town office facility.

## GENERAL METHODOLOGY

The procedure followed in the analysis of sites and requirements for both the recreation area and Town offices included meetings with several different groups such as the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission, the Waitsfield Planning Commission, and the Waitsfield Board of Selectmen as well as the Town Clerk, Treasurer, Tax Collector and other individuals to gather local input and to develop a sense of the community's desires.

Local realtors were among those consulted regarding possible sites for these facilities and after development of a list of potential sites, the following factors were used to evaluate and compare:

1. Size of property
2. Compatability with use of adjacent land
3. Proximity to existing settlement
4. Cost of property
5. Site development costs
6. Parking and traffic factors
7. Flood plain considerations

Once the most favorable sites were established, a site plan was drawn for the recreation facility and a floor plan was developed for the office complex by combining an earlier preliminary floor plan with some valuable input from Ted Joslin of the Planning Commission. These tools were then used to estimate construction and development costs for both projects.

The specific details of each proposed facility as well as our plans and recommendations are presented below.

## RECREATION FACILITY

Recreational needs - The general consensus from conversations with the various groups and individuals regarding desired recreation facilities was that the following should be provided:

### Higher priority

1. Ball fields - softball, little league, rugby/soccer
2. Tennis courts - two minimum
3. Basketball courts - one minimum
4. Skating rink
5. Miscellaneous games - horseshoes, volleyball
6. Playground
7. Picnic facilities - outdoor and pavilion
8. Toilet facilities

### Lower priority

1. Night lighting
2. Pool complex

Identification of sites - Ten sites were noted as being possibilities for the recreation complex, however this list was quickly shortened after a site specific analysis in terms of the seven factors noted in the methodology section. The suggested land below the Waits farm was eliminated because of unfavorable terrain; land referred to as Tardy's and the old Fairgrounds were deleted because of high cost and poor proximity to the central residential areas of Waitsfield and Irasville; the State salt shed area was discounted because of remote location, flooding potential, and small size. Land adjacent to the Telephone Co. office, the Bagatelle property and the Ted Joslin property were all eliminated as being unavailable at a reasonable cost and, in some cases, as not lending themselves to recreation in terms of land use. The Flemer land behind Bonnette's was given a low priority because of cost, impact on agricultural land, high flood potential and the associated high site development costs. The two remaining sites are the present Couple's Club recreation field and the Jack Smith property across the river.

Recommended site - Based on location, flood potential, land use, size, and costs of purchase and development, it is our recommendation that the Couple's Club property be pursued as the most favorable site and that the Jack Smith property still be considered as a fall-back option.

Suggested development plan - We have prepared a plan of the Couple's Club at a scale of 1"=50' which depicts one possible arrangement of all the amenities previously outlined in the recreational needs section. (Please refer to Appendix A). The tennis court, basketball/ice rink, pool, and parking have been located in the western portion of the site which, according to flood studies, is less likely to be inundated and the ball fields and less costly improvements have been located near the river and in the northeastern areas of the site. The building shown west of the driveway is intended to be a picnic or meeting pavilion, open on three sides and bordered on the fourth

side by an enclosed toilet and storage area. The building adjacent to the pool would be built with the pool and would be an enclosed bathhouse with change areas, bath facilities and lockers. This structure would serve as a single controlled entrance into the pool.

Estimated costs - It is assumed that the transfer of title of the Couple's Club land to the Town will be accomplished for little or no funds (See section on implementation). The costs presented for project development represent construction in 1981 dollars and are felt to be conservative. The field and court costs have been developed from past experience with similar projects and the pool costs are representative of a first class concrete pool similar to the one built this summer in the City of St. Albans. Modifications in pool design and construction could result in substantial savings but it was felt that the quality option should be presented.

Implementation - It is our understanding that although there is a general concurrence with developing the Couple's Club site into a more extensive and attractive recreation complex, there is also some feeling that the Couple's Club may not be willing to release their ownership and control of the present facility. They may be concerned also about future management of an expanded Town-owned facility, about exclusion of neighboring towns' residents, and about liability considerations.

There may be several options to consider relative to a mutually agreeable arrangement between the Town and the Couples Club. First of all, the facility can be jointly designated as "The Waitsfield-Couple's Club Recreation Area" for example, to keep its users mindful of the background and the cooperative improvement of the fields. If outright ownership of the land by the Town is a stumbling block, a long term lease could be considered. It has been suggested by several people within the Town that a recreation committee be established to manage the operation and maintenance of an expanded facility. This committee could possibly be composed largely of Couple's Club members to keep them actively involved in something that they obviously are very proud of. The concerns of liability would appear to be largely unwarranted since the Town either already has or can purchase the required insurance for this protection. Residents from neighboring Towns can be assured of continued use of an improved facility simply by a Waitsfield town decision to allow them to participate or by a joint funding arrangement with the other Towns. Possibly Waitsfield could provide 50% of the funds and Warren and Fayston could provide 25% each. The recreation committee would then presumably include some proportion of membership from the participating towns also.

A brief work session with the Couple's Club and some conversations with the other Towns' Selectmen could go a long way toward answering these questions and concerns.

WAITSFIELD RECREATION FACILITY  
 COUPLE'S CLUB PARCEL  
 PRELIMINARY COST ESTIMATE

PHASE I

1.	Road and parking		
	a.	Improve 450 lf of existing road	\$2,000
	b.	420 lf new road - 16' wide @ \$8	3,360
	c.	Parking - 9540 sf @ \$0.50	<u>4,770</u>
			\$10,130
2.	Pavilion building		
	a.	Structure - 1800 sf @ \$15	\$27,000
	b.	Well and septic system	8,000
	c.	Exterior lights & elec. service	<u>5,500</u>
			\$40,500
3.	Little league field		
	a.	Grading, stripping topsoil	\$1,000
	b.	Clay & sand infield	2,000
	c.	Backstop	1,200
	d.	Bases, benches, bleachers	1,700
	e.	Seeding and finish work	<u>1,200</u>
			\$7,100
4.	Softball		
	a.	Grading, stripping topsoil	\$1,800
	b.	Clay & sand infield	2,400
	c.	Backstop	1,200
	d.	Bases, benches, bleachers	2,500
	e.	Seeding & finish work	<u>1,800</u>
			\$9,700
5.	Soccer/rugby field		
	a.	Grading, seeding & finish work	\$4,000
	b.	Goals	<u>800</u>
			\$4,800
6.	Playground construction & equipment		\$2,500
7.	Planting - 26 trees @ \$80		\$2,080
8.	Benches, grills and trash receptacles		\$1,320
9.	Tennis courts - two with fencing & nets		\$40,000

10. Ice hockey rink/2 basketball courts	<u>\$30,000</u>
Total construction cost	\$148,130
10% Contingency	14,800
Design and Administration	<u>22,200</u>
PHASE I TOTAL.....	\$185,130

PHASE II

1. Pool complex

a. Pool - 75' x 45' poured concrete	\$200,000
b. Building - 1800 sf @ \$50	<u>90,000</u>
	\$290,000

2. Exterior lighting - tall lights

a. Softball - 7 lights @ \$2,150	\$ 15,050
b. Tennis - 4 lights @ \$2,150	8,600
c. Basketball - 6 lights @ \$2,150	12,900
d. Installation	5,000
e. Buried elec. service - 1550' @ \$4	<u>6,200</u>
	\$ 47,750

Total construction	\$337,750
10% contingency	33,800
Design and administration	<u>50,600</u>
PHASE II TOTAL.....	\$422,150

## TOWN OFFICES

Space requirements - Conversations with people in Town indicate that the present office facility in the lower level of the library is not adequate in terms of space or layout. It is felt that a new facility should include three offices, large vault storage, work space near the vault, a service counter with open space behind and in front, filing space, toilet facilities, and a large meeting room which can be divided by a moveable partition. Future expansion possibilities should also be considered in the design.

Identification of sites - Both the concepts of new construction and of existing building renovation were considered. The two viable sites for new construction were identified as the land northeast of and adjacent to the Howard Bank and the vacant school land northeast of the elementary school building.

Locations which were suggested for renovation were the old high school, the General Wait house, the Newcomb house and a second floor addition to the fire station.

In terms of new construction, the school land has the disadvantage of being furthest from Waitsfield and Irasville and is an obvious area into which the school can expand if the need ever arises. The Howard Bank land is an area which presently will remain undeveloped (per deed restriction by the Town) and therefore might be purchased at a reasonable price. The terrain is low however and because of a reported high water table, considerable fill would have to be brought in prior to construction.

Generally speaking, the concensus of opinion regarding renovation of an existing structure for office space was fairly negative. It was felt that between purchase costs, renovation costs, access to the handicapped, and the problems of trying to adapt an existing floor plan to office space, the new construction options would be more practical. The one exception to this was the suggestion of adding a second floor to the fire station and locating the offices there. At first glance this appeared feasible - a vault could, with some special design, be constructed upstairs, an elevator could provide service to the handicapped and the existing roof is in need of repair. Upon closer examination, however, this option does not appear to be very practical. Elevator costs range from \$27,000 to \$40,000 depending upon size, a normal vault cost of approximately \$7,000 would roughly double when moved upstairs, the entire roof structure would have to be removed and improved to accommodate the office floor loading, and the traffic activity and parking could present some serious access and exit problems for the fire and emergency vehicles. The aesthetics of a taller fire station would also be less than desirable.

Recommended site - In terms of the evaluation criteria previously mentioned and in terms of an overall Town complex concept we recommend that Town offices be located on property to the rear of the General Wait house with the Howard Bank land as a second priority option. Our thinking is that offices located near both the school and fire station would unify the area as a consolidated municipal facilities complex. The fire station would remain unobstructed from Town office parking and the close proximity of the school to the offices would provide convenient, large meeting space for Town activities. There has been mention of creating a historical society or museum in the General Wait house. We support this suggestion if deemed economically feasible. Specifically, we recommend that property to the rear of the General Wait house (including existing sheds and buildings) be acquired by the Town and the Town offices be located at this site. It probably would be necessary to clear existing sheds and barns prior to new construction. However, the historical significance of these structures should be considered prior to demolition.

Suggested floor and site plans - A preliminary floor plan was drawn and submitted to the Town for comment. After receiving some valuable input, we have revised the plan to that included as Appendix B. It includes three small offices, a 12'x16' vault, work space near the vault, men's and women's toilet facilities, small kitchen, filing space, public lobby, energy conserving vestibule, and two meeting rooms with separate entrances and moveable partition. The floor plan area is 2,600 s.f. and the building is envisioned to be of wood frame construction in an architectural style which is compatible with the General Wait house. To provide for growth, the office plan as presented could be separated from the main house in a manner which would allow for future expansion.

The site plan, Appendix C, depicts the relationship between the fire station, Town offices and elementary school. The drive is shown coming off the fire station drive to minimize the number of entrances to Route 100. A walkway could be constructed from the rear exit of the offices to the elementary school to facilitate preparation for Town meetings, etc.

Estimated costs - We have assumed, based on input from individuals in town, that the General Wait parcel and buildings could be purchased for a moderate sum of money (See implementation section). The construction costs are in 1981 dollars and represent wood frame construction of the given floor plan. Land acquisition is not included in preliminary cost estimates.

Implementation - One of the key elements of establishing the General Wait house site as a Town office complex is the reasonable purchase of the entire property or the development of a town office in a manner compatible with the current residential use of the dwelling. It is our understanding from conversations with several individuals in Town that the present owner has some interest in seeing the home used as a historical site or small museum. If the Town were to speak to the owner with this concept as a firm part of its overall plan, a mutually beneficial agreement could result. If the owner were to express an interest in continuing to live in the home, possibly

he would agree to sale of the whole property to the Town for office construction with retained occupancy rights for a set period of time, after which the Town (or historical society) could begin renovation of the dwelling as a museum. The Town might also consider subdividing the parcel, building an office on the rear portion and acquiring an option to purchase or a first right of refusal for the front portion containing the house.

Another method of property transfer might be Town purchase of an alternative dwelling for the owner in return for title to the Wait house. Zoning variances will likely be required.

WAITSFIELD TOWN OFFICES  
GENERAL WAIT HOUSE  
PRELIMINARY COST ESTIMATE

1. Barn & shed demolition	\$ 1,000	
2. Office building-2600 sf @ \$50	130,000	
3. Extra for vault, door, & racks	6,700	
4. Paved drive and parking	<u>6,000</u>	
Total Construction		\$143,700
10% Contingency		14,300
Design and administration		<u>21,500</u>
TOTAL		\$179,500

## FINANCING

The "budget crunch" facing local governments has forced more and more cities and towns to turn to outside sources for financial aid. Vermont communities, burdened with a very regressive and stagnant tax structure, are finding it particularly difficult to fund operating and capital improvement budgets. While the need for federal and state fiscal assistance is increasing dramatically, the real dollars available to municipalities are shrinking. Federal domestic assistance is being reduced across the board. Grants to state and local governments are victims of uncontrollable expenditures, military spending, and efforts to balance the federal budget. President Reagan's proposed Fiscal Year 1982 budget is the fourth consecutive federal budget to reduce non-welfare grants to state and local governments. The impact of the "New Federalism" on the Town of Waitsfield is simple. Grants are not available to fund the proposed recreation facilities and town offices. A few loan programs are available and will be briefly discussed. However, the interest rates for these loans do not present any distinct advantages over borrowing from private lending institutions. The recreational facilities and town offices, if constructed, will probably have to be financed with local tax dollars.

Traditionally, the Land and Water Conservation Fund, administered by the Vermont Agency of Environmental Conservation, has funded 80% of the costs of outdoor recreational facilities. Unfortunately, this program is not funded in the current federal budget. The Community Facilities Loan program of the Farmer's Home Administration authorizes loans to local communities for the construction and improvement of recreational facilities. But because this activity is low priority and there are more applications than there is money, it would be difficult to obtain this loan for recreation development.

It is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to acquire federal or state grants for the construction of municipal buildings, especially town offices. Loans under the Farmers Home Administration's Community Facilities program are available for municipal building construction or improvement. However, the interest rate has recently been increased from 5% to a rate tied into the municipal bond index, currently 12.25%. The program offers no advantages over borrowing from your local bank.

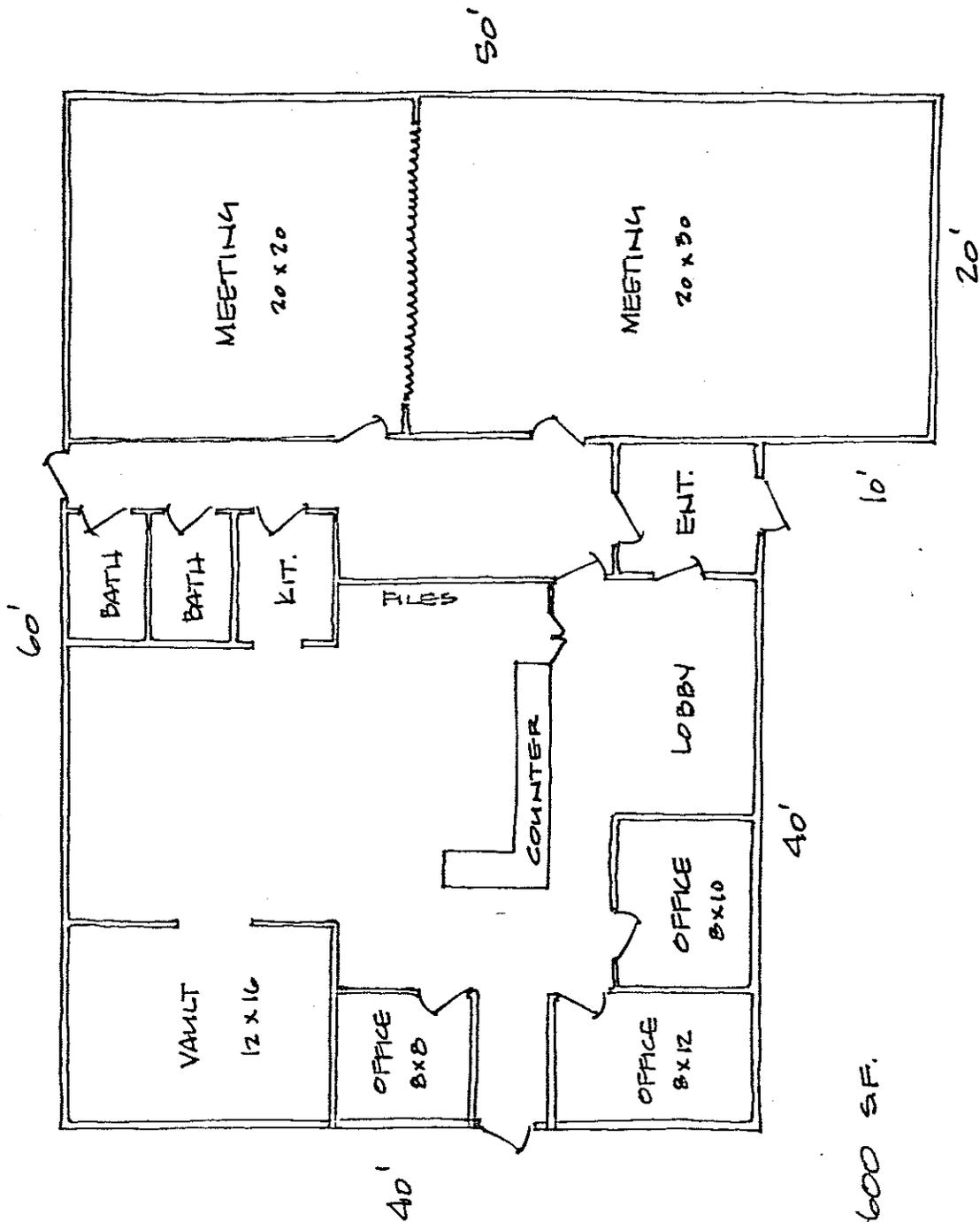
In summary, the only apparent sources of financing for the recreation facilities and town offices are local property taxes and/or general revenue sharing. The table below depicts the annual payments (principal and interests) for loans for the projects amortized over a 20 year period. The calculations are based on interest rates of 12%. It is estimated that rates for municipal borrowing may decrease to 10% by Spring of 1982.

	<u>PROJECT PHASE</u>	<u>ESTIMATED COST</u>	<u>ANNUAL PRINCIPAL &amp; INTEREST-20 YEAR PAYBACK</u>	<u>ANNUAL IMPACT ON TAX RATE *</u>
I.	General Rec. Facilities	\$185,130	\$ 24,875	+16¢
II.	Pool Complex & Exterior Lighting	\$422,150	\$ 56,517	+37¢
III.	Town Offices	<u>\$179,500</u>	<u>\$ 24,031</u>	<u>+16¢</u>
	TOTAL	\$786,780	\$105,333	+69¢

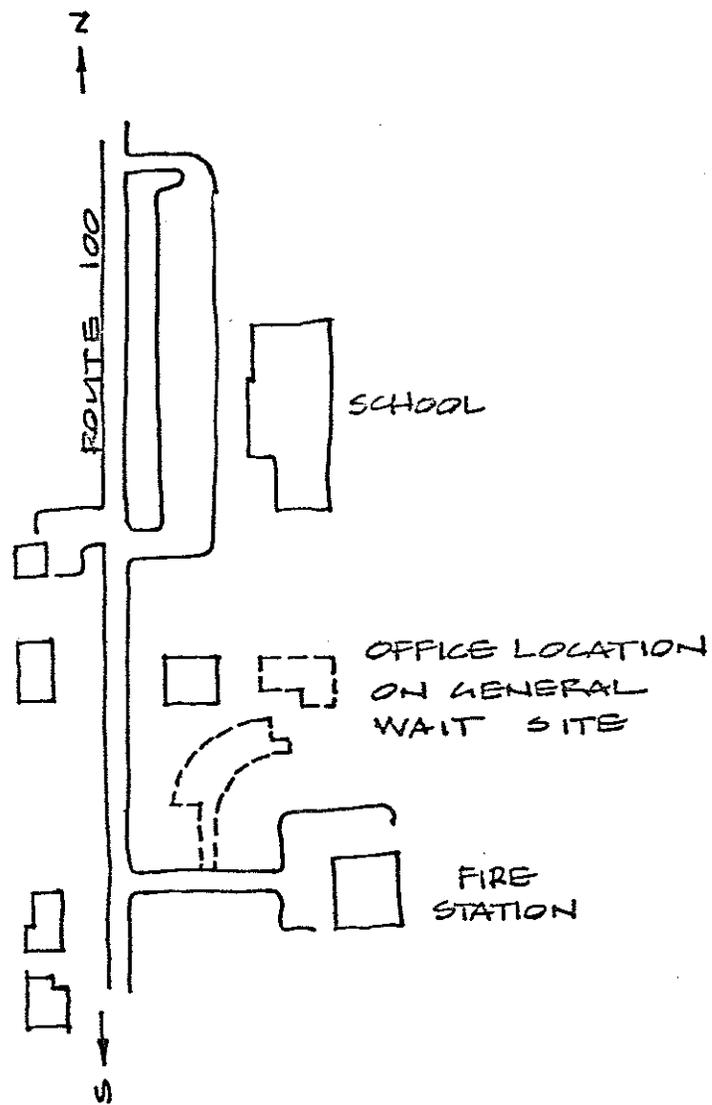
\* Based on the estimated 1981 grand list of \$153,500. The annual tax rate impacts will decrease as the grand list increases

## SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

It is our recommendation that the Town of Waitsfield strive to reach an agreement with the Couple's Club to purchase or lease their property for development of an expanded, improved recreation facility and that the owner of the General Wait house be approached regarding purchase of at least a portion of his property for construction of an office building. The creation of a historical site or museum should be considered for the General Wait house.



FLOOR PLAN



SITE PLAN

