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## Neighbors hear about DPW facility

By **Bethan L. Jones**/ Staff Writer

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Saturday was a casual meeting. Department of Public Works director William Hadley was wearing jeans and Town Manager Carl Valente traded his usual tie for a sweater. The discussion taking place, however, was far from casual as town leaders worked to bring residents up to speed on the plans for the new DPW facility.

Many of the residents filling the Estabrook meeting room in Cary Hall were DPW abutters and neighbors, looking to understand the planned changes and give input to make the new facility a better neighbor to the surrounding residential area than the existing structure.

Complaints about noise and ambient light were common amongst those living near the facility on Bedford Street, as well as environmental concerns for any spills and damage to the wetlands in the back of the DPW property.

Permanent Building Committee Chairman Phil Poinelli oversaw the meeting with Janet Slemenda of HKT, Inc, the architects for the project, and Michael Lawrence of the engineering firm Gannett Fleming, which is also working on the project.

The current DPW facility is approximately 50,000 square feet divided between administrative space, maintenance needs and vehicle storage. After evaluating the program needs for the department, which is one of the largest in the area, Slemenda said Lexington needs a facility of around 88,000 square feet. The additional space will allow for better storage of vehicles and equipment as some are far too large to fit into the current facility and give programs which currently do not have sufficient space or space at all room to function properly.

Residents appeared ready to listen to town officials and committee members and were also willing to offer advice. Several asked for additional evergreen screening to be planted along the DPW side of the bike path, hindering the view of the facility from the path and the neighboring houses. Residents also wanted the screening to limit the light coming from the facility at night.

Poinelli said the new facility will have lighting which limits spill-over into other areas. One resident also requested moving the fueling island from the residential side of the facility to the other where the DPW lot abuts commercial use so residents will not be disturbed when trucks refuel 24 hours a day.

Resident Kay Tiffany asked if the town was planning to address the traffic problems, saying it is "very hard" to get out of Reed Street and Sunny Knoll Avenue at times. She was also concerned the additional staff at the facility, if other departments are relocated

there from the Town Office building, will add to the problem.

Valente said which departments will be moving to the new building is still being determined and a traffic study will be done to determine if the moves will have a detrimental effect on traffic in the area.

Resident Russ Tanner of Highland Avenue wondered why the current facility cannot be renovated rather than completely rebuilding. Poinelli said the current facility, parts of it more the 100 years old is in great disrepair and would cost more money to renovate to current code than starting from scratch. As the DPW still need to be in working operation during the construction, part of the plan is to be able to construct and move in stages. Poinelli added it is the plan to make the new facility as energy efficient as possible and low maintenance, things the current facility has never been.

"It has evolved without the input of design professionals ... it just evolved," said Poinelli of the current facility, reminding residents the first plan submitted for reworking the existing facility was submitted in 1960.

Slemenda also spoke of installing a water retention system, which will capture and clean all the water on the site before it runs into the Vine Brook and setting up a system for reusing rainwater for maintenance purposes.

Along with determining which departments will reside in the new facility, the architects are also trying to pin down other details such as having restrooms for public use due to the building's proximity to the bike path.

Poinelli said the PBC will bring forward a report at the end of Annual Town Meeting and hope to have bids in hand for the 2007 spring Town Meeting. While no actual cost projecting has been done, the project is expected to come in around \$20 million and will be funded by a debt exclusion vote in coming months.