

Harpswell SWOT Summary

Introduction- The following is based on an MCOG-held workshop at the Harpswell Town Office on August 30, 2023. This workshop was open to the public and was advertised in the Harpswell Anchor, the Town website, and was available to watch remotely on Zoom. The date was selected with the intention of getting the most residents to attend before the start of the school year and as seasonal residents prepare to depart.

The information gathered from the workshop is intended to help guide MCOG as it investigates potential uses for the administration building (Building 126) at Mitchell Field.

Summary of Workshop-

Strengths: The location and potential of Building 126 are highly agreed upon as the strengths of this site. Building 126 sits on a large open-space that has scenic and accessible views of the water. With guidance and planning, the site could address multiple needs in the community. While the current zoning restricts what is allowed at Building 126, the Town of Harpswell can amend the Shoreland Zoning when a plan has been determined. Residents also noted the size and interior flexibility could accommodate multiple uses.

Weaknesses: Building 126, as it currently stands abandoned, is the weakness. As noted in Strengths, Building 126 has waterfront access and scenic views. The location of Building 126 limits turning radius for the planned boat ramp that could be addressed by removing the building. The building itself has also deteriorated since being emptied over two decades ago, from the brick façade chipping away to the roof leaking. Participants noted, at its best, it is not attractive. The building also lacks water and sewer but is connected to power.

Opportunities: The residents that came to the workshop emphasized that Building 126 could provide a need for the Town as a whole. Residents noted the need to improve educational opportunities (a satellite library, astronomical and marine education based on the location), a shared resource for nonprofits and the community (meeting rooms, voting booths, public restrooms). The site could also provide a revenue source for the Town if leased out to an entity that would be compatible with the site; financial capacity would need to be proven.

Threats: The future of Building 126 can negatively impact the positives of Mitchell Field if it is not planned out. The location of Building 126 means that any enhancements could impact the waterfront access by limiting the boat launch access radius. The lack of utilities, potential expansion of paved parking, and lighting could impact the natural benefits Mitchell Field has been known for in the community.

The Town is also beholden to the financial component that could restrict the desired project because it may require significant outside funding that may take months, or even years, to put together. When the future of Building 126 is chosen, it will also be equally important to have someone dedicated to the implementation of the plan.

Goals-

1. Making Mitchell Field a Destination:
 1. Site is not centrally located to all Harpswell residents, so what can be done to make people from as far as Cundy's Harbor interested in coming out?
 2. As of now, there are over 100 acres of open-space with waterfront access that can be used by residents of all ages.
 3. The site can accommodate multiple uses.
 4. The site is on the water and has minimal lighting impacting Dark Skies.
2. Making the Administration Building part of a master plan:
 1. Part of Mitchell Field
 - i. The building is owned by the Town of Harpswell, as part of the Mitchell Field complex.
 - ii. Mitchell Field offers an outdoor space for events but no rain alternatives.
 - iii. Public restrooms near a high-volume area.
 - iv. Boat ramp project is part of Mitchell Field Master Plan. Removing building could make water access easier.
 2. Part of Harpswell
 - i. Multiple non-profits in Harpswell have needed a space for various uses.
 - ii. The location offers educational opportunities for various sciences (marine, astronomical).
 - iii. Building can be leased to create revenue, jobs, and amenities for Harpswell.
 - iv. New voting space to remove burden from School is possible.
3. Implications of Actions to be taken
 1. Rehabilitation
 - i. Guttled 4,000 square feet available compared to building new; costs, aesthetics, Mitchell Field master plan.
 - ii. Provision for water and sewer (opportunities on site)
 - iii. Rehab can serve multiple uses, including waterfront activity support
 - iv. Building is already ADA compliant.
 - v. New use will need a lead/building manager
 - vi. Limited space configurations.
 - vii. Will be dependent on funding and timing of sources.
 - viii. Garage has utilities while the rest of the building does not.
 - ix. Garage has multiple applications (presently in use by Marine Resource Officer, location not considered ideal)
 2. Demolition
 - x. Funding.
 - xi. Helps keep traffic and impacts on environment low.
 - xii. Demolition could secure waterfront as the dominant use.
 - xiii. Building may be difficult to modify to make rehabilitation effective.

- xiv. Helps improve waterfront uses and views (including dark sky)

Harpswell SWOT Information

(#) indicates any stickers received

STRENGTHS (32):

- Variety of uses and potential for mixed-use (10)
- A big blank slate (8)
- Location/ Waterfront (7)
- Natural draw/ destination (3)
- Dark skies (2)
- Town-owned (1)
- Location could be a draw and unify (1)
- Location for S. Harpswell
- Historic Tax Credits
- Well-built
- Site flexibility
- ADA compliance

WEAKNESSES (14):

- No utilities connected to building (4)
- Conflict with waterfront/boat launch (2)
- Difficult to modify/Too well-built (2)
- Not central for Harpswell (2)
- Location and Distance (1)
- Construction/Costs (1)
- Appearance/Seen better days (1)
- Traffic Flow Impact (1)
- Roof
- Not sure this serves all of Harpswell

OPPORTUNITIES (65):

- Library (12)
- Home for non-profits (9)
- Community Center/Meeting Rooms (9)
- Education for Marine, Astronomical, Recreation, etc. (9)
- Band Stand for rainy days (6)
- Café potential (6)
- Event Space (5)
- Bathrooms (5)

- Voting Location (5)
- Revenue source/lease (3)
- Improve façade/look (2)
- Funding opportunities (1)
- Collaborative for non-profits (1)
- Non-profits (1)
- Access by water (1)
- Storage
- Used in conjunction with gazebo and current uses

THREATS (13):

- Funding source and time to get the funding (4)
- Conflict with waterfront uses (3)
- Overuse of space/capacity (3)
- Increased activity impact on habitats (1)
- Light pollution (1)
- Increased paved parking that would interfere with the meadows used for special events (1)
- Use could impact boat launch
- Impact on the beach
- Traffic and maintenance costs for road

GENERAL (31):

- Space for families and residents of all ages (10)
- Large Recreation Space for biking, walking, playground, etc. (7)
- “Who is going to lead the vision” (7). People suggested non-profits
- Cost of rehabilitation vs alternative locations for proposed uses (5)
- “Safe Place: (2)
- Place to Gather/ DNZ Option among others
- Minimal options for use without administrative building
- Mitchell Field could be a Non-profit destination center for that part of Harpswell
- “How many people would go to the new amenity?”
- “How many people go once a week?”/ “How often do people visit Mitchell Field?”
- “Can this offer a rain spot for outdoor uses?”
- “Why should people visit since it won’t be central for Harpswell?”
- Could offer a unifying space
- Adds to opportunities of Mitchell Field