

Boxborough Building Committee

The Boxborough Building Committee (BBC) was formed in 2016, chartered with seven voting members and jointly chaired by members from the Board of Selectman (BOS) and the Finance Committee (FinCom). The BBC is charged with evaluating needs for Police, Fire and the Department of Public Works (DPW) and recommending a comprehensive plan to address the facilities needs of all three departments. This year, the committee continued to evaluate a number of options and reviewed prior work on a joint public safety facility. Noting that both Fire and DPW facilities have significant deficiencies and recognizing the importance of continuity of public safety operations, together with the costs for temporary relocation of apparatus, the committee concluded that the best approach would be a three-phase strategy:

- Acquire a suitable parcel of land on Massachusetts Avenue for a new fire station
- Subsequently, use the old fire station temporarily for DPW operations
- Finally, renovate and expand the police station and dispatch center

The committee worked with the fire chief to refine space needs requirements for a fire station, and gathered input from nearby towns. This information was used to define a fire station building and site footprint. The committee worked with the town planner to review a number of parcels along or near Mass Avenue suitable for a fire station. Several potential sites were identified, and first level engineering feasibility assessments were performed on three locations. Subsequently, the committee voted to conduct a more detailed due diligence evaluation on one site. This evaluation included a Ch 21E environmental assessment, an appraisal of value, and a professional construction cost estimate for site preparation. This work was completed in time to present an article for site acquisition at the December 4 Special Town Meeting (STM). However, the BBC voted to pass over the article due to the high cost of site preparation, largely due to the presence of significant ledge.

The committee continued to evaluate other sites that may be suitable for a fire station.

Shortly after the conclusion of the December STM, the committee became aware of the possibility of acquiring an existing building that is very well-suited for the DPW. Although not comprehended in the initial strategy, the BBC recognized this presented an excellent opportunity. The building has ample garage and office space and has twice the inside floor area of the current DPW barn with additional covered outside space for equipment storage. The building is complete with well, septic system and emergency generator. The DPW Director has evaluated the building and premises and determined that it is well-suited for the department's needs. The committee unanimously supported the acquisition of this facility. We presented the facts to the Selectmen who concurred and called a Special Town Meeting for February 26, 2018 to purchase the property.