

Boxborough Building Committee

At the 2016 Town Meeting it was clear that voters were not satisfied with the options before them for meeting the space needs of our Police and Fire Departments. In particular, they were not satisfied that the single building concept for both PD and FD that was investigated by the Space Needs Advisory Group (SNAG) would be the best alternative for Public Safety. Finally, it was recognized that the needs of the DPW should also be addressed. The Boxborough Building Committee (BBC) was created to reexamine the Town's needs for all three departments and report back to Town Meeting in 2017. In September the Selectmen approved a charter for the BBC and appointed members. The BBC consists of seven voting members plus alternates and is co-chaired by two members each from the Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee. A home page for the BBC was created on the town web, where minutes, agenda, and other information are published.

The BBC addressed several main tasks:

- Assess space needs and develop a roadmap for FD, PD, and DPW for the next 20 years. What will each department need and on what timeline?
- Prioritize those needs and determine if they can be met with existing sites alone. Examine the potential for re-use or repurposing any existing space. Quantify constraints due to structure, site or building code issues.
- Identify suitable potential sites.
- Recommend a strategy that will meet our needs while minimizing disruption to ongoing operations and ensuring that we do not buy more than we **need** sooner than we **must**.

The committee agreed that technical assistance would be required to support its investigations into space needs and building sites. An article requesting the sum of \$15,000 for this purpose was approved at the December 2016 STM. Further, the article also directed that the unexpended balance of \$7649 from the previous SNAG study also be appropriated to support the BBC effort.

Assessment:

With assistance from the Chiefs, the BBC analyzed the HKT report on the combined public safety building concept to develop separate estimates for the police and fire departments to inform the identification of potential suitable sites for either department or both. The committee also reviewed the needs of the DPW, which was not included in the HKT study. A very high-level analysis of DPW space needs was begun. We have looked at the experiences of comparable surrounding towns, and taken into consideration the expected needs of Boxborough for the next 20 years. All three departments will need either renovation or replacement to meet our needs for that period. The current FD site is too small to permit drive-through bays of sufficient size. PD and DPW sites are barely adequate. In order to use only the existing sites, we would have to relocate each facility while renovation occurred. The committee concluded a relocation strategy would add significant cost and disrupt ongoing operations of all three departments.

Prioritization:

- 1) The FD is the oldest facility and is a **public safety risk** because newer fire trucks do not fit inside its bays. It also needs additional space that meets code requirements and best practices for decontamination areas, office and personnel, mechanical systems, training, and an Emergency Operations Center.
- 2) The DPW is the next oldest facility and is a **financial risk** because it lacks adequate covered storage space for expensive newly acquired equipment, as well as office space.
- 3) The PD is the newest facility but needs to **upgrade** and expand its space for evidence handling and suspect processing, as well as for staff space, meetings and investigations.

Working with the town planner, the BBC identified a number of potential building sites along Mass Ave that should be assessed in some detail to inform the strategy on how best to proceed. As the year ended, the committee felt that good progress had been made in this regard, and was looking forward to making its presentation to Town Meeting in May 2017.