

Boxborough Building Committee (BBC) Report

May 8, 2017

At Town Meeting last May, it became clear that voters were not satisfied with the options before them for meeting the space needs of our Police (PD) and Fire Departments (FD). In particular, they were not satisfied that building a single Public Safety Building for both PD and FD is the best alternative. Finally, they were not satisfied that the needs of the Department of Public Works (DPW) were being addressed. The BBC was created to reexamine the Town's needs and report back to Town Meeting this May.

Tasks:

- 1) Assess Boxborough's space needs for the FD, PD, and DPW.
- 2) Prioritize those needs and determine if they can be met with existing sites alone.
- 3) Recommend strategy to Town Meeting that will meet our needs while minimizing disruption to ongoing operations and ensuring that we do not build more than we **need** sooner than we **must**.

Assessment:

We have analyzed the HKT Architects report and discussed its findings with the Fire and Police chiefs. We are also reviewing the needs of the DPW, which were not included in the HKT study. We are continuing to look at the experiences of comparable surrounding towns, and are taking into consideration the expected needs of Boxborough in the future. All three departments will need either renovation or replacement to meet our needs for that period. The current fire station equipment bays are under-sized and the site is too small to permit apparatus drive-through. The Police Department and DPW facilities are barely adequate and in many respects don't meet building codes or best practices. In order to use only the existing sites, we would have to relocate each facility while the renovation occurred. This would cost several hundred thousand dollars and would disrupt the ongoing operations of all three departments. Further, relocation costs would be only an unrecoverable expense, not an investment for the future.

Prioritization:

- 1) The fire station 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 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, and maintenance arrangements.
- 3) The police station is the newest facility but the space needs to be expanded and **upgraded** for evidence handling and suspect processing, as well as for staff space, meetings and investigations.

Town Meeting should address the Fire Department needs in 2017 and then turn its attention to the DPW and Police Department the following year.

Preliminary Recommendation:

1. Identify and acquire a suitable parcel of land on Mass Ave and build a new 16,500 SF fire station. Considering requirements for parking, well, fire suppression, and septic systems this will require about 4 acres.
2. When the new fire station is complete, we would move all apparatus and personnel into it. Meanwhile, the Fire Department would use mobile communications to remain in contact with Dispatch, so that fire and ambulance services could continue without interruption.

Once the Fire Department needs are met, the Town should consider alternative approaches to meeting the needs of the DPW and Police Department. One such alternative could be:

- Move DPW offices into the old fire station and selected DPW equipment to the adjoining yard. DPW operations can continue, based temporarily in the old fire station.
- Design a new DPW facility for equipment and offices, making use of the existing site.
- Demolish the old DPW barn and commence new construction at an appropriate new location. The salt sheds and fuel depot can remain open and available for use.
- After the new DPW barns and offices are complete, move DPW operations into them.
- While new DPW facilities are being built, complete plans for renovating the police station, which might use the old fire station site, or some portion of the newly acquired fire station site.

Conclusion:

Addressing the Town's needs in stages, beginning with the acquisition of a new site for the Fire Department, would ensure that we do not build more than we need sooner than we must. It would save us the cost and disruption of temporarily relocating Fire Department apparatus and operations. And, when all facilities have been upgraded, the Town would still own the land on which the fire station now sits. That land could then be repurposed for Town use or sold, offsetting or eliminating the cost of acquiring the new fire station site.