

**Town of Townsend
Fire-EMS Station Planning Committee**

Report to the Board of Selectmen

July 28, 2009

Introduction:

The Townsend Fire-EMS Station Planning Committee was formed in August of 2007. The mission of the committee as defined by the Townsend Board of Selectmen is to investigate the feasibility of building a new Central Fire-EMS Station/Headquarters on the site of the current Fire-EMS Headquarters.

- Member of the committee were:
- Donald Klein, Gary Shepherd, Greg Niemiera, Duane Creighton, Mike Grimley, Mike Sodano, Chris Cotter, Brian Borneman and Jed Coughlin

This is the second stage of a three stage process to replace all three of the departments 1875 built fire stations. This process was started in April of 1995 with the approval of the Board of Selectmen, who authorized the creation of the Town of Townsend Fire Station Study Committee. This initial study looked at the history of the buildings, current condition of the buildings and the suitability for housing modern firefighting apparatus. In addition, that committee was also requested to evaluate options for improving the stations: this included expanding the existing stations at the current site, renovating one or more of the stations and building new station(s).

History:

In September of 1996, the report was presented to the Board of Selectmen, Andrea Wood, Robert Rebholz and James Hamel. In the report the committee gave the following recommendation:

“The committee assumed that Station 2 will stay in service to the Town for the foreseeable future. However, Station 2 does not have any office space and cannot serve as the administrative headquarters of the Fire Department, nor is it handicapped accessible. Although Station 2 may serve well as a satellite station, the committee did recommend that one or more of the stations be constructed to replace Station 1 and Station 3. These two structures suffer from a variety of shortcomings, including:

- the structures occupy the entire parcel of land on which they stand (no room for septic or structural renovations)
- the structures are sited adjacent to heavily congested intersections in locations that may no longer provide acceptable coverage for their service areas

The committee’s opinion is that these two structures are no longer suitable as fire stations and should be “recycled” for some other use. Full text of the report can be provided upon request.

One of the committee’s discussions centered on the question of how many stations the Town should construct. Assuming that Station 2 continues to be used, the discussion made the following points:

- One additional station would suffice if that station could be optimally located within the area it is intended to serve. If only one station could be constructed, it must be able to reach the extremities of its service area within an acceptable response time.
- Two additional stations would enable significantly better coverage, and therefore lower response time.
- Three additional stations would be too expensive to operate and maintain

Therefore the committee, at the time, recommended the construction of two fire stations. See the “Town of Townsend Fire Station Study Committee” report to the Board of Selectmen dated September 23, 1996 for further details.

At the Special Town Meeting in January of 2000, an article was placed before the voters to approve and fund the construction of a new Fire Station to replace Station 3 in the Harbor; it was passed contingent on Proposition 2 ½ debt exclusion. On February 15, 2000 a Proposition 2 ½ debt exclusion vote was held and the \$850,000 cost of funding a new Fire Station in Townsend Harbor was approved. It wasn't until the fall of 2003 that construction actually started, and it was completed in April of 2004. The station was dedicated in June of 2004.

It took 8 years from the start of the Fire Station Study to build and open the first new Fire Station since the original stations were built in 1875. It is now mid 2009 and we still have only built one of the recommend stations. There are a number of things that have happened in the last 14 years, since the original study was completed, that have made replacing Station 1 and now Station 2 more critical than ever.

- Modern fire apparatus have changed dramatically over the years, they have gotten longer, higher and wider than anyone back then had anticipated. This is due to a number of factors, but the two most prevalent are new safety requirements set by the NFPA, and new emission standards now required by the EPA for fire apparatus.
- There is very limited parking at the 8 Elm Street station and it is extremely difficult to get ambulances back into the station given its proximity to the stop lights at the RT 13 and RT 119 intersection, and the heavy traffic volume during the morning and evening commute hours. The parking behind the Town Hall (272 Main Street) is very limited during certain times of the day or week and it can be very difficult to get apparatus in and out of the garage when there are functions, such as Town Meeting going on. The Headquarters building at 13 Elm Street is somewhat better in terms of parking and basic functions such as heat, water, electricity, phones, computer links. We still have a problem getting vehicles out of the parking lot on to RT 13, we are only 100 yards from the 8 Elm Street facility and the problems with heavy traffic and the stop lights are also compounded with being side by side with the entrance to Dunkin Donuts.

- The conditions of the building have continued to deteriorate to the point where the band-aid approach we have been using to repair these buildings is no longer viable.

In 2001 the property at 13 Elm Street was voted on and purchased as the potential site for the new central fire station (Station 1). In 2005 the Townsend Fire Department and the Townsend Municipal Ambulance Service administration and Medic 1 moved into the second of the two buildings on the property.

In 2003 a number of apparatus were moved around in order to prevent further damage to both Station 1 and the apparatus currently parked in the bays. Both Ladder 1 and Engine 1 have been damaged backing into and pulling out of Station 1 bays, because of the very narrow opening they must drive through getting into the station. The ambulances which were housed in the Municipal garage behind the Town Hall were moved to the old Station 1, this was done because these trucks are not as wide or as long as the current fire apparatus. Engine 1 and Ladder 1 were moved into the garage along with Forestry 1 and Rescue 1. This building is a very basic garage with only heat and electricity. There are no other utilities, no toilets, storage or the ability to clean and repack the trucks inside the building in the winter.

The central fire station apparatus, ambulances, medics and the department headquarters now operate out of three buildings in a ¼ mile area in the center of Town. It becomes extremely difficult at certain times of the day or weekends to get out of headquarters and get to either one of the facilities housing the apparatus.

The Fire Station Planning Committee also looked at Station 2 to see if the finding of 14 years ago still hold true, unfortunately they do not. Station 2 now suffers some of the same problems as Station 1 and 3. Very minimal work has been done to the building in order for modern fire apparatus to fit into the bays. With the new EPA standards, all new fire apparatus after January 2010 will no longer fit into the bays. NOTE: The current apparatus housed in Station 2 will be the last that will fit into the building. When we go to replace these two pieces of equipment, we need to have a new station in which to house them. This building can not be upgraded to accommodate the new larger apparatus. While the skeleton is structurally sound, it can not be widened or altered without tearing it down. The skeleton would have to be widened and new structural steel supports installed to support the upper floors; this would be very costly and limit the height of apparatus to be housed there. It also suffers in terms of energy efficacy, heating and insulation being the biggest problem. The building sits on a piece of property that is slightly larger than the current structure. It is not large enough to build another station on the site, nor would its current septic system past the new septic laws.

Committee's Findings:

It is the opinion of this committee that the findings of the initial Fire Station Study Committee are still valid for Station 1, but the problems there have been heightened by the latest requirements from the NFPA and the EPA. New EPA requirements for pollution control goes into effect on January 1st, 2010. This will require that all fire apparatus sold or manufactured in the United States meet the new EPA emission standards for diesel engines. These standards will require a new exhaust and after burner system that will increase the width of all fire apparatus from the current 96 inches to 109 inches. This coupled with the added 12 inches on either side for mirrors will mean that no new apparatus will fit through the current door opening at Station 1, as well as Station 2. These new emissions standards will also affect ambulances, although to what degree has not yet been determined. Because of these problems all effort should be made to replace the current three building central station as soon as possible. The planning on what should be done about Station 2 should begin immediately, so all alternatives can be explored before we need to replace Engine 2 and/or Tanker 1.

Actions Needed to Provide Suitable Stations(s)

The committee believes that the Town needs to continue the process to provide stations that will adequately house a modern Fire-EMS Department and provide service well into the future. Toward this end, the Town needs to

- Complete a conceptual design to see if a new central fire-ems station based on the requirements developed by this committee will fit on the 13 Elm Street site. (completed in March of 2009)
- Begin to look for funding sources to adequately fund the project. (applied for stimulus grant through Homeland Security on July 10th, 2009)
- Begin to develop architectural plans based on station requirements by priority. (contingent on funding)
- Begin permit process (once architectural plans are complete)
- Find temporary site to house Fire-EMS Department HQ and Medic 1
- Begin groundbreaking on Central Station
- Begin review on Station 2 alternatives

Central Station/Headquarters Requirements

The committee set forth requirements for a new central station/Fire-EMS headquarters that will meet the needs of the department and the community today and the foreseeable future. They also strongly recommended that the building should include the capability of expansion in the future as needed.

The number one priorities at construction:

1. Offices for the Chief, senior officers, inspectional division, fire prevention, TEMA office & storage, EMS offices, conference room, secure file room, training room & library and public reception area .
2. Five to six full depth bays, work shop/maintenance area, hose drying and storage area, decon area, SCBA workroom with cascade system and secured ems supply room.
3. Men & Women restrooms, men & women shower, locker room, bunk rooms, full kitchen & dining area and dayroom.
4. Wireless internet throughout the building, multi-line phone system, back-up gas fired generator, high efficiency heating/cooling system (this includes radiant floor heat in apparatus bays) and all mechanicals in sound proof room.
5. Heat, smoke, CO and Sprinklers as required by building codes and NFPA requirements
6. Bay area must have diesel exhaust system, drop down power plugs and airline hoses for all apparatus positions in bay area.

Secondary Priority if money available:

1. Back-up communication center.
2. Turnout gear cleaning room with industrial washer and dryers.
3. Dropdown AV projector and screen for training room
4. Two additional bays if possible
5. Water fill stations for apparatus
6. Intercom system for the building
7. Exercise room

Summary:

The current Center Station is spread out between 3 buildings. The 8 Elm Street building housing two ambulances is 135 years old, not energy efficient, lacks accessible storage, lacks any kind of health or safety features for personnel (vehicle exhaust, ability to open compartment doors while in the bays), very little room to maneuver around vehicles, heating system sits in open bay behind one of the vehicles, roof continues to leak into rooms below, gasoline powered generator sits behind vehicles, SCBA compressed air system sits in a non-vented vehicle bay, vehicle bay entrances are very narrow, and it lacks sufficient parking. The building behind Town hall at 272 Main Street, is a basic garage that was built in the late sixties or very early seventies. It is not energy efficient, lacks any toilet facilities, (just has heat and electricity), there is no place for people to sit (mutual aid departments must sit on truck bumpers or in their vehicles when covering this station), doors are very narrow, parking is limited when functions are going on in Town hall, difficult at best to get apparatus out when Town hall is open, almost impossible when large function is going on. The 13 Elm Street facility was built in the early nineties as a commercial building, has parking, but does not have adequate office, training or storage capabilities, and is not energy efficient. Building has 3 separate heating &

cooling systems, electrical panels and hot water tanks. It does have enough space to build an adequate central station, but the Town has lacked the funds to pursue this up until now.

We have completed our needs analysis and priority list. We have done a very basic conceptual plan to ensure that the building with the required square footage can be built at this location. We need money and the Town's approval to move this project forward to the next level. To that end, I have applied for a \$4,950,000 dollar grant from the Federal Government through Homeland Security for some of the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act stimulus money. This does not require any matching funds from the Town of Townsend, but does require that we meet the guidelines for health and safety as set down by the NFPA. It also requires that we make the building energy efficient and green wherever possible.

We are looking for a commitment that if we can find the financial resources to build this project now, that the Town of Townsend will support our efforts. The first step is the support of the Board of Selectmen.

The residents of Townsend, Board of Selectmen, Town Administer, Finance Committee and Capital Committee and other town officials must realize that we are beyond doing nothing or band-aiding the problems. Our 135 year old fire stations have gone way beyond their useful life and now must be replaced.

If any member(s) of the board wish to get a tour of our facilities, I will make myself available at anytime day or evening to show you around.