

Fire Station – Municipal Campus Project Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

March 11, 2022

Below are some of the FAQs about the project. If you don't see the answer here, feel free to contact Chief Ed Walker at ewalker@peterboroughnh.gov or (603) 784-5601. This list will be updated on a weekly basis.

Q: What will the new fire station cost?

A: The final step of our design process will be to determine the estimated costs. The fire department has been in the current building for almost 50 years. The first step in the process, which we are in now, is to determine what the town needs for a fire station and then design the building around that. By approaching it this way we will make sure that we do not over design the building while at the same time accounting for the future.

Q: What will happen with the current fire station?

A: The current site is 10 acres located in the downtown area. Most likely the town will sell the property to provide for some offset to the cost of new building as well as return the property to the tax rolls.

Q: I thought that there was a lot of wetland area at the Elm St. site. Is there enough room to build up there?

A: Yes, a fair amount of space has been identified as suitable through wetlands delineations done in years past. However, a new wetlands delineation is required every 5 years, so we are conducting a new one to ensure the building envelope does not encroach on any wetlands or their buffer.

Q: How do we know if Elm St. is the best location for the fire station and other public buildings?

A: There were two main considerations in determining the site of a new fire station. The location had to optimize the response time to emergencies and ideally not remove any properties from the tax rolls. Previous studies have verified the Elm St. location as meeting both needs.

Q: It looks like there is some land on the south side of the site that is not owned by the town but shown as part of the campus. Is there a plan to acquire this land?

A: Yes, the land you are referring to is a total of 2.4 +/- acres owned by The Harris Center with a conservation easement held by the Peterborough conservation commission. The town is

in the process of taking those parcels through an eminent domain process that will prioritize conservation values in the "just compensation" determination.

Q: Is there a written proposal that lists how each of the challenges have negatively impacted their ability to respond promptly to emergencies, if a new building would ultimately be less expensive in the long run, etc.?

A: The current building is over 75 years old and the issues that we face go well beyond response times. The town has undertaken several studies and reviews of all municipal facilities over the years and determined that the fire station fails in several critical areas impacting not only the health and safety of the staff but the ability to effectively meet our operational mandates. Full copies of these reports and other documentation please visit the [Town of Peterborough Project Page](#).

Q: Is this the same "Evans Flats" area that was proposed for more housing?

A: The area known as "Evans Flats" not only includes the area around the current Community Center and DPW garage, where these facilities are proposed, but a section along Evans Rd. that was/is being considered for housing. They are not mutually exclusive projects.

Q: What is the value of the equipment that the fire department has stored in the fire station?

A: The fire station houses the departments fire and EMS apparatus and equipment. The total replacement value of the apparatus and the equipment regularly carried on it is \$6.6M. The other fire and EMS related equipment and supplies stored in the station have an approximate value of \$750,000. (This does not include the value of typical building and office related equipment.)

Q: Will the project be [LEED certified](#)?

A: Sustainability is very important to the Town of Peterborough and will be factored into the design and systems of the building(s.) For example, looking toward "net zero" systems, solar panels, and alternative energy. With respect to true LEED Certification, there are a lot of cost associated with the process that do not add the overall efficiency of the building so at this time we are not looking to have the building certified.

Q: Why a campus approach?

A: In 2019 voters approved the renovation of the Department of Public Works (DPW) facility located on Elm St. With the realization that a major part of this project is site related, it made sense to pause the DPW planning and take a larger view of the whole site (now referred to as the campus) to ensure any work related to that project did not inhibit the fire station. For example, roadways, parking lots, and utilities. Additionally, there may be an opportunity for some economies of scale by looking at both buildings together.

Q: How will other municipal buildings on the campus be impacted?

A: The campus area currently contains, the Community Center, DPW Garage, and National Guard motor pool building (used for cold storage.) One benefit of the campus approach as outlined above will be to minimize the impact on each of the buildings, and other features, of the site while maximizing the value of the site.

Q: What is the benefit to other communities?

A: In addition to the Town of Peterborough, Peterborough Fire & Rescue provides fire protection to the Town of Sharon and is part of a robust mutual aid system providing fire suppression to entire Monadnock region. Our Emergency Medical Services division provide emergency ambulance service to the Towns of Peterborough, Dublin, Franconia, Hancock, Sharon, and Temple along with paramedic support to Antrim Ambulance, Souhegan Valley Ambulance Service, and Jaffrey-Rindge Memorial Ambulance. In addition, we provide emergent and non-emergent patient transfers out of Monadnock Community Hospital. Providing Peterborough Fire & Rescue with a station that allows them to fully function will not only help those we directly serve, but also those served indirectly.

Q: Where is the funding coming from?

A: The entire project will be funded through the Town of Peterborough. As with many other large capital projects, we will be looking to offset as much of the cost as we can through grants and other funding. Some possible sources for these offsets include the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), US Rural Development (USDA), NH Land and Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP), Eversource Energy Rebates, 2021 Infrastructure Bill, Miscellaneous other grants.

Q: How do the future needs of the Peterborough Police Department impact this current project?

A: Although the town is a ways off from needing a new police station, in designing the campus we need to make sure that we take into account all the foreseeable uses, one of which is siting the police station. At this time, the plan is to understand enough about the police department to determine the approximate size and necessary systems of the building so that we can make sure the future building will fit on the site.

Q: What is the overall timeline for the fire station?

A: The current design process is intended to have a ballot question ready for the May 2022 Town Meeting to fund the construction of the fire station. If the article passes, it will take approximately nine (9) months for final design and bidding of the project and then an addition 12 – 14 months for construction.

Q: Are pedestrian enhancements for either Route 101 or Elm Street being considered?

A: As we move through the public input and design process for the campus, if there is a need to update either roadway, including pedestrian access, those items will be factored into the plan.

Q: What will happen to the Aquarius Fire Museum located next to the current fire station?

A: The Aquarius Fire Museum, located at 14 Summer Street, plays an important part in preserving the history of the town. The building was donated to the town specifically to be used as the museum and is curated by the Peterborough Fire & Rescue Association. As we move along with the process the Town and the Association will be working together to make sure we adequately address this important facet of the department.

Q: What is the tax implication of the project?

A: As you are aware, any tax implication that we provide now is based on a “snapshot in time” utilizing our current valuation, an estimate interest rate (conservatively placed at 3.5%,) and estimated total amount of the bond (current projected cost \$23,144,649).

Utilizing these parameters, and our anticipated construction schedule, the first year would be a half payment of \$578,616.23 or \$0.66 per \$1,000. The second, and subsequent year’s payment would be \$1,571,155.36 or \$1.80 per \$1,000. This puts the full payment amount as equal to \$580 for a property assessed at \$300,000.

This will be a level principal bond and the total amount due each year will decrease for the 30-year life of the bond.

Q: What is the history, and status, of any fire department capital reserve funds and other capital projects?

A: The fire department currently has a capital reserve fund for apparatus and equipment. It is anticipated that this fund will be utilized in FY 2023 to offset the cost to refurbish Engine 1. This will essentially deplete the entire fund. As part of our fiscal restructuring there are plans to utilize capital reserve funds more heavily.

The next capital purchase that the fire department anticipates is the replacement of our Ladder truck in FY2030. The cost is anticipated to be \$1,800,000.

The Town has received the first of two tranches of American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA) funds from the Federal Government, the total of which will be \$701,000. These funds can only be put to specific purposes, and the Select Board has chosen to apply those funds to the Fire & Ambulance Facility/Municipal Campus project. The voters at Town Meeting will be asked if they would like to set up a capital reserve fund for that purpose. Those funds will then be available to offset some of the costs of this project.

Q: What are the long-term operating costs of the building?

A: Part of the design process will be a determination of the heating, ventilation, air conditioning, and other fixtures in the building. Once these have been determined the architect will be able to estimate the costs

to operate the building. The energy systems in the building will be designed to meet the 100% renewable mandated of the 2021 town meeting.

Q: What does the term “soft costs” represent?

A: The “soft costs” figure that is being carried as total of 30% of the construction costs is made up of two parts. The first, 25% of construction cost, is there to cover final design of the building; engineering studies; testing and inspections; furniture, fixtures, and equipment (FF&E); moving expenses; and the like. The 5% owner’s contingency is there to cover changes that may need to be made after the building is designed. Both these costs are estimates, and as we refine the project cost, these numbers will come down.

Q: What is the status of the discussion with the Conservation Commission?

A: To give us the land necessary to complete this project the town acquired two (2) parcels of land from the Harris Center for Conservation Education through the Eminent Domain process. Both parcels held a conservation easement overseen by the Conservation Commission. Additionally, there are some portions of the plan that will require us to disturb the wetland buffer areas.

To ensure that we can continue smoothly with the plan, the Town and architect have been working with the Conservation Commission along the way as to our intents. To date, these conversations have been very positive, and the Commission is comfortable with the direction that we are heading.

Q: Have we considered traffic issues at the ends of Elm Street?

A: Currently the fire department and ambulance service utilize Elm St. to respond to calls off Dublin Road and other areas in that direction. Although there are often vehicles waiting to turn onto Dublin Rd., we rarely have issues making it safely through that intersection. Regarding the Elm Street, Main Street, Union Street intersection, once the station is constructed, we will evaluate our response procedures to minimize the number times that we have to use it.

Q: What are the added costs if we add solar to the building?

A: HKT Architects estimates that it would cost between \$100,000 and \$200,000 to add the necessary infrastructure for a photovoltaic array to the building. If we were to decide to add the panels, it would most likely be through a third-party contractor, similar to the current panels on the library, and they would bear that cost.

Q: Although it is a renewable source of energy, have we considered the pollution impact of wood pellets or chips?

A: Although not specifically discussed, as we get further into the discussions around specific building systems, this is one of the factors that will need to be considered.

Q: The site work around the Peterborough Community Center (PCC), and the associated cost, is extensive. What happens if the current study of the PCC causes the town to reconsider the use of that building?

A: One of the main goals of the Fire Station – Municipal Campus Task Force was to ensure that site design

would account for all the envisioned uses of the site. Currently the PCC is a significant part of the site, as well as the fabric of the community. If it is decided that there will be alterations to either the current building, or its use, we have plenty of time to alter any site plans to meet those changes. The key to our current process was ensuring we did not eliminate any possibilities with our designs.

Q: Other communities are building smaller stations for a lot less money. Why is our building so big and so expensive?

A: The planning around the fire station has been focused on the specific needs of our community and department. There are several factors, beyond community size and call volume, that go into this planning. The building that is being proposed, although considerably larger than the current building, is designed around what the Peterborough Fire and Ambulance does on a daily basis to meet the service demands of the communities we serve.

Q: How much consideration has been given to the consolidation of services on the site?

A: A significant focus of the Task Force was how to maximize the use of the site for our town. Some examples of that is utilization of common driveways for the fire station and DPW, common power feeds, and tying in of all the site drainage. In addition, as we begin to move forward with the project, consideration will be given to other opportunities for the sharing of resources such as solar energy, heating, and cooling, and backup power.

Q: This building is based on our current level of service which includes the ambulance which provides service to several other communities. How much of the building is attributed to that service and how are the other communities paying for that share?

A: The building design is based on the level of service provided by the fire and ambulance service including the services to our contract towns. Currently the operational costs associated with our station are allocated across the fire and ambulance budgets including the fees charged to our contract towns. With specific respect to cost sharing from the other towns for construction, the other communities that we serve represent less than 50% of our total emergency ambulance call volume and even if they were to drop our service, there would not be a significant reduction in the scope of the building.