

Where we are now in the process and what will the next steps be?

In the spring of 2009 the Board of Selectman presented a warrant article in the amount of \$30,000 for the conceptual planning of a Winnacunnet Road Headquarters Fire Station. The Fire Chief recommended that the Department include the planning for the Beach sub-station to occur simultaneously. It makes sense, seeing that it would be necessary to relocate the headquarters from the beach to Winnacunnet and it really is the beach station that is in greatest need of replacement. The warrant article was amended to \$50,000 however the purpose of the article could not be changed. So, \$20,000 was directly appropriated from the FD budget to work on the planning for a beach sub-station and restricted the amount spent on Winnacunnet to the original \$30,000. Bear in mind this is conceptual planning and initial cost estimating only, not to develop construction documents.

The Fire Chief established four objectives that could be accomplished, feasibility and site selection, building programming, schematic design to include elevations and presentation materials, and initial cost estimating so the Board of Selectman could present a warrant article at a later time.

The planning team developed a Request for Qualifications in May and received responses from 15 firms. These were reduced to eight that were invited to a Pre-proposal Conference in June. During this meeting they were presented with several documents of work previously completed by the Town, i.e. engineering studies of the roadways, traffic studies, the Design Charette, The Hampton Beach Master Plan, the Town of Hampton Master Plan, Geo-tech data from various nearby sites in the Beach district, among various other materials. At the conclusion of the meeting the seven that showed up were provided with the Request for Proposals outlining the scope of work.

In July the RFP's were evaluated and five of the firms were interviewed to discuss their philosophies on fire station construction, LEED, relative experience, success in gaining public support for these type of projects, etc... One firm was selected, Goudreau and Associates of Chester NH. A contract was developed and executed.

**At every step during the process the Board of Selectman was updated at one of their meetings.**

The Fire Chief approached the Board of Selectman and suggested that we create an advisory committee so there could be a "community sounding board" to work with at appropriate points in the process. The Board ultimately appointed Selectman Nichols, Tracy Emerick from the Planning Board, Ann Carnaby from the Energy Committee, and Mr. Charles Navin who had expressed an interest in the Town's Permanent Building Committee. Also invited were representative of the Beach Precinct, and the Hampton Beach Area Commission.

Simultaneously the Fire Chief worked with the architect on the building program and site selection. Once there was a respectable idea of need, it was discussed with the advisory committee, considered their input and made appropriate adjustments before proceeding. At this point the design team had a

square foot size but no elevation drawings. The basic floor plan schematic drawings have been completed and approved by the advisory committee.

Following this was the site selection. Five sites were evaluated considering operational as well as demographic criteria. The Winnacunnet site was easy, the plan is to add onto the building to accommodate the modern equipment, get the vehicles out of the back parking lot and under cover, and provide adequate space for the headquarters staff presently located at the beach. The beach sub-station was recommended for either side of Brown Ave at Ashworth with the North side being preferred. As an additional part of the project we completed test borings to determine soil conditions enabling us to better determine the foundation needs of the buildings.

At this point the design team proceeded to the "drawings" showing elevations so people can see what the buildings would look like.

The plan is to have this process completed by December with public presentation materials available for "campaigning" and cost estimating to present an accurate cost for a warrant article.

Besides the additional indoor space for the equipment and the relocation of the headquarters staff, what else is needed? Why is this needed? How many staff will be relocated? How many vehicles need to be sheltered?

These questions are similar, so answers are grouped together. The beach fire station was constructed in the 1920's and only with space for apparatus of that era. This limitation has caused the delay in the replacement of fire apparatus because the modern vehicles will no longer fit. We have 4 pumpers, one aerial ladder (we could not replace the beach ladder because of the station), a lift bucket truck, three ambulances, a utility, and four trailers of equipment that require shelter inside a heated station. Presently our fire prevention bureau (fire prevention officer, fire inspector, secretary) and the fire department administration (fire chief, deputy chief, secretary) must be located at different stations because neither can accommodate all the staff. When the Winnacunnet Rd station was constructed 30+ years ago it was the intent for the administration to relocate there. They did, temporarily, less than 12 months later they moved back to the beach because the previous administration designed the station too small.

We are designing to meet today's needs with the concept of being able to expand if the future need requires additional space someday.

What is the condition of the existing downtown facility? Why is it deficient? What else needs to be done to bring it up to standard? What is that standard? How do our stations compare to other modern facilities in the area?

The Winnacunnet Rd station is not in bad condition, it is inadequate to accommodate our space needs.

Vehicles are parked three across in a space for two. Additionally it lacks a sprinkler system, is NOT ADA compliant, and was constructed without the ability to retro-fit much of the existing space. By today's codes, when you renovate, you must comply with modern standards. The real problem is at the beach, if you have never been there you should visit and see it firsthand. The station on Ashworth Avenue contains lead paint, mold, a failing roof, substandard electrical system, fails to meet life safety codes, and lacks a vehicle emission system. The Insurance Services Office and the NH Department of Labor have both recommended the station be replaced or have required significant renovations to bring the building into compliance. This, however, will still not meet the needs of the department today. The idea of replacing the beach station has been on-going since the 1980's. I have several different plans from that time as well as several conceptual designs from the previous fire chief. Our stations are among the oldest on the Seacoast; Seabrook, Hampton Falls, Rye, Stratham, Greenland, Portsmouth, Dover, Exeter, among many others have modern facilities. When I first began looking at station designs and costs I considered a little over a dozen recently constructed stations to see what the size and costs were.

How will all this ultimately improve your ability to respond to fire and rescue incidents? Why can't these improvements be put on hold again?

The Department has been unable to replace aging Fire Apparatus due to inadequate size of the current Fire Stations. Vehicles are routinely out of service due to failing pumps and vehicle safety systems. With modern buildings to protect and accommodate modern Fire Apparatus we can begin to address some of these issues and reduce the vehicle maintenance costs. Presently the design team has been advised that construction costs are at a low, bond rates are also low, so now is a good time for capital projects such as Fire Station construction.

When will we vote on what and what are the approximate amounts that we will be voting on? How will this affect our tax rate? Are there funding sources available that can or will assist the Town in paying for the project?

The first questions have not been answered yet. It will be up to the Board of Selectman to determine what goes forward as a warrant article. The Fire Chief has investigated the potential for other funding. The Department considered a direct appropriation of Stimulus Funds and was rejected. The Department applied for a Fire Station Construction Grant from the Department of Homeland Security however, the funding available was far less than the amount requested by all applicants. The funds were awarded to communities that were "shovel ready".

Will it include removal of the old Town Hall?

No, the addition will not expand into this area. This was a direct request of the Planning Board representative who wanted to keep that area available for other future needs as identified in the Charette.

How will it affect parking behind the school?

It will increase the parking available in the Town Lot. We will remove our vehicles that are parked there and we will add a staff parking area to the east.

Will it include sidewalk renovations or other roadway alterations and how do these relate to any future improvements on the road?

Sidewalks and roadway improvements are Department of Public Works capital projects and not being considered as part of the fire station construction. The strategy is to keep the cost of the fire stations down.