

## **Town Hall/Fire Station Feasibility Study – Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Why does Lakeville need a new fire station?**

The current fire station is an impediment to the effective and efficient provision of fire protection, EMS, and rescue services to the Town of Lakeville. There were numerous deficiencies identified during current and past evaluations of the Lakeville fire station. For example, the fire department building lacks life safety protection features that are typically found in structures that serve critical infrastructure. The building that houses all town firefighters, fire apparatus, ambulances, and rescue equipment lacks a contemporary fire alarm system and is not protected by a fire sprinkler system.

The fire station lacks reasonable facilities for the decontamination of equipment and protective clothing. Gear washing and equipment decontamination activities are performed in areas that also serve as department living space, likely resulting in the transfer of carcinogens and other toxins throughout the facility. Firefighters are frequently exposed to bloodborne pathogens, biohazards, and infectious diseases; the current facility lacks a designated location for the decontamination of responders or their clothing. Firefighters must fully remove all contaminated clothing and shower to be decontaminated. There is currently no designated or private area that is appropriate for firefighters to follow decontamination procedures. Responders must enter the living area to access showers or laundry facilities, potentially causing cross-contamination of the space. None of the contaminated materials are contained or treated beyond discharge into a conventional septic system.

Reasonably configured fire stations are designed to create an efficient and timely response to any emergency within a jurisdiction. The limitations of the current facility require that firefighters are often remote from the fire apparatus, delaying the response to emergencies. The inadequate size of the apparatus bays requires that vehicles must be arranged in a way that allows them to fit in the building, versus arranging for mission needs and usage. Fire trucks are currently parked behind ambulances; in the event of a fire, responders must move ambulances out of the building to allow the response of the fire trucks. This configuration creates a significant delay in the arrival of the fire apparatus; any mechanical failure would prevent any response at all.

The current fire station is partially surrounded by a FEMA flood zone and lies completely within a Title 5/Zone A area. In the event of a flooding event, the fire station would be evacuated to an alternate location. There are no Town owned structures with the capacity or design to accommodate the needs of the station. The nature of the fire department equipment and supplies requires a facility capable of storing large vehicles in a climate-controlled space, living space for a minimum of 5 employees, and business space for the execution of administrative and fire prevention activities.

### **How was the feasibility study originally funded?**

The feasibility study was approved for \$70,000 at the May 2021 Annual Town Meeting as part of the Town's capital budget. The study was charged with evaluating three options, as described below. The study was intended as a follow up to previous efforts to address the existing facility's shortcomings.

### **Who was on the project team?**

The Town hired Socotec AE Consulting, a respected project management firm, to conduct the feasibility study. The Select Board appointed a project team that consisted of the following members:

Richard LaCamera, Select Board  
Lillian Drane, Town Clerk  
Ari Sky, Town Administrator  
Michael O'Brien, Fire Chief  
Nate Darling, Director of Inspectional Services

### **What was the feasibility study's objective?**

The feasibility study was initiated to develop an assessment of the current and anticipated space needs for the Lakeville Fire Department and the Town offices, which are currently divided between the town hall building at 346 Bedford Street and the old library at 241 Main Street.

### **How did the study gather information regarding building conditions and department needs?**

Socotec conducted interviews of staff members in Town departments and evaluated existing conditions at Town Hall. The firm prepared a series of space planning documents that showed current and long-term needs and reviewed similar buildings in other Towns with similar needs.

### **What options did the study consider for the town hall and fire station?**

The study built upon a previous study of town offices and public safety facilities, conducted by Kastle Boos Associated in 2007. The 2007 study reviewed 11 options, of which eight were determined to be nonviable. The current feasibility study built upon those conclusions by examining three potential options for the departments currently operating at the town hall/fire station:

1. Renovate the existing building to continue as a town hall and fire station.
2. Renovate the existing building for the Fire Department and construct a new town hall.
3. Renovate the existing building for the town hall and construct a new fire station.

The study determined that Option 3 is the most viable option.

### **Why did the study rule out an expansion of the current fire station?**

The study determined that Option 1 was not feasible for the following reasons:

- The identified size requirement would require an addition larger than the existing site could support.
- The existing septic system cannot accommodate increased capacity.
- The site contains a number of constraints, including location as a watershed to a public water supply and a designated priority habitat of rare species.
- The area has a history of significant flooding events, making dependable access for operational units problematic.
- The majority of the Town Hall/Fire Station site is surrounded by FEMA flood zones, and the site has been compromised on several occasions due to flooding in adjacent locations and the basement.
- The entire site is located within Zone A, which severely limits options for future development.
- It is unclear whether the historic pumphouse structure could be preserved in a manner that would be conducive to operations.
- Operations during construction would be extremely disruptive to public safety and general government operations, most likely requiring rental space as an interim measure.

### **What is the possibility that the Board of Health could allow for an increase in septic flow at the current location?**

The current septic system is approved for 570 gallons per day. The Board of Health has indicated that it could consider an increased flow if the change is directly related public safety. However, it should be considered that any increase in flow will reduce the serviceable life of the existing septic field, and that waivers from Title V regulations are meant to be considered as a last resort. In addition, any additional meeting space intended for availability to the public would impact septic flow.

### **Has the Town considered the construction of an outbuilding to house the ancillary Fire Department vehicles?**

Among the objectives of the proposed fire station project is the minimization of turnout and overall response times. The national standard for operational turnout is 60 seconds or less; the Lakeville Fire Department's current average turnout is 125 seconds. This is due to the poor arrangement of the vehicles, the lack of clear paths for firefighters to travel between vehicles, and the extreme caution (due to bay door width) firefighters must utilize while driving apparatus out of the building. A properly configured apparatus bay with properly sized bay doors will shave significant time off turnout and response time.

In addition to impacting response time, the practicality of outbuildings would be challenged by climate control and vehicle exhaust capture requirements. Specifically, storage temperature requirements for medications and fluids, which generally require a minimum temperature of

about 40°F , would be a primary consideration. In addition, any vehicle that holds water must be protected from freezing to prevent damage.

These considerations dictate that fire engines and rescue vehicles must be stored within an enclosed building. Any such building would also require systems to capture vehicle exhaust, as required by workplace safety regulations. An outbuilding would essentially be configured much like a substation, adjacent to the primary station.

### **What sites were considered for a new fire station?**

The study considered three sites that had been previously designated for public safety use.

- Bedford Street (adjacent to the north side of the existing Town Hall)
- Precinct Street (adjacent to the Lakeville Senior Center)
- Bedford Street (across the TWC access road from the police station)

The study determined that the Precinct Street parcel would be the most suitable, due to its operational advantages and relatively straightforward development conditions.

### **The 2007 Feasibility study showed a need for a fire substation in the vicinity of Howland Rd. What is the likelihood that the town will need to build a second fire station?**

The Town of Lakeville has and intends to continue to maintain a single fire station in a central location of the Town, the goals being to have a single fire station that provides the greatest benefit to the most people.

Providing prompt medical and fire protection to the Howland Road school campus is a major concern for the Lakeville Fire Department. The Fire Department has addressed this need by entering into a mutual aid agreement with the Freetown Fire Department. Freetown Fire responds automatically to any emergency on the campus, followed by resources from the Lakeville Fire Department, an arrangement that was not in place at the time of 2007 feasibility study.

### **What is being proposed at the November 14<sup>th</sup> Town Meeting?**

The Town Meeting will be asked to approve \$220,000 to advance design for the Fire Station project and \$205,000 to advance the Town Hall renovation. This funding, which would not require any debt, would allow the Town to hire designers to develop a schematic design and preliminary budget for each project. Building committees would be formed for each project. The conceptualized projects would then be brought to a future Town Meeting for consideration and there would be an election to consider an override to support the required debt.

**Will the construction price be lower if the Town delays one or both of the projects?**

Conditions in the debt and construction markets are volatile, as is much of the economy at present. For these reasons, the Town is taking a conservative approach by only funding preliminary design. Elected leadership and Town administration will make recommendations after preliminary design activities have been completed sometime in 2023.

**How much will operational support of a new fire station cost?**

It will not be possible to estimate most operational support costs for a new facility until it has been designed. Every effort will be made to construct a fire station that is energy efficient and inexpensive to maintain. As a point of reference, custodial costs for the police station total about \$8,000 annually, and utilities total about \$34,000.