

**NEEDHAM PUBLIC SAFETY FACILITY PROJECT
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS
October 2018**

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Why do we need to rebuild our Public Safety Facilities?

The buildings that house the Police and Fire Departments can no longer accommodate changes that have occurred in operations, staffing, technology and security over the past 70 to 80 years. The Town has grown dramatically since these buildings were constructed, and the service demands and expectations of those who work, play, and live in Needham have also grown. These demands are trending up at a significant pace with the addition of multi-unit residential projects and business development, particularly in Needham Crossing. The feasibility studies conducted on both buildings determined that reconstruction is the most appropriate way to meet current needs and growing demands for at least the next half century.

The Public Safety Building, located at the intersection of Chestnut Street and School Street, opened in 1931, and was renovated in 1988-1989. Fire Station #2, located at the intersection of Highland Avenue and Webster Street, opened in 1949 and was also renovated in 1988-1989.

From 1950, 19 years after the Public Safety Building first opened, until 2015, the Police Department grew from 25 officers who responded to 1,774 calls to 49 officers who responded to 31,610 calls. The proposed new station would correct deficiencies in the Police Department, including the lack of adequate locker facilities for female officers, inadequate evidence and property storage, outdated interview rooms and recording technology, and would provide needed ADA accessibility, public meeting space, records storage, dispatch areas, patrol and administrative offices, and report writing space. The prisoner holding cells are outdated and inadequate, and the prisoner booking area is unsafe due to its size and configuration. The building cannot accommodate modern technology, while the roof continues to leak into the records/server room on the second floor. The climate control system works only sporadically throughout the building.

In 1950, the Fire Department had 27 firefighters. Call volume data is not available for 1950, but the Department responded to 600 calls in 1960. By 2015, the number of firefighters was 64 and the Department responded to 3,915 calls. The proposed new facilities meet the deficiencies identified in the Fire Department, including apparatus bays that are too small for modern fire trucks, insufficient area for performing equipment maintenance and repair, and lack of facilities for storing and cleaning turnout gear, minimal existing office space, and inadequate facilities for firefighter support such as bunkrooms, toilets and showers. The new buildings will provide accessibility and much needed storage space for files and equipment.

How did we get to this stage of the project?

Both stations have been included in the numerous facility master plans that have been developed over the past two decades. The November 2, 2015 and February 10, 2016 Special Town Meetings and the 2017 Annual Town Meeting approved a total of \$390,000 in funding for feasibility and schematic design leading to the reconstruction of the Public Safety Building and Fire Station #2. The October 2, 2017 Special Town Meeting appropriated \$3.75 million for the design phase of the project.

PROJECT SCOPE

What is the proposed size of the Public Safety Building and Station #2?

Station #2 is proposed to increase from 9,670 to 22,112 s.f., and the Public Safety Building is proposed to increase from 31,673 to 58,838 s.f.

Why are the proposed buildings larger than the existing stations?

For Fire Station #2, the primary reason for the change in square footage is for the expansion of the apparatus bays and the separation of fire operations support areas from the apparatus bays. Operations support areas include racks and shelves to hold turnout gear, hoses, hazmat response equipment, and the laundry machines used to clean turnout gear. These items are currently located in the existing apparatus bays, and the improper storage of such equipment is considered a serious health and safety concern. The number of apparatus bays at Station #2 will increase from two to three in both the upper and lower levels. The size of the bays will also increase – the existing bays do not meet modern standards. The current standards mandate at least five feet of clearance on either side of the fire trucks. Currently, the trucks are only inches apart. There is no dedicated mechanic's bay in either station to support in-house maintenance of equipment. The new Station #2 will include a mechanic's bay to allow the Town to perform more maintenance and repair work in-house. Other program areas have changed as well: public spaces, firefighter support areas, and building services. The category of “public spaces” consists primarily of a small lobby and waiting area – currently, anyone who stops at Station #2 for assistance must stand on a stairwell landing or in the very small watch room filled with equipment.

The Public Safety Building includes Police operations, Fire operations, shared services, and building support. As at Fire Station #2, the largest total increase is also the apparatus bays and the separation of fire operations support areas from the bays. Other significant changes include: community policing, patrol, and training areas, Police staff facilities including lockers, toilets, showers, and the firing range, the Fire Department lobby and administration areas, and the shared public lobby and waiting area.

Is there sufficient room for the stations where they will be located?

Sufficient area exists for the reconstruction of Station #2, as a result of an amendment to the Zoning By-law passed by the Special Town Meeting in October, 2017. For the Public Safety Building, the Town has acquired six parcels immediately adjacent to the building over the past seven years, including most recently the acquisition of 43 Lincoln Street at the May 14, 2018 Special Town Meeting. These acquisitions were intended to facilitate the reconstruction of the building, and to improve parking challenges in the downtown.

Are zoning changes required to accommodate the reconstruction?

Article 9 of the October 10, 2018 Special Town Meeting Warrant proposes to amend the Zoning By-Law to allow the Town to upgrade its public safety communications infrastructure. The amendment would allow installation of a monopole at the Public Safety Headquarters not to exceed 130 feet and a monopole or structure at the RTS not to exceed 199 feet.

Why does the Public Safety Communication System need to be upgraded?

During the process leading to the final design of the stations, the PPBC engaged a communications consultant to evaluate options for modernizing the current failing public safety communications system. This is the system that both Police and Fire use to communicate between the dispatch center and personnel in the field. The study identified concerns about the system's reliability, age and operational efficiency. The entire radio system infrastructure is out of production or near the manufacturer's end of useful life.

The existing system has significant gaps in coverage, particularly in the growing commercial side of Town. Much of the current system is connected through Verizon-leased copper lines. These lines are increasingly subject to outages as Verizon is reducing its support for old infrastructure, and will soon phase out the copper wire infrastructure entirely. The recommended solution is the replacement of the existing radio antenna and repeater system with a microwave system that is more reliable and provides greater coverage.

Needham's Town government operations are subject to the Town's zoning laws, which include existing rules and limitations on communications towers. The Board of Selectmen has requested consideration of amendments seen as necessary to the Public Safety communications plan. The proposed zoning would allow the installation of structures on municipal land, and on existing privately-owned structures.

The recommended solution is for a four tower closed loop microwave system with associated equipment and whip antennas. The sites proposed for the radio antennas and microwave dishes include one on a leased tower in Needham Crossing, one on State-owned land on the Dedham line, and two on municipal land – at the Recycling and Transfer Station (RTS) and the public safety headquarters (to replace existing infrastructure on the cupola that will be dismantled). The proposed zoning amendment would allow the Town to seek a

special permit from the Planning Board for each location, and the Town must demonstrate that any structure is at the minimum height necessary for proper functioning of the communications system. If the zoning amendment is approved, the Town will seek special permits from the Planning Board in early 2019.

Existing structures on land surrounding the RTS range from a height of 195 feet to 650 feet. The current design at the RTS is for a lattice tower not to exceed 199 feet. At the Public Safety Headquarters, the current height of the antenna on the cupola is 99 feet. The proposed zoning would allow installation up to 130 feet at this location. However, the existing antenna is expected to be replaced by a monopole with a height not to exceed 120 feet.

Where will Fire and Police Operations be located during the construction project?

The reconstruction of the Public Safety Building will be performed in two phases. In the first phase, a new Fire apparatus bay and communications/dispatch center will be constructed on property that the Town previously acquired for that purpose at 66 -70 Chestnut Street. Fire operations will continue in the existing station until the first phase of construction is complete, and then they will relocate to the first phase of the new facility. The existing station will then be demolished and the second phase of the project – Police operations – will be constructed. The Needham Police Department will be relocated to the Hillside School until the construction is complete. The Hillside School is expected to close in June, 2019 and the Sunita Williams School will open in August, 2019. Fire operations at Station #2 will need to be relocated during construction as that site is too small to accommodate the placement of temporary quarters there during construction. The current plan is to construct temporary facilities – for both apparatus and staff – in the parking lot of the Hillside School. Depending on the progress of the project, Fire and Police operations will overlap at the School for a period of time.

How will the temporary quarters at Hillside School affect the neighborhood?

In the first phase of the project, personnel from Fire Station #2, along with vehicles and equipment, will be relocated to the Hillside School on a temporary basis. The interim Fire Station will be staffed 24/7. In the second phase of the project, the Needham Police Station will relocate to the Hillside School. The Police will operate three shifts, and will not be holding prisoners at the temporary location.

Why are both stations being reconstructed at the same time?

The advantages of constructing both stations at the same time includes choosing one construction contractor to manage overhead, equipment and labor in a more productive and efficient manner, which will reduce the overall cost to the Town. The construction plan also assures commonality of equipment that otherwise may differ because of public bidding limitations.

PROJECT SCHEDULE

What is the project schedule?

The estimated schedule for the Project is as follows:

October 10, 2018	Special Town Meeting
November 6, 2018	Debt Exclusion Vote
January, 2019	Public Safety Building Construction begins
October, 2019	Station #2 relocates to Temporary Quarters
June, 2020	Fire Station Headquarters Opens
	Police Station relocates to Hillside School
April, 2021	Fire Station #2 relocates to its new facility
December, 2021	Police Station relocates to the new facility

The project schedule is currently an estimate and may be modified after the contract is awarded.

PROJECT COST & FINANCING

What is the expected cost of the project?

The current estimated budget for the Public Safety facility project is \$69,995,000, broken down as follows:

Category*	Amount
Construction	
Public Safety Building HQ	\$35,955,900
Fire Station 2	\$13,822,723
Temporary Quarters	\$2,048,377
Public Safety Communications	\$3,548,000
Project Contingency	\$3,955,000
Soft Costs (Architect/Engineering/OPM/ Debt Issuance/Other)	\$4,940,000
Furnishings & Technology	\$4,756,000
Moving Expense & Other	\$969,000
Total	\$69,995,000

* Includes previously appropriated amounts

How will the project be funded?

The Board of Selectmen has voted to place a debt exclusion override question on the November 6, 2018 ballot. The project, which consists of two fire stations, a police station, and temporary relocation facilities, is too large to fund through the Town's debt budget within the tax levy. Every effort will be made to minimize project costs without impacting the suitability of the project.

What portion of the project cost will be requested at the October 10, 2018 Special Town Meeting?

The October 2, 2017 Special Town Meeting approved funding for the design development and construction document phase of the project in the amount of \$3,750,000. The October 10, 2018 Special Town Meeting warrant includes a request for appropriation of the balance of the project, including the communications infrastructure and facility construction, in the amount of \$66,245,000.

What will the override amount be? \$69,995,000.

How will this project affect the average single family home tax bill?

The estimated average single family home (ASFH) annual tax bill would be increased by an average of \$436 per year to pay the annual debt service for the proposed excluded debt. These calculations are based on the FY2018 ASFH assessment of \$904,828. This calculation is based on a single tax rate. On an annual basis, the Board of Selectmen determines whether the Town will have a single tax rate or a split tax rate. The effect of a split tax rate, which the Town has had since 1988, is a subsidy to the residential taxpayers by the business community. All indications are that the Town will continue this practice. On a historic basis, the split tax rate would reduce the tax impact to the average single family homeowner by 11% - resulting in an average annual cost of the debt service of **\$388**.

What is being done to reduce the total cost of this project?

The project has been reviewed intensively during the feasibility stage, minimizing the need for temporary space, using available spaces for circulation rather than corridors where appropriate, reducing the number of apparatus bays, sharing of facilities where possible, and eliminating excess space from programmed areas. The design concepts were continually reviewed by representatives from the Police and Fire Departments, the Permanent Public Building Committee, the Department of Public Facilities - Construction Department, and selected members of the Design Review Board. Efforts to date have resulted in a reduction to the proposed cost of over \$9.0 million.

Why is the construction method known as Construction Manager at Risk being employed?

The Construction Manager at Risk (CMr) project delivery method permitted under MGL c. 149A for public projects is being employed because it offers several advantages for a project of this magnitude and scope. CMr is a process in which a builder is brought into the project at the design phase to provide input on project development so that a Guaranteed Maximum Price (GMP) can be developed with the Town, leading to greater certainty about the eventual total cost of a project. This project, which is complex because of its phasing, is well suited for this type of project management. Certain efficiencies in the schedule can be realized through design and other economies which will result in savings to the Town. The PPBC selected the firm of Consigli as the CMr.

What are the additional costs to the Town if the new stations are built?

The Public Safety Building and Station #2 will be larger than the existing facilities, and will be built in accordance with the building code. Although the new buildings will be energy efficient, they will have a greater energy demand due to the requirements of elevators, air handling units, decontamination systems, and a larger square footage. The new facilities will require additional cleaning and maintenance services from Town forces and contractors. The current facilities have limited maintenance services so the new facilities may require 2.5 more employees. The facility related costs include custodial services, maintenance of building systems and grounds, use of outside contract labor for maintenance and repairs, communication systems (telephones, radio system, internet), trash collection, custodial and maintenance supplies, grounds equipment and supplies, utilities (electric and natural gas), building insurance, and benefit costs for employees. After accounting for monies currently appropriated, the net increases are conservatively estimated to be \$110,000 for Station #2 and \$156,000 for the Public Safety Building. These recurring expenses would be phased into the operating budget over a three year period as the different facilities are occupied.