



TOWN OF NEEDHAM

TOWN HALL
Needham, MA 02492-2669

Office of the
TOWN MANAGER

TEL: (781) 455-7500
FAX: (781) 449-4569

Public Safety Communications System Public Information Session **August 28th (Tuesday), 7-9 PM, at the Center at the Heights, 300 Hillside Avenue**

On Tuesday, August 28, 2018 the Board of Selectmen will hold an information session from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. at the Center at the Heights, 300 Hillside Avenue to provide information and updates regarding the proposed Police and Fire Public Safety facilities projects, specifically planning for upgraded communications systems utilizing monopole or other towers or hardware at locations intended to assure Town-wide coverage. As currently planned, those locations include the Public Safety Building at Chestnut and School Streets, on existing private towers in Needham Crossing, near the Recycling and Transfer Station (RTS) on Central Avenue, and potentially on State-owned land on the Needham-Dedham line.

During the past several years, the Selectmen, Police and Fire Departments and the Town's Permanent Public Building Committee (PPBC) have been engaged in the feasibility and design process for reconstruction of the Town's Police and Fire stations. Design funding was approved by Town Meeting in 2017. The Public Safety project is a major undertaking for the Town, at an estimated total cost of \$69 million, to replace both existing stations with new facilities intended to meet current and future needs for the next 50 years. Additional information about the Public Safety project is online at www.needhamma.gov/newpoliceandfirestation.

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. 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 Selectmen have 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 sites proposed for the radio antennas and microwave dishes on municipal land include 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.

If you are unable to attend the hearing and would like to submit questions or comments, please contact the Board of Selectmen at selectmen@needhamma.gov or through the mail to: Board of Selectmen, c/o Needham Town Hall, 1471 Highland Avenue, Needham, MA 02492.

August 1, 2018