



**NEEDHAM PUBLIC SAFETY FACILITY PROJECT  
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS  
September 22, 2017**

**PROJECT OVERVIEW**

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**Why do we need to rebuild our Public Safety facilities? What is wrong with the buildings we have?**

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 have 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including the lack of adequate locker facilities for female officers, inadequate evidence and property storage, outdated interview rooms and recording technology, and would provide needed accessibility, public meeting space, records storage, dispatch areas, patrol and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 The prisoner holding cells are outdated and inadequate, and the prisoner booking area is unsafe due to its size and configuration.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, 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.

## **PROJECT SCOPE**

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

Station #2 is proposed to increase from 9,670 to 22,043 s.f., and the Public Safety Building is proposed to increase from 31,673 to 56,857 s.f.

### **Why are the proposed buildings so much larger than the existing stations?**

Detailed comparison charts for Fire Station #2 and the Public Safety Building are available at [www.needhamma.gov/newpoliceandfirestation](http://www.needhamma.gov/newpoliceandfirestation).

For Fire Station #2, more than 84% of 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 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 (5.5% of the total increase), firefighter support areas (10.1% of the increase), vertical circulation (1.7% reduction), and building services (1.9% of the total increase). 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.

For the Public Safety Building, Police operations are 37% of the total increase, Fire operations represent another 45%, and shared services and building support are the remaining 18%. For many of the reasons outlined for Station #2, the largest total increase is also the apparatus bays and the fire operations support items at 36%. Other *significant* changes include: community policing, patrol, and training areas (9%), Police staff facilities

including lockers, toilets, showers, and the firing range (16%), Fire lobby and administration areas (13%), and the shared public lobby and waiting area (11%).

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

Sufficient area exists for the reconstruction of Station #2, subject to the approval of an amendment to the Zoning By-law (see below). For the Public Safety Building, the Town has acquired five parcels over the past seven years immediately adjacent to the building. These acquisitions were intended to facilitate the reconstruction of the building, and to improve parking challenges in the downtown.

### **Why does the Town propose to buy another parcel on Lincoln Street?**

The acquisition of 43 Lincoln Street will both improve the design of the project and also preserve parking spaces currently dedicated for the general public. There is only one privately-owned parcel remaining in the area between the Chestnut/Lincoln Parking Lot and School Street. Benefits to acquiring the parcel include:

- The Chestnut/Lincoln public parking lot counts and circulation remain as they are currently. Without the acquisition, approximately 33 spaces will be eliminated;
- The resulting site configuration is uniform and regular, facilitating construction and maintenance;
- The site perimeter for the Public Safety Building will be easier to secure;
- On-site vehicular circulation is improved, as fire apparatus would not need to navigate between cars, and will have a second means of egress;
- Stormwater management options are improved; and
- Greater opportunity to provide green space in parking lot is possible.

The Town is actively pursuing the acquisition of this parcel, and an article authorizing the Board of Selectmen to acquire the property is included in the October 2, 2017 Special Town Meeting Warrant.

The property consists of approximately a quarter of an acre. No appropriation is required for the acquisition – the Board of Selectmen negotiated a mitigation agreement with the developer of the new apartment complex on Second Avenue to support enhancements to public safety facilities.

### **Are zoning changes required to accommodate the reconstruction?**

Articles 8 and 9 of the October 2, 2017 Special Town Meeting Warrant propose to amend the zoning both on Chestnut Street and in Needham Heights. On Chestnut Street, the proposal is to change the zoning district from a Single Residence B District to a Center Business District. The Police and Fire Station property is the only parcel along Chestnut Street that remains in a residential district. The change benefits the design of the project because it allows greater flexibility with respect to dimensional requirements consistent

with the Chestnut Street corridor. In Needham Heights, the proposal is to change the zoning by-law to allow municipal structures in the General Residence District to have both greater floor area ratio and lot coverage through a special permit process. This benefits the reconstruction of Fire Station #2 which is in a very good location to provide response to the Needham Heights and Needham Crossing area, but on a small lot.

### **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 current proposal is for the Needham Police Department to be relocated to the lower level of 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 may overlap at the School. If that occurs, it would be only for a few months.

### **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. The current plan is to construct a temporary structure to house Fire equipment and another one for Fire staff quarters. The Police Station would be located on the ground floor of the Hillside School. Hillside School neighbors have indicated how much they value access to the playground space at the School, and would appreciate a walking path through the School property to reach the new Sunita Williams School without requiring their children to walk along West Street. The PPBC has taken these requests under consideration for the design phase.

### **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.

## **Why does the public safety building include a firing range?**

Reliable access to range space for weapons training and qualification is a critical public safety priority. In the current climate, it has been difficult for law enforcement departments to find a suitable location to meet mandatory training requirements for Department-issued firearms. Although there are firing ranges in the area, many private ranges have limited availability or reduced functionality, and all require staff to travel outside of Needham and the surrounding area. In years to come, the Police Department's ability to use a private club or range may become increasingly difficult. The Department needs access to a space that will allow officers to conduct firearms and use of force training more often. From a safety and liability perspective, officers need to practice live firing more than the once or twice a year to satisfy State requirements.

## **PROJECT SCHEDULE**

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### **What is the project schedule?**

The estimated schedule for the Project is as follows:

|                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| October, 2017   | Special Town Meeting – request for design funds                 |
| October, 2018   | Special Town Meeting – request for construction funds           |
| November, 2018  | Debt Exclusion Vote   |
| March, 2019     | Public Safety Building Construction begins                      |
| September, 2019 | Station #2 relocates to Temporary Quarters                      |
| December, 2020  | Police Station relocates to Hillside School                     |
| April, 2020     | Fire Station #2 relocates to its new facility                   |
| April, 2022     | Police Station relocates to the new facility on Chestnut Street |

The project schedule is currently an estimate and may be modified during the design process.

## **PROJECT COST & FINANCING**

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### **What is the expected cost of the project?**

The current estimated budget for the Public Safety facility project is \$65,405,000, broken down as follows:

|   | Station #2   | Public Safety Building | Temporary Quarters |
|---|--------------|------------------------|--------------------|
| Construction  | \$12,132,000 | \$31,169,000           | \$3,653,000        |
| Land Acquisition  |              | See Note               |                    |
| Project Contingency   | \$1,486,000  | \$4,047,000            | \$413,000          |
| Soft Costs<br>(Architect/Engineering/OPM/<br>Debt Issuance/Other) | \$1,673,000  | \$3,489,000            | \$366,000          |
| Furnishings & Technology  | \$950,000    | \$5,605,000            | \$90,000           |
| Moving Expense & Other  | \$102,000    | \$205,000              | \$25,000           |
| Total   | \$16,343,000 | \$44,515,000           | \$4,547,000        |

*Note: If Town Meeting approves the acquisition of 43 Lincoln Street, no additional appropriation is required – the Board of Selectmen negotiated a mitigation agreement with the developer of the Second Avenue Residences to support enhancements to public safety facilities.*

### **How will the project be funded?**

The Board of Selectmen intends to place a debt exclusion override question on the November 6, 2018 ballot. The project, which consists of two fire stations and a police station, 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 2, 2017 Special Town Meeting?**

The Special Town Meeting request is to fund design development and construction documents to enable the Town to issue an Invitation for Bids prior to the construction appropriation and debt exclusion. The requested amount for design is \$3,750,000.

### **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 up to \$628 in the peak year to pay the annual debt service for the proposed excluded debt. These calculations are based on the FY2017 property values, with the ASFH assessment at \$843,913. The actual cost to each property owner will vary, and will decline each year after the peak year.

### **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, 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 Public Facilities Department, and the Design Review Board. These efforts will continue during the design phase.

### **Why is the construction method known as Construction Manager at Risk being considered?**

The Construction Manager at Risk (CMr) project delivery method permitted under MGL c. 149A for public projects is being considered 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.

### **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.