

Terryville Fire District

**19 Jayne Boulevard
Port Jefferson Station, NY 11776-2934
(631) 473-9303 • Fax (631) 473-2442**

BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS 2024

**Lee Brett, Chairman
James Guma
James Rant
Daniel Gruosso
Steven McCarren**

**Stephan Petras, District Manager
GinaMarie Brett, FDEMSC
Margaret Gironda, District Treasurer
Marilyn Peterson, District Secretary
Christopher P. Ring, Attorney**

January 11, 2024

For Public Release:

RE: District Construction Project

Building community support for a new fire station project/renovation can often be the most challenging part of construction endeavors. Time and time again, in all regions of the country, we have seen voters reject bond measure after bond measure to fund the construction of a new fire station, renovations, or repairs that is badly needed in a community.

While we know many people will generally oppose any new tax, there may be several other reasons that voters are quick to reject these bond measures. And we can't always place the responsibility on our voters unless we can say that we did everything we could to educate the community about our needs. In Short, "People aren't in the market for solutions to problems they do not see, acknowledge and understand."-William Bridges.

For us in the fire service, it is easy to understand the need for new fire station facilities and updating current structures. Within minutes we can quickly identify, point out and usually quantify in some terms several deficiencies in an ageing and inadequate fire station facility that we know needs to be replaced. But many of our community members, without any fire service experience, have no understanding of what a fire station is supposed to be and needs to be.

We must put ourselves in your position: Pick a service industry business located in our community that we know nothing about and then ask yourself, "Is the building in which the business is located adequate for their needs? Does it have adequate space for their business to be successful today and in the future? Does the building have the amenities and mechanical features to make it both safe and efficient? What does the building lack that the business needs?" Because we know nothing about the building needs of the business, we can't answer any of these questions; we can only think of more questions to ask. In doing this we come to understand how most voters feel when being asked to fund a fire station construction project. Often our community does not understand why it's needed.

As your elected representatives, we feel the need to educate and inform all our taxpayers about what a fire station really is. The fire station isn't just a garage to park the fire engines in, with a kitchen where the firefighters eat, play cards, and tell stories. We know this, but do our community members know this?

This construction initiative addresses three very fundamental needs and three different agendas.

- **19 Jayne Blvd -Headquarters Large Scale repairs and updates c. 1950, 1992, 2000.**
 - Replace current roof.
 - Rebuild siren tower.
 - Floor and room renovations for worn, damaged, stained, uneven surfaces.
 - Wall amendments for 25-year-old wall coverings
 - Replace end of life wood cabinetry that is worn, falling apart, and no longer serviceable.
- **688 Old Town Road – Utility Building (New Proposed) 6,000 sq ft 4 Bays**
 - Relocation/ response point for Department operations and displaced apparatus during construction of Station 2.
 - Cold storage for equipment and supplies
 - Alternative holding area for off service vehicles for mechanic shop.
 - Alternative training area
- **688 Old Town Road- Station 2 c. 1974 – 5637 sq ft – renovation/rebuild to 18,000 sq ft.**
 - complete overhaul – code compliancy

These projects are to address our current needs/shortcomings as well as the perceived needs for the next 20 -30 years. We strive for increased responses and to be able to operate with greater safety and efficiency. Our hometown image is important as well. We are a part of the community and take pride in that. Design aspects involve facilities that make a community proud of their firehouses as much as they support the men and women who volunteer emergency services for our community.

The largest of these construction endeavors involve Station 2, Old Town Road. Built in 1974. This facility does not fit the needs of modern-day firefighting. It was never built to house both fire and Ems nor arguably a co-ed environment. When erected in 1974, firefighting and the community served was a lot different. We now have full-time EMS and have more than doubled personnel, equipment, and responses to meet with community growth. Vehicles alone comprise a larger footprint, are heavier and our fleet size has increased. Hence more space is required just to house vehicles.

Safety practices regarding gear, equipment and personal contamination have come a long way in 50 years. The need to decontaminate is not effectively met or is non-existent with the current facility. Irrespective if this is fire or Ems.

There is minimal consideration for female firefighters/Ems personnel. We do have women in both roles and space is needed for privacy. Trends dictate more and more women are entering emergency services and we need to provide equitable conditions.

Shorter, faster, safer routes are needed to have responders appropriate and don protective equipment and make entry to responding vehicles unencumbered by detours. To respond quickly by passing through ample space to pull apparatus out- current door openings are tight-no room for error.

After responding to our community's needs, generally the first order of business is to prepare for the next alarm. Replenish water, replace utilized equipment/supplies and make the vehicle ready for the next run. Very importantly, how do you handle decontamination of equipment and personnel when the current facility does not support that? "Guarding health risks for our responders is paramount." -TFD BOFC. Cleaning ambulances and medical equipment is imperative. Protection of life at the station is as important as at the scene of the emergencies we respond to.

Training areas/classrooms are for on-going and long-term preparation. These areas need to be scalable for both didactic and hands-on training. These areas need to encourage and be conducive the valuable learning experiences. This space must also serve as a place to conduct meetings and possibly an emergency operations center.

This also gives rise to the need for restrooms, kitchen, and dining areas. We need to mention there are NO showering nor rest areas in the current facility when the need arises. This means during extended stays like weather emergencies and standbys those needs are serviced with folding cots and hand bathing from a single sink in bathrooms with single toilets for 45+ members.

In 50 years, station 2 has stood at its current location unimproved. Arguably it has been well maintained, however it has not grown like our community, membership, equipment, or supply needs.

This is an opportunity to correct the shortcomings of the current facility. Just as a fire truck or an ambulance is a tool to transport firefighters or deliver emergency care, the building serves as a tool as well. A tool to enhance operations, provide a safe/secure environment and improve efficiency. We are confident this will not only be reflected in quicker response times but also increased morale in a dwindling volunteer sector whereas recruitment and retention are real issues.

As elected officials, we are stakeholders in the community we live in. We are entrusted with our neighbors and families' best interests and must be fiducially responsible. Budgeting for these initiatives requires extensive insight and pragmatic solutions. Wants vs. needs. We need to consistently strive to support not only our community but also the emergency responders that serve us. Unselfishly dedicating hours in training and providing 24-7 coverage at times to great risk to their own life and safety. We attempt to support them by providing adequate funding, training, and equipment to help them do their jobs well. Again, these are needs. Adequate, functional facilities fall into the equipment category.

Since identifying these needs, construction costs have soared. Think about the standard home remodel. Durable goods and services have increased, labor costs have increased. Moreover, these increases are not stopping and pierce through what could reasonably be absorbed by the district's annual budget. Construction costs are generally well understood as the money paid to a contractor for building. There are many more factors involved than price per square foot. Property amendments like drainage, sewage, and parking come into focus. Soft costs like IT needs, security, communications, interior design, furniture, telephones, AV equipment are all necessary and represent a significant amount of money.

Contingencies are also important. A bid price is not a turnkey price. Contingencies are for those overlooked items that come up during construction and must be covered. Some changes occur as the building comes off the paper and is erected. We have seen this just with newer building code compliances or unsuitable soil conditions.

Our facilities are a community investment for the health, safety, and well-being of every resident, responder, business owner, or visitor to the place we call home. The value we place in our fire district is the value we place in our homes and area.

In summary some key points to consider,

- There has been dramatic growth in the number of residents, commercial/industrial/medical facilities as well as roadway traffic in the past 50 years.
- Present appropriations need repair and replacement.
- As stakeholders we need to ensure we comply with building, Occupational Safety and Health (OSHA), and National Fire protection Association (NFPA) standards.
- Protect our sustainable investments.
- Be morally, economically, and publicly responsible.
- Prepare rather than react to current and future demands.

It is our sincere hope this summary has educated everyone who reads it. We invite the community to view our facilities. Please come to our in-house meeting on January 16th @ 6pm @ Station 2, located at 688 Old Town Road.

Thank you for your continued support,

The Terryville Fire District, Board of Fire Commissioners,

Lee Brett, Chairman

James Guma, Co-Chair

James Rant

Daniel Gruosso

Steven McCarren