

Public Safety Facilities Task Force
Joint Meeting
Select Board
Minutes
February 13, 2023
7:30 PM
Carlisle Town Hall, 66 Westford Street, Carlisle MA

Members in attendance: Tom Bilotta, Christine Lear, Jerry Lerman, Bill Risso, Lee Storrs,
Members not in attendance: Ingo Szegvari

- I. Meeting called to order at 7:45 pm
- II. Task Force Members presented recommendations to Select Board (attached). See Select Board minutes for full details on presentation and response.
- III. Meeting adjourned at

PSTFT Documents area available through the town website or at
<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1kgTJDWtzyoV6BejpL8H8424J2QZd3aHj>

Submitted by Christine Lear
Unanimously approved on March 7, 2023

Carlisle Public Safety Facilities Task Force
Recommendations to the Select Board
February 13, 2023

Task Force Members

Tom Bilotta, Christine Lear, Jerry Lerman, Bill Risso, Lee Storrs, Ingo Szegvari

Introduction

At our meeting on February 7, 2023 the Public Safety Facility Task force (PSFTF) voted to present a set of recommendations to the Select Board. These recommendations were developed after a detailed examination of the existing Police Station and Fire Station. It is our conclusion that neither of those buildings addresses the needs of the departments at this moment in time, and they certainly won't be able to adequately meet the needs going into the future.

Our process was presented in detail to the Select Board as a draft report in their meeting on December 13, 2022. This report contains the cost estimates that were developed by consultants that provided the basis for many of our decisions.

We have determined that a combined Public Safety building would be too costly to pursue. Since none of the existing Town-owned lands were deemed suitable, it would also require the Town to incur the cost of acquiring a new site in addition to the construction costs. If it were built on the site of the existing Fire Station, it would require a temporary structure to house the fire department during the construction process.

If completely new structure were built for either the Fire Department or the Police Department, it would again require the acquisition of a suitable new property in addition to the construction cost. If the new buildings were placed on the existing sites, there would be no property acquisition cost but there would be the cost of providing temporary housing for the departments during the construction process. Either way, the cost to the Town would be prohibitive.

In our deliberations, we did not consider the possibilities of regionalize either police or fire functions since it was outside the scope of our mandate. We assumed that the Police Department would continue to operate in the same manner as it does today allowing for future growth due to Carlisle's growing population. The possibility of regionalizing the dispatch function was discussed but we believe it would not achieve a significant reduction in either staffing costs or space requirements. As for the Fire Department, the unique character of Carlisle (no fire hydrants, on-call firefighters) make the equipment and staffing requirements not amenable to regionalization.

To summarize, we have tried to examine all of the possibilities for the Police Station and the Fire Station. From the options we have examined, we have agreed to make the following recommendations to the Select Board.

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Fire Station

Because building codes and structural issues make it too costly to build on top of the existing Fire Station structure, we recommend that a new structure be constructed adjacent to the existing structure. There is adequate space on the existing site to make this possible. We've talked with the Town Building Inspector who agrees this an option worth exploring. It has the following benefits:

- 1) No acquisition of new property is required
- 2) It will be less costly than building a completely new building since the existing structure will still be used.
- 3) Building an annex (a separate building) rather than an addition will avoid triggering costly requirements such as adding a sprinkler system to the existing structure.
- 4) The Fire Department could continue operating out of the existing structure while the new construction is underway.
- 5) It will allow for a transition from an on-call fire department to a full-time fire department at some time in the future.
- 6) Some of the existing infrastructure (wells, septic, etc.) may be used by the annex structure.

To further explore this possibility, we recommend that the Select Board fund a feasibility study (estimated cost: \$20,000) that would determine the details of this project and estimate its cost. We have a sketch provided by Bryan Sorrows (Fire Chief) that would be a starting point. If the study determines that the cost is reasonable, the next steps would be to seek funding from the Town to develop complete design documents and put the project out for bids

Police Station

We recommend that the Police Station be renovated on its existing site to provide the functionality and expansion capability that is lacking in the existing building. As with the Fire Station, this approach has the following benefits:

- 1) No acquisition of new property is required
- 2) The Police Department could continue operating in the existing structure while the new construction is underway.
- 3) It is less costly than building a completely new building since most of the existing structure would still be used.

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- 4) No new infrastructure (wells, septic, electricity) is required.

There are several possibilities for this approach that need to be explored due to the size constraints of the site. Parking at the Police Station has always been an issue, so if the footprint of the building is expanded in any direction, additional parking will need to be provided. Several interesting solutions to this problem have been presented that require further exploration:

- 1) Allow the building to extend closer to Lowell Street either by way of a variance or by extending the Town Center Business District to include the Police Station.
- 2) Building additional parking spaces behind the existing structure either into the wetlands or behind the Town Burying Ground. Both of these options have intriguing possibilities and deserve further exploration.

To further explore these possibilities, we recommend that the Select Board fund a feasibility study (estimated cost: \$20,000) that would determine the details of this project and estimate its cost. We have a preliminary design for a Police Station renovation that was prepared by TBA Architects in 2020 that would provide a starting point. The TBA design was based on the assumption that the footprint of the existing structure could not be significantly increased. The purpose of the feasibility study will be to determine what can be done if that constraint is relaxed. If the study determines that the cost is reasonable, the next steps would be to seek funding from the Town to develop complete design documents and put the project out for bids.

Further Recommendations

Since expansion of the Fire Station and expansion of the Police Station will both generate a need for additional parking, we think this provides an opportunity for the Town. The PSFTF explored the Conant Land behind Town Hall as a possible location for a new Police or Fire building. Though there were several problems in siting a new public safety building there, it seemed to present an opportunity to expand parking for the entire Town Center area, including Town Hall, the Police Station, the Fire Station as well as the businesses in the Town Center. Though this was beyond the scope of the PSFTF charter, we believe a parking study of the Town Center area would fit in nicely with the needs for expansion at the Police and Fire Stations.