

**Gilford Police Station Expansion/Renovation
Frequently Asked Questions
1/10/09**

Q. Do we really need to add on to the police station? Isn't it big enough?

A: With the growth of Gilford over the past 20 years, the police department has had to grow as well. Between a larger year round and seasonal population and new venues like Meadowbrook Farm, as well as events like Motorcycle Week and the Timberman Triathlon, the department has needed to add more officers. Anyone taking a tour through present police station will see it is seriously lacking space. Hallways are crowded and narrow. Equipment is stored in every nook and cranny. With changes in state and federal laws and changes in national police standards and procedures over the last 20 years, the requirements to meet them have changed. Unfortunately the station as it is now does not come close to meeting those requirements.

The expanded police station is designed to meet the present and projected needs of the police department for the next 20 years.

Q. But didn't the townsfolk vote down a new police station a few years ago?

A: Yes. The original proposal came in at \$2.9 million for a new standalone police station. The voters rejected the plan as too expensive.

Q. What's different about this new proposal?

A: Rather than building an entirely new freestanding facility like the one rejected by the voters, an addition and renovation looked to be the best option. More than a small number of town residents stated that an addition was a far more attractive project. One of the biggest issues was cost. The present Facilities Planning Committee looked into the cost of an addition and renovation to the old section of the police station and found it was less expensive.

Q. How much is this project going to cost? How will it affect the tax rate?

A: The FPC has developed a not-to-exceed project cost of \$1.58 million.

\$1.2 million will be funded through a bond and \$380,000 via the town's undesignated funds balance.

The \$380,000 will be used to fund such things like certain customer costs as well as contingencies. \$150,000 of those funds have been set aside for contingencies. These are funds that will be used to cover the costs of unexpected work that might need to be done due to unforeseen circumstances or conditions. If these circumstances do not occur then the funds will not be expended. The Board of Selectmen thought it would be more cost effective to use undesignated funds for this purpose since financing contingency money that may not be needed was deemed too expensive.

The initial cost on the tax rate will be \$0.08 the first year. By the end of the 20-year bond the effect on the tax rate will be \$0.04.

The effect on the tax rate will not be seen this coming fiscal year, but on the following one once the project is completed. With a bond issue from the high school energy improvements being retired next year, the overall effect on the tax rate could end up being zero.

Q: What does the cost of the project include?

A: Material, labor, and engineering, i.e. construction work, is the major cost. There are also non-construction costs to the project such as furniture, office equipment (storage lockers, file cabinets, chairs, etc.), consultant fees, contingencies, and a host of other costs too numerous or detailed to list here.

Q. How big will the police station be after the addition and renovation?

A: About 11,800 sq feet, not including the new meeting rooms. Just under 800 square feet of space in the existing police station will be turned into dual-use meeting rooms, to be shared between the police station and the town hall. This adds more space that can be used for public meetings or for police training sessions.

Q: About those new meetings rooms: Where will they be and why are they being created?

A: The plans call for the new meeting rooms to be located at the front of the present police station, where the existing dispatch center and detectives offices are presently located. They will be accessible from both the town hall foyer and the new police station lobby. The new meeting rooms will be very similar to those in the town hall, meaning they can be configured as two separate rooms or as one larger room, depending upon space needs and scheduling.

The police department won't require the space on a 24/7 basis, making the space available for use by the public, giving the residents of Gilford 'more bang for the buck'. Because the rooms need to be easily accessible to both police personnel and the public, it seemed prudent to place them in a location that made it possible to do so.

The present training room is located in the basement, a secured section of the station. When it is not in use by the department it cannot be used by the general public due to its location. By moving it upstairs into the public access section of the station, that space can be used for meetings or other functions when the police department is not using it.

Q: Did the Facilities Planning Committee look at other alternatives to adding on to the existing police station?

A: Yes. We believe that all reasonable alternatives were assessed, including the purchase or lease of an existing building within town. The cost of doing so would have been much higher than the townspeople have indicated they are willing to spend.

There was also the issue of available buildings. None of the buildings that would have fit the bill were

available or the owners wanted too much for them. Others were not suitable.

Q. Will there be a weight room in the expanded police station?

A. For the answer, go to our Rarely Asked Questions page.

Q. Has the Facilities Planning Committee looked into using energy efficient designs to help keep the cost of operating the expanded police station as low as possible?

A: Yes. Between high-efficiency insulation, doors, and windows, energy efficient lighting and lighting design, and making use of a geothermal heat pump system for heating and cooling, we believe the operating costs could be equal to the costs of operating the present police station despite the larger size of the facility. But we really won't have a definitive answer until one year after the new facility has been occupied.

We also took into account public input and looked over suggestions we received in light of incorporating some of them into the design. We had an independent team of engineers review them and make recommendations about the feasibility, cost, and cost savings of each one and list the pros and cons of the suggestions submitted.

Q: A geothermal heat pump system for heating and cooling? Isn't that expensive?

A: No. While the up front costs will certainly be higher, the operating costs are lower. Cooling (air-conditioning) costs will be as much as 90% lower. Heating costs will likely be between 50% and 70% lower, depending on the cost of heating oil. Because the system uses no fuel for heating, volatile fuel prices will have minimal effects on the cost of heating. Also, there are rebates available from PSNH to help offset the higher cost of installing such a system. It's possible with the rebates and other incentives, the actual cost of a geothermal HVAC (Heating, Ventilation, And Cooling) system could end up costing not that much more than a traditional system. Even without such rebates the payback for the higher cost of the geothermal system is estimated at 7 years with oil at \$2.50 per gallon, and 3-5 years at \$3-\$4 per gallon for heating oil. Should heating fuel prices go higher, the payback period will be even shorter.

Q: Why isn't the police station going to be tied in with the Town Hall's heating and cooling system? Isn't it already paid for?

A: Yes indeed. However the existing system isn't capable of handling the additional load. Also, the Town Hall's HVAC system will need replacement in the near future. One boiler has already failed and been replaced and a second required considerable maintenance to remain operational. It wouldn't be prudent to use the existing system. Additionally, the existing chiller for the air conditioning system isn't large enough to handle the additional cooling load of the expanded police station. The present heating and cooling systems have exceeded their design lifetime and will become more expensive to maintain.

Q: Even though a geothermal system won't be burning fuel for heating, won't it use more electricity than a traditional HVAC system?

A: Yes. While it is true the system will use more electricity when it is used for heating as compared to a traditional combustion-based heating system, it won't be all that much more. A traditional system uses electricity to operate valves, circulation pumps, oil burners, fans, and controllers. A geothermal system uses electricity for much of the same, except that in place of the oil burners the system runs a well pump and compressor.

Q: Wouldn't it be less expensive to update and expand the Town Hall's HVAC system to carry the expanded police state?

A: Yes and No. While a traditional system may have a lower upfront cost, the operating and maintenance costs are much higher. There are two reasons why it is not desirable to do so.

First, a new system of the type already being used at the Town Hall won't be nearly as efficient as the proposed geothermal system and would still be vulnerable to fuel price swings and supply disruptions.

Second, the Board of Selectmen is looking into converting the remainder of the Town Hall over to a geothermal HVAC system. If the decision is made by the voters to make this conversion, then and only then would it be worthwhile from a financial standpoint to have the new system carry the entire heating/cooling needs of the town hall and police station.

Q: What other upgrades will be required to ensure the proper operation of the expanded police station?

A: An upgrade to the electrical drop and interior electrical distribution panel will be required to handle the new load requirements of the expanded police station as well as to meet the latest electrical codes.

In order to handle the higher electrical load during an outage, the existing generator may need to be upgraded or replaced. The FPC, Department of Public Works, and the architect are looking into replacing the existing alternator with a new one with higher generating capacity. This assumes the existing engine of the gen set is capable of handling the higher load. If it is not, then the entire generator set will need to be replaced. Should this be necessary, there is the possibility of being able to acquire a government surplus gen set at a greatly reduced cost as compared to similar gen set purchased via normal commercial purchasing channels. Federal grants may also be available to pay for a new gen set.

Q: Some of the floor schematic layout looks to be complicated compared to other municipal buildings, specifically the basement level. What's going on?

A: Police stations have very specific requirements under national police standards. Such things as booking rooms, holding cells, evidence lockers, evidence processing and storage, sally ports, records storage, weapons storage, and safe rooms all have specific requirements in order to ensure the safety of the officers, detainees, witnesses, and the public, as well as maintaining the proper chain of custody for evidence.

Q: Will there be a firewall between the police station and the town hall, or will a sprinkler system be installed?

A: The decision was made to install a sprinkler system in the police station. There are advantages to a sprinkler system, including lower insurance rates.

Q: Will the sprinkler system include the Town Hall?

A: No. But the system being installed in the police station will have the capacity to provide sprinkler coverage to the town hall should the decision be made to install them at a future date.

Q: What about the three storage trailers behind the station? Will they still be required once the addition and renovation is completed?

A: No. With the additional space made available by the police station expansion the need for the storage trailers will no longer exist. They will be removed and the space where they now sit will again be available for parking. The town will save money because it will no longer be paying to rent the trailers.

Q: What about the drainage problem that's existed along the front of the police station? Will that be solved during construction?

A: Yes. In fact it wasn't until surveys were done for the initial plans of the police station expansion project that the cause of the drainage problem was discovered. Apparently some of the backfill used during construction of the Town Hall/Police Station crushed the drainage pipe laid along the outside edge of the foundation. This will be corrected when excavation for the new police station entrance is performed. With that repair, the condensation problems that has plagued the basement should be remedied.

Q: Does the cost of the new station include upgrading the police radio system?

A: No. The system has already been upgraded with new digital radios, the funding which came from a federal grant. Your local tax dollars were not used for the upgrade. There will, however, be costs associated with moving the radio systems into the new dispatch center and radio/computer server vault. These costs are included in the total project cost.

Q: Because the new station is an addition to and renovation of the existing station, how will the police department be affected by the construction? Will they need to move into a temporary facility during the process?

A: No. The first phase of the construction will be the addition on to the rear of the station. While there

will be some disruption of police operations during this phase, they will be kept to a minimum where possible. Some operations may be moved to the rooms in the basement of the town hall normally occupied by the SAU. Other operations may require the use of portable offices to be located outside the police station. Things like booking will be handled at the Laconia Police Department or the Belknap County Sheriff's Office when the booking room and holding cells are unavailable due to construction activity.

After the addition is completed, the police department will move some of their operations into the addition while renovation of the present station is being performed. The last part of the renovation will be the move of the dispatch center and creation of the new meeting rooms. Should the need arise during this portion of construction, dispatch may be temporarily moved to the Belknap County Sheriff's dispatch center until the new dispatch center is completed.

Q: How was the bidding for the new construction carried out? Wasn't it supposed to be a public bid?

A: No. Instead the town used a Request for Proposals. A bid requires the town to take the lowest bid, even if it is obviously "low-balled" or otherwise deficient. The Request for Proposal did not obligate the town to take the lowest bid if it was found lacking or unrealistically low.

The requests for proposals from the construction firms were handled in two stages.

The first stage was an open Request for Qualifications, meaning that *any* general contractors wishing to submit proposals for the contract were required to send their qualifications to the town for review to ensure that they had the experience, were capable of handling the contract, and had the required insurance and bonding.

The second stage was a Request for Proposal, sent to each of the general contractors meeting the requirements laid out in the Request for Qualifications. Their proposals were sent to the Town Hall and opened during a public meeting of the Facilities Planning Committee. The FPC reviewed the proposals, and then made their recommendations to the Board of Selectmen which contractor should be selected for the contract. The Board of Selectmen made their selection based upon input from the FPC, though they were not obligated to select the firm recommended by the FPC.

Q: Of the proposals received, what was the spread between the lowest and highest bidder? Was the low bidder selected?

A: Five proposals were received. The difference between the lowest and highest bidder was \$150,000. The FPC saw this as an indication that the proposals received were good, as the differences for the various divisions of the proposal were small. It gave the FPC and the Board of Selectmen confidence we were seeing the best efforts by the submitting contracting firms.

Q: Assuming the warrant article for the police station expansion passes at Town Meeting in March 2009, when will construction begin?

A: April/May 2009. The addition and renovation should be completed by February 2010.

Q: There doesn't appear to be any storage in the sally port as there is in the present station. Why not?

A: The new sally port is bare for a good reason: safety. When an officer is moving an arrestee from the back of a police vehicle into the booking room it would be foolhardy to provide the arrestee with an impromptu weapon capable of hurting or killing an officer while attempting an escape. If there's nothing in the sally port but the police vehicle there's nothing an arrestee will be able to use as a weapon.

The garage stall next to the sally port does include storage for such things as tires and spare parts for the police vehicles, as well as other department equipment not requiring storage in an environmentally controlled space. The equipment storage space in the garage will be secured.

Q: What if we have more questions that haven't been answered here or on the FAQ page?

A: Anyone with questions can either use the comment system on the blog, send an e-mail to fpc@tarnover.us , or contact the town administrator, Scott Dunn.

This FAQ will be updated as required in order to answer your questions.