

CHARLEMONT FIRE STATION ALTERNATIVE PLANS

MARCH 2010

PREPARED BY THE CHARLEMONT SELECTBOARD



I. History:

Sometime in 2003 the Town of Charlemont applied for a grant to acquire a new fire truck. In August 10 of 2004 Fire Chief Ken Hall questioned Selectmen Jim Gariepy, Erwin Reynolds, and Charles Bellows as to "why the addition to the Fire Department was not on the Town Warrant." "Ken also pointed out that the Grant the town received for the new truck was posted in the paper and...the new truck will not fit in the garage at this time." Two weeks later the Selectboard minutes reflect that a draft proposal for and RFP for an addition to the fire station had been created "and the Admin. Asst. will forward it to Town Counsel for review."

In April 2005, at Special Town Meeting, the town voted to transfer \$15,500 from stabilization for its share of a new tanker truck, the remainder of the funds to come from a Homeland Security grant. One month later at the Annual Town Meeting of May 16, 2005, the following articles addressed the firehouse addition. Articles 17 & 18 read: "It was agreed by the new Selectmen (Bellows, Reynolds, Fantuccio), Finance Committee, and Building Committee for the Fire House addition to table this for now and refer to committee."

The new Tanker was delivered in 2006 and accommodations were made to fit it into the old firehouse. Although there is no record of a committee being appointed to discuss an addition, the Fire Department began discussing the space problem amongst themselves and in various public forums. The Fire Department raised the issue with the Finance Committee, and the department even proposed an inexpensive (\$25,000 - \$50,000) addition that might be constructed with volunteer labor. However, no official proposals or plans were ever presented to the town for vote at Town Meeting. The Fire Chief raised the issue on the floor of the 2007 Annual Town Meeting

In the May 2008 at the Annual Town Meeting the issue of firehouse needs came to the floor in a discussion about a warrant article to put \$100,000 into stabilization. By hand vote a motion to save this \$100,000 for the firehouse addition was narrowly defeated. Instead the town voted Article 9, to raise and appropriate \$5000 to conduct a feasibility study for a public safety facility. The Selectboard agreed to study the problem of space, to work with the departments and with a consultant, and to issue a report on alternative solutions. This report, which was funded by that \$5000 appropriation, is the result of that agreement.

In the last year and a half the Selectboard has worked with its consultant, Joseph Mattei and Associates, Architects and the Fire Department to determine the needs of the department and to lay out all of the alternative plans for providing for those needs. Some of these plans are not feasible for engineering reasons or for financial reasons. All of the possibilities we explored are listed below in order that the taxpayers may see the range and thoroughness of solutions that were considered.

It should also be noted in this report that the Selectboard has simultaneously been studying the needs of the Town Hall, and alternative plans for addressing those needs, especially the need for a new roof. We expect that the town will ultimately need to decide how to address all of its needs and to construct a priority order for dealing with these needs.

II. The Needs for additional space in the Fire Station, as presented by the Fire and Ambulance Departments



1. At least two new or extended bays, preferably 4 new bays
2. Ground level training room
3. Office space for 3 offices
4. Hose drying tower
5. Bathrooms with showers, especially for EMTs
6. Storage space

III. Alternatives for providing additional space

It should be understood that we have no control over the cost of labor, materials or equipment, over the Contractor's methods of determining bid prices, or over competitive bidding, market or negotiating conditions. Accordingly, our consultant cannot and does not warrant or represent that bids or negotiated prices will not vary from any estimate of Construction Cost or evaluation he has prepared. All estimated prices are informed estimates not final figures. Alternatives A – F, are brief synopses of the ideas we have been discussing.

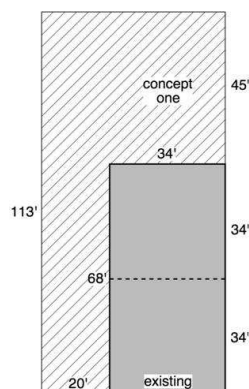
A. The first alternative considers a new station based upon the assumed needs of the Town. The station would be designed to accommodate current and future needs for a life span of 100 years. The concept includes 6 bays, 3 offices, break room/kitchen, training room, toilets/shower, maintenance room, mechanical room, 2 storage rooms, and hose tower. The building would be constructed primarily of masonry with a structural steel framed roof system. The building would be on one floor. The floor area of the station would be assumed at 8,000 sf. The estimate does not include the costs of buying or developing a site. The estimate is extrapolated to a construction date of 2010.

Cost Estimate: \$2,000,000.00

B. This alternative includes adding 2 bays, office and training area, toilet facilities, storage, etc., by adding (3790 sf) to the north and west side of the building. It includes renovations to allow for better use of the existing facility. New roof, doors, energy upgrades and brick veneer exterior.

Cost Estimate: \$850,000.00

West Route 2 East

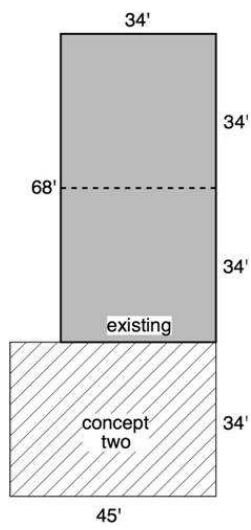


South Deerfield River

C. This concept includes adding (1530 sf) 2 bays only to the south side of the building. It includes renovations to allow for better use of the existing facility. New roof, doors, energy upgrades.

Cost Estimate: \$255,000.00

West Route 2 East

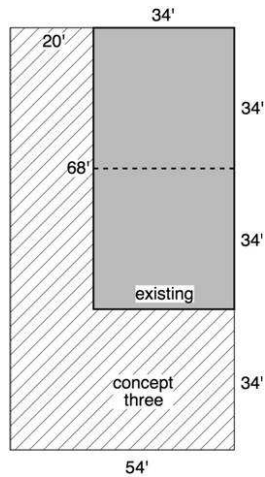


South Deerfield River

D. This concept includes adding (3296 sf) 2 bays, 2 offices, break room/kitchen, training room, toilets/shower, maintenance room, storage and hose tower. It includes renovations to allow for better use of the existing facility. New roof, doors, energy upgrades.

Cost Estimate: \$660,000.00

West Route 2 East

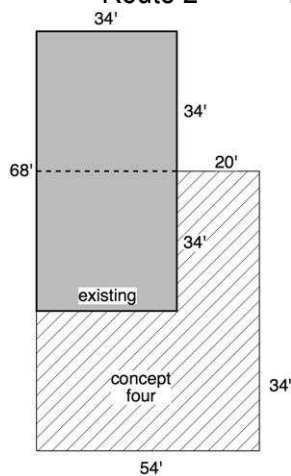


South Deerfield River

E. This concept includes adding (2516 sf) 2 bays, 2 offices, break room/kitchen, training room, toilets/shower, maintenance room, storage and hose tower. It includes renovations to allow for better use of the existing facility. New roof, doors, energy upgrades.

Cost Estimate: \$370,000.00

West Route 2 East



South Deerfield River

F. This concept is relatively new and has not been researched in enough depth. It would involve moving some or all of the Fire Equipment into the present highway building and building a new "Butler Building" for the Highway Department, possibly on town owned land in the eastern part of Charlemont. Such a building might be erected and provide more square footage for emergency vehicles at lower cost per square foot than any of the other alternatives.

Cost estimate \$400,000 - \$800,000

IV. ANALYSIS

Your Selectboard notes that the Town has committed this year to an expenditure of almost \$100,000 for a new ambulance, which is on order at the time of this writing. Further, these are difficult economic times, perhaps not the best of times to start a project of this magnitude, much less two projects (Fire Station and Town Hall roof).

Any decision regarding the firehouse will involve significant tradeoffs. A brand new facility would serve all Fire Department needs for the next fifty years but would create a very significant financial debt for the town. Any of the other alternatives will involve compromises of various sorts to the needs of Fire and Ambulance, as stated at the outset of our work. Any building extensions to the south of the current fire station, for example, may be seriously hindered if not eliminated due to issues with sewer rights of way and other set-back requirements.

We believe that the research in this report provides a framework for a realistic discussion within the Town regarding how to proceed into the future. For example, some ideas that we have heard discussed are clearly not feasible and should not further occupy us.

The only action the Selectboard has taken is to instruct our grant writer to be alert to any possible funds for which we might be eligible. So far, we have applied for and been rejected for one grant, but we will continue this effort on behalf of the town. If we were to get a grant this might accelerate the decision making process.

We feel that further analysis of these alternatives should be done by a larger cross section of our voters, perhaps even the Annual Town Meeting, on the assumption that our taxpayers will be underwriting any action in this regard. This is not a decision which we feel should be made only by the Selectboard. At the very least a much broader forum should occur before narrowing the alternatives and setting the priorities.

