



# BROOKLINE FIRE DEPARTMENT

## Town of Brookline Massachusetts

### FIRE DEPARTMENT HEADQUARTERS

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September 29, 2022

To: Advisory Committee  
From: John F. Sullivan, Fire Chief/EMD  
Re: Fire Station Renovation/Replacement project – CIP update

Initial discussions regarding the necessity for significant improvements to our Town's five fire stations began shortly after my arrival in late 2018. At that time, the average age of the stations was just over 90 years of service to the community. Unlike nearly all other Town facilities, these stations are staffed and in service 24-hours a day, seven days a week, three-hundred and sixty five days a year. They serve as both a functional garage/storage facility for our equipment and apparatus, and simultaneously as living quarters for the firefighters who are assigned to those stations on a 24-hour shift.

**It is our responsibility to ensure that our employees have a safe, healthy and equitable work site from which to serve our community.** This project was originally focused on these two essential elements:

- **Minimizing the occupational health risks of all employees.**
- **Providing a work/living space in conformity with all local, state and federal safety standards.**

These priorities have not changed since the inception of this project. However, as is the case in many projects of this scope, additional development components, economics and ancillary influences have significantly expanded its scope. Through this evolution, the Fire Department Administration has made every effort to accommodate as many additional facets of this project as practical, while remaining steadfast to its core objectives.

An appalling lack of foresight and planning have forced the Town to take exigent action to address these serious health issues without deferral. As such, this plan has not

followed a traditional project development path. Traditionally, funding is secured for feasibility and design studies prior to being moved to implementation in the CIP; however, urgency has compelled a more direct path to action. Existing CIP funds were leveraged to retain an engineering/consulting firm, Garcia, Galuska and DeSousa Engineering (GGD) to provide a preliminary engineering and code compliance assessment to address our known primary concerns; the health and safety of our firefighters. This firm is actively involved in multiple fire station projects in several metro Boston communities -addressing these very same concerns. GGD has, and continues, to provide services to the Town on multiple projects, and is a trusted partner in the Town's economic development scheme.

Initially, this project focused primarily on environmental zoning renovations of the five existing facilities and code compliance issues to meet the new OSHA standards. In April 2019, the assessment and initial estimation (\$8-million) was forwarded to the Town for consideration. This initial assessment and subsequent deliberations with our Town project team and engineers revealed that yet another long-ignored fundamental workplace issue must be addressed as well:

- **Ensuring gender equitable facilities for all employees.**

GGD submitted a revised plan and estimate in October 2019 of approximately \$20-million that provides all employees with a substantially more equitable work environment from which to operate.

In November 2019, Warrant Article 21 "*Prohibition on New Fossil Fuel Infrastructure in Major Construction*" passed Town meeting. This article, and subsequent legislation made it clear that new construction and major renovations of any Town-owned facility will comply with Fossil Fuel Free (FFF) mandates.

In the wake of these additional influences, GGD advised our project team that at least one facility, Station 5 // Babcock St., would prove to be a significantly more costly endeavor than originally planned. These factors came together to substantiate that due consideration should be given to replacement of this facility versus a costly and likely ineffective renovation.

The department was asked to defer action twice because of competing debt-exclusion votes on costly school projects, and in March of 2020, the global COVID-19 pandemic stalled any forward momentum this project had gained in the preceding year.

In January 2022, GGD was asked to re-engineer the project assessment to include an estimate for a Station 5 replacement. The estimated cost for demolition and replacement on site, temporary quarters, inclusion of FFF infrastructure in all facilities and pandemic inflationary costs escalated the total project price to approximately \$50-million. This new estimate also includes an additional (optional) \$10-million should the Town decide to pursue a "Net-Zero Ready" project scope, bringing the overall estimate to nearly \$60-million. **In March of 2022, the Advisory Committee unanimously**

**supported this estimate to move forward to a debt-exclusion vote in the fall election cycle.**

Recently, the Zero Emissions Advisory Board (ZEAB) has made strong overtures that they would oppose this project should it fail to include provisions for the eventuality of an Electric Vehicle (EV) fleet. The Fire Department Administration has fully committed to converting all of its non-emergency vehicles to EV as soon as practical. It has further committed to exploring the feasibility and operational capabilities of front-line emergency response vehicles including apparatus as the emerging industry evolves. Initial conversations with Fire Apparatus/ Facilities engineers are ongoing, however very preliminary/conservative estimates could add an additional \$18-million dollars to build out the infrastructure and equipment necessary for this expansion further skyrocketing the overall cost with inflation to nearly \$83-million. **This undertaking is necessary and substantial but ultimately outside the scope of this CIP's mission.**

The core imperatives of this project remain unchanged:

- **Minimizing the occupational health risks of all employees.**
- **Providing a work/living space in conformity with all local, state and federal safety standards.**
- **Ensuring gender equitable facilities for all employees.**

These long-ignored ethical and moral imperatives must continue to be the focus of these deliberations and this project. Any additional influences must be measured against these real threats to our firefighter's health, safety and equitable treatment.

Trying to address the added environmental concerns levied on this project has proven to be a challenging and extremely costly endeavor. Climate action is a necessary step in the fight to preserve the future of our planet, and all efforts are right and just. I have pledged to work ardently to try to meet and/or exceed these real concerns. I believe that there are opportunities for both inclusive, as well as cooperative parallel projects to exist to address the climate issues at hand.

I again ask the Advisory Committee to support the recently revised estimated project scope and cost of **now approximately \$65-million** to address all of the department's core needs, as well as to meet the FFF mandate and the additional "Net-Zero" ready initiatives. These initiatives dovetail with aspects of the core project inasmuch as substantial work to the HVAC systems are necessary for environmental zoning to occur. Ongoing "envelope improvements" are part of the current CIP scope, and the "Net-Zero" upgrades would merge with that aspect of the original project.

I further ask the Advisory Committee to continue to explore and support CIP funding for a parallel feasibility and design study to address the eventuality of an all EV fleet. This should be part of an overall Town plan and not done in silos. This systematic effort would afford the Town the ability to methodically seek all potential federal and state

funding sources dedicated to this end to augment the yet unknown cost of such an expansive endeavor.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John F. Sullivan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "J" and "S".

John F. Sullivan, Fire Chief