

PUBLIC SAFETY BUILDING UPDATE FOR MAY 20 BALLOT

Presented by the Public Safety Building Committee



In January 2022, the Southampton Select Board appointed a new Public Safety Building Committee (PSBC) to develop and present to residents of the town a plan for a modern and efficient Public Safety Building that will house the Fire Department, Police Department, and Emergency Operations Center. The committee is comprised of 11 voting members and our Town Administrator.

SITE OPTIONS AND FEASIBILITY:

The committee's first responsibility was to identify and evaluate all potential centrally located sites for the building. A list of town-owned and privately-owned parcels was compiled and ranked according to measures of suitability. Three sites were identified for further consideration: 210 College Highway, site of the present Fire Station; 0 (now 125) College Highway, undeveloped land across from Parker and O'Grady Law Offices; and 79 Clark Street, land owned by Marmon/Keystone.

The next phase of the project was to select and engage an architectural firm to complete a Feasibility Study. In April 2023, the Southampton Select Board contracted with HKT Architects of Charlestown, MA to perform the Study and to present their findings and recommendations for a facility that will meet the needs of Southampton's size and population.

GETTING TO THE BOTTOM LINE:

Throughout the process of working with HKT to develop a new public safety facility, the PSBC emphasized functionality and economy. Understanding that construction costs have escalated dramatically over the past five years and that a new, more stringent Massachusetts energy code has been put in place, the committee pared away every non-essential component from the structure. When the Feasibility Study Cost Estimate came in for a second time at a level that the PSBC found too costly, the committee did not approve it. The committee extended the original contract and requested HKT to make even further reductions. This second plan is now reduced from 26,895 sq. ft. to 21,523 sq. ft. with a cost currently projected at \$27,800,000.

NEXT STEPS:

The proposed new Public Safety Building will be situated on the recently acquired 54-acre parcel at 117-125 College Highway. Land planners are currently developing a Master Plan for that site. The next step in the process will be for the town to hire an Owners' Project Manager (OPM) and an architect. A funding request for these costs was approved at the March 22 Special Town Meeting (STM). This same request will now appear on the May 20 ballot. The full design proposal and construction costs will be requested this fall at another Special Town Meeting and, if approved, at a special election shortly thereafter.

For more information, including tax impact, design details, and educational materials, please go to www.TownofSouthampton.org and click on PUBLIC SAFETY BUILDING

PUBLIC SAFETY BUILDING FACTS

* Public safety facilities are designated as “essential facilities” and are assigned the most stringent structural “risk categories” in the State Building Code.

* The converted historic structures that our Police, Fire, and Emergency Departments presently occupy were not engineered to meet this stringent code and they lack adequate security and state-of-the-art utility infrastructure. An attempt to renovate these buildings to bring them into compliance, if this is even possible, would require major structural overhauls. In addition, the cost to maintain and heat these old buildings is inefficient and unpredictable. A new building designed to house both the Police and Fire Departments together will meet building codes and be OSHA and ADA compliant. The design will allow for future expansion needs and will feature more efficient heating and cooling technology potentially reducing costs over time.

* There are multiple reasons why a “Butler”- style, or pre-engineered structure is not recommended. Since pre-engineered metal buildings achieve their cost savings by engineering the structural steel framing members to be the absolute bare minimum required, building designs must be customized to meet the needs of public safety projects adding to the construction cost and reducing the savings another project type might realize. Pre-engineered metal buildings are also very difficult and expensive to modify in the future.

* The Fire Station is comparatively undersized with other departments in the region. The bays are too narrow to provide sufficient clearance for modern fire trucks, and lack proper decontamination, shower and laundry facilities for our returning crews who are exposed to the contaminants of firefighting.

* HKT Architects’ research determined that the Town-owned property behind the current Fire Department cannot support the septic or parking requirements for a new public safety building. The presence of ledge, land elevation changes that would necessitate a multilevel building with an elevator, and the added costs of relocating the fire department during construction would make site development costs prohibitive.

* Recommendations for up-to-date green technology were sought during the Feasibility Study phase and will be required with the final architectural design prior to construction, per regulation, cost efficiency and in recognition of global climate change. The new design will allow for less dependence on fossil fuels.

* As with any capital project where the cost exceeds what can be funded with the tax levy, a debt exclusion or loan must be voted for by the Town. Payment of the debt over multiple years is incorporated into the property taxes - a debt exclusion goes off the tax rolls upon project completion.

* The architects have provided the following comparative figures: If the same structure had been built in 2019, the cost would have been in the neighborhood of \$15,600,000. The projected cost for building the same structure in 2030 would exceed \$36,000,000 as construction costs and materials continue to increase at an anticipated rate of 4 - 8% annually.

* All funding opportunities, including grants, outside of borrowing will be sought as they become available.

