

**UPDATE FROM
THE BOXBOROUGH BUILDING COMMITTEE**

January 2021

**SUPPORT THE EFFORT
TO IMPROVE PUBLIC SAFETY
FOR THOSE WHO LIVE AND WORK
IN BOXBOROUGH**

**The background and ongoing work
of the Boxborough Building Committee
to replace the Town's outdated, inadequate
and potentially dangerous
fire, police and dispatch facilities**

For further updates go to

Boxborough-ma.gov/304/Building-Committee

SUMMARY OF BOXBOROUGH'S PUBLIC SAFETY NEEDS

PURPOSE

- **THE REPLACEMENT OF FIRE, POLICE AND DISPATCH FACILITIES** has become a crucial need for the Town.
- **THE BOXBOROUGH BUILDING COMMITTEE (BBC)** seeks help from the Town's citizens to study how best to move forward.

WHO

- **THE TOWN HAS BEEN WORKING** since 2013 to address the need to replace outdated, inadequate and dangerous safety facilities.
- **THE BBC HAS BEEN STUDYING** site and building options since 2016.
- **THE PUBLIC** needs effective safety services to match growing needs.
- **TOWN EMPLOYEES** need adequate and safe facilities to serve the public.
- **THE TOWN** needs to attract and retain excellent staff.
- **BOXBOROUGH CITIZENS** will find further information and an opportunity to submit comments and questions on the Building Committee website at boxborough-ma.gov/304/Building-Committee

WHY

- **INADEQUATE, UNHEALTHY FIRE FACILITIES** need more room for equipment and personnel.
- **THE DECONTAMINATION PROCESS** must be isolated and improved in order to protect personnel and the public.
- **CRAMPED, UNWORKABLE POLICE FACILITIES** need proper spaces for emergency communications, weapons storage, evidence storage, and prisoner booking and detention.
- **WOMEN NEED EQUAL FACILITIES:** toilets, showers, lockers, and sleeping space.

WHAT

- **A NEW, COMBINED FIRE, POLICE AND DISPATCH FACILITY** is the most economical way to better serve the public.
- **THE TOWN'S NEEDS** in response to changing demographics will require far more public health and safety service than current facilities provide.
- **COMMUNITY MEETING SPACE** may be possible on a site large enough for additional building.

WHERE

- **NEED FOR A LARGE CENTRAL LOCATION** with adequate water, sewage treatment, and parking led the BBC to examine a score of sites near Mass. Ave.

- **THE SITE AT 72 STOW ROAD** appears to be the most promising and viable site, and it may provide space for other community needs. The land is also available to the Town for immediate use.

WHEN

- **AT THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING in May 2021**, the BBC will present results of a Stow Road site constraint study and details regarding progress towards design, funding estimates, and construction plans.
- **BY THE SPRING OF 2023**, if all the planning steps are complete, the BBC hopes to break ground for the public safety facility.

THE HISTORY AND FUTURE

OF BOXBOROUGH'S PUBLIC SAFETY BUILDINGS

THE PURPOSE OF THIS DISCUSSION is to inform citizens and seek their input regarding construction of a combined fire, police and dispatch facility at 72 Stow Road. BBC and citizen discussion will refine the project and help the Town with design, funding, and construction plans.

Brief History: In 2013, Boxborough began studying the Town's inefficient, out-of-date and dangerous Fire, Police, and Department of Public Works facilities. Formed In 2016, the BBC started work on practical solutions, beginning with the relocation of the DPW in 2018. In anticipation of the Town's future growth and changing needs, the BBC continues to study how best to replace the Town's antiquated, inadequate fire and police buildings.

Specific Goals: In the fall of 2020, the BBC expanded its membership and focused its mission on reviewing earlier findings and working on the feasibility of building new safety facilities on 13.5 acres of Town property on Stow Road, behind apartments on Mass. Ave. and across from Tisbury Meadow and Sheriff's Meadow condominiums. The Housing Board has custody of the land and has studied it as a possible site for affordable housing; the Affordable Housing Trust is willing to accept compensation from the Town to allow the Town to use the land for a public safety facility. While Stow Road remains the focus for new safety facilities, the BBC is prepared to consider other suitable sites, should they become available early in the process.

Site Constraint Study: A firm has been hired to evaluate whether the Stow Road land is adequate for a combined fire, police and dispatch facility. The study will assess whether other Town needs, such as a community center,

could be added. The study, which should be complete by the May 2021 ATM, will analyze:

- Water
- Septic
- The site (topography, ledge, wetland, etc.)
- Vehicle storage and parking
- Conceptual drawings
- Estimated costs

Future Studies will consider such issues as

- Heavy vehicle, safety vehicle, and public traffic
- Comparison of a single-story vs. a multi-story building
- Cost/benefit of a Net-Zero building

WHY DO WE NEED TO REPLACE CURRENT SAFETY BUILDINGS?

- **Workplace safety issues fail employees and the public.**
- **The current Police Station fire suppression system does not meet code and is unsafe for lockup and its occupants. Replacement of the system is a major construction project at an estimated cost of \$1,000,000.**
- **Unequal male and female facilities must be corrected.**
- **Current buildings lack efficient, dedicated spaces for essential fire, police and dispatch functions and training.**
- **The outmoded, undersized, decrepit Fire Station is dangerous.**
- **Failure to meet present-day code requirements means that current facilities can no longer be remodeled or expanded; they have to be torn down and replaced.**
- **The current fire and police sites are too constrained by wetlands to be used for new buildings.**
- **Unacceptable working conditions make it increasingly difficult to attract and retain our excellent employees.**
- **The existing stations will not serve the growth, future demographics, and changing safety needs of the Town.**

Fire Needs:

- Create adequate apparatus bays for larger current and future equipment.
- Provide a safe space and safe equipment for decontamination.
- Double the current space for apparatus.
- Add missing female toilet, shower, locker, and dorm facilities.
- Increase kitchen and day room space.
- Provide desk and bunk space for staff.
- Create a proper Emergency Operations Center.

- Increase the number of equipment lockers for essential items, such as turn-out gear and Scott Air-Paks for self-contained breathing.
- Replace temporary, plywood cubbyholes with proper storage spaces.

Police Needs:

- Add interview and AV surveillance spaces.
- Provide storage space for records.
- Improve the physical security of the dispatch room, currently facing Mass. Ave. and fronted with only wood and glass.
- Add an armory for cleaning and storage of weapons and other equipment.
- Provide separate spaces for roll call, conferences, and lunch room.
- Increase spaces for booking and holding of prisoners.
- Build storage space for equipment currently deteriorating and becoming moldy in makeshift outdoor containers.
- Add space for evidence processing and a secure chain of custody.
- Provide female and male toilets, showers, lockers.
- Correct the problem of dispatch personnel (often one person) having to leave the desk to check on detention cells, thereby leaving dispatch uncovered.

Shared Needs:

- Improve the function of the Emergency Operations Center and the classroom training facility.
- Add an exercise room, light kitchen, break room.
- Co-locate dispatch, public safety communications, and the core server storage system for the Town.
- Add office space for Animal Control.
- Consider adding a public meeting space.
- Combine infrastructure, parking, power, mechanical, heating, ventilation, etc.
- Share an emergency generator and other emergency equipment.

HOW HAVE NEEDS CHANGED? Facility, Staffing, Town Demographics and Increased Services:

- In 1959, the three-bay, sloped roof portion of the Fire Station was built; the population was about 600, a local businessperson was Fire Chief, and other officers and firefighters were volunteers.
- In the early 1970s, two bays and office and storage space were added, and the police moved into the older portion of the building.
- In the late 1970s, two large bays were added; the population was close to 3,000, and a modern ambulance replaced the police station wagon.

- By the late 1970s, police had become full time, the DPW Director was also the Fire Chief, and fire staff and EMTs were "on call" and no longer volunteers.
- The Police Station was built in 1989 to serve 3,300 people with a staff of five.
- By the mid-1980s, dispatch was contracted through Littleton for police and through Acton for fire and ambulance.
- Currently, fire and police dispatch is staffed 24/7 at the Boxborough Dispatch Center in the Police Station

Current and Future Needs:

- The current population is 5,213.
- The current fire staff is seven full time and approximately 30 part time.
- The current police staff is 10.
- The Town's population in 2040 is projected to be 5,578, according to the Mass. Dept. of Transportation.
- The 2040 Fire staff could number 16.
- The 2040 Police staff could number 33.
- Fire and police professions have become more demanding, and safety services have increased significantly during the last 30 years.
- Because the hiring of public safety personnel has become increasingly competitive, safe, clean working conditions matter.

WHY BUILD A COMBINED FACILITY FOR FIRE AND POLICE?

- **Cut costs by sharing infrastructure.**
- **Cut costs by using a number of the spaces jointly, creating common spaces that serve all personnel, such as reception areas, HVAC, and other mechanical needs.**
- **Lower the cost of design, site preparation, and project management.**
- **Save money by constructing one footprint, not two.**
- **Free up space for other Town needs.**

WHAT WILL IT COST TAXPAYERS?

- **To accurately estimate costs, the BBC will require the services of an architect and a project manager.**
- **Early estimates vary and will depend on final specifications and development, construction, and furniture costs. The BBC will share estimates with citizens as planning progresses.**
- **Construction costs increase approximately 4% each year.**
- **Because public building costs are increasing faster than housing values, the longer the project is delayed, the greater the impact on tax bills.**

- **Further study and public participation will help the BBC define the Town's needs, to ensure that modern public safety services are delivered economically.**

HOW DO WE COMPARE WITH OTHER TOWNS?

- **New, larger Boxborough facilities should meet the needs of the Town for 20 years or more.**
- **The BBC will carefully examine the design and cost of new public safety facilities in other towns and will share the findings with citizens.**

WHY CONSIDER THE STOW ROAD SITE?

- **The land seems well suited for a combined Fire and Police facility of 27,000 to 35,000 square feet.**
- **The Town already owns the site, as it is held by the Boxborough Housing Board. Money to compensate the Housing Trust will remain within the Town.**
- **The site constraint study will determine if the size of the property may also allow for a community senior center, a Town Hall annex, or possibly a small recreation area.**
- **The Town Engineer, Conservation Commission, and other consultants studied other options, none of which proved suitable.**
- **While moving forward with the Stow Road site study, the BBC will give timely consideration to other locations.**

THE BBC CONSIDERED THESE OTHER SITES:

- **Lincoln Property (1320 Mass. Ave.): not pursued because of difficulty in reaching an agreement with the current owner.**
- **Abutting former DPW (593 Mass. Ave.): too wet and limited space.**
- **975 Mass. Ave, across from Sara's Way: too much ledge.**
- **1300 Mass. Ave., on corner of Burroughs Road: conversion of office building too costly.**
- **Land between Blanchard School and Sargent Memorial Library: wet, poor grading, sight line problems.**
- **Rebuilding on the existing site of fire and police:**
 - **Existing Fire Station is already on a flood plain. Given wetland constraints, a combined facility on existing fire and police sites would be possible only at great expense**
 - **The temporary relocation of fire and police facilities during construction would cost as much as \$1,000,000.**
- **Hager Land: too steep and wet.**

- Land behind new DPW: steep downgrade, restricted Mass. Ave. access.
- Area near Town Hall: not large enough.
- Cisco Beaver Brook: remote location.
- Agricultural Land: no plan to pursue.
- Remainder of "Town Center": private land with sight lines and wetland issues.

NEIGHBORHOOD QUESTIONS NEEDING ANSWERS:

- **In what way will moving fire and police near residential areas affect Mass. Ave. apartment dwellers and those living in Tisbury Meadow and Sheriff's Meadow?**
 - Police cruisers do not regularly leave the station with sirens wailing. They are usually elsewhere in Town when dispatch tells them to respond to a call. When leaving the station, cruiser sirens would be used only to clear traffic as a safety measure.
 - When fire apparatus and ambulance leave the station, they are required to activate sirens when they enter the Stow Road and Mass. Ave. intersection.
 - For police vehicles, staff training and the following of operating procedures will mitigate noise. Police sirens will be used only when a vehicle is responding to an emergency and needs to move traffic.
 - The Fire Chief will solicit the opinion of neighbors regarding the travel of emergency vehicles heading west or east on Stow Road or Middle Road.
- **What are the traffic implications of operating large emergency vehicles, police emergency vehicles, and private vehicles at this site?**
 - A traffic study will address the use of vehicles at the Stow Rd. site.
 - The State will be involved in addressing traffic issues on Mass. Ave.
- **What street lighting, traffic lights, and warning noises will be required on Stow Road and at the intersection of Stow Road/Middle Road and Mass. Ave.?**
 - Professional traffic studies and consultation with neighbors will lead to appropriate noise abatement policies.
 - A traffic study should help the Town design appropriate signage and traffic lights.
 - Acton and other towns often use "Opticon" remote signal controls which allow emergency vehicles to activate traffic signals before the vehicles arrive at the intersection.
 - The typical design for intersections such as Mass. Ave. and Stow/Middle Roads is for a blinking yellow light to change to red for emergency vehicles.

OTHER QUESTIONS:

- **If this project goes forward, what happens to the land and facilities opposite Blanchard School?**

Members of the BBC will look at options, gather public opinion, and examine what might fit the existing site constraints.

TENTATIVE CALENDAR, PENDING COVID-19 INTERFERENCE:

- **Winter and Spring 2021:** Develop a site constraint and feasibility study and begin exchanging information with citizens.
- **May 2021 ATM:** Share information about progress with voters.
- **Summer 2021:** Ongoing concept development and communication.
- **Fall, 2021 STM:** Seek funding for design architect and Owner's Project Manager (OPM).
 - The OPM's job will include oversight of value engineering to reduce costs without sacrificing the proper function of the facility.
 - The approach will follow the process used for the Douglas/Gates building project.
- **Fall 2021 through early Fall 2022:** Complete design development, schematic design and cost estimates.
- **Fall 2022 STM:** Seek funding for construction and the OPM for on-site management of the construction phase.
- **Fall 2022 and early 2023:** Seek construction bids; hire contractor.
- **Spring 2023:** Break ground.

FUTURE DISCUSSIONS:

- **This document and other BBC efforts will introduce citizens to questions and answers related to this project, prompt further discussion, and prepare the Town to make wise, well-considered decisions.**
- **Recognizing that COVID-19 makes communication difficult, the BBC plans to use social media, the Town website, mailings, video facility tours, and virtual forums to inform and to encourage citizens' participation.**
- **The BBC will address citizen contributions in public communications and virtual meetings.**

SEND US YOUR IDEAS AND QUESTIONS:

Please fill out the "Contact Form" on the Building Committee's page website: boxborough-ma.gov/304/Building-Committee.

LOOK FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

Go to the BBC website to find drawings, plans, feasibility studies, and other material.

UPDATES: The BBC will post news of recent developments on the BBC website every month.

BOXBOROUGH BUILDING COMMITTEE

MEMBERS:

| | |
|---------------------------|-----------------|
| Les Fox (Chair) | Select Board |
| Maria Neyand | Select Board |
| Gary Kushner (Vice Chair) | FinCom |
| Ling Chen | FinCom |
| Bill Litant | COA |
| Larry Grossman | Sustainability |
| Al Murphy | Housing Board |
| Becca Edson | RecCom |
| Bryan Lynch | Board of Health |
| Hugh Fortmiller | At-large |
| Owen Neville | At-large |
| Than Stuntz | At-Large |

ADVISORY:

| | |
|------------------|------------------------|
| Paul Fillebrown | Fire Chief |
| Warren Ryder | Police Chief |
| Jason Malinowski | Fire Lieutenant |
| Ryan Ferrara | Town Administrator |
| Bentley Herget | Inspector of Buildings |
| Simon Corson | Town Planner |