

UPDATE FOR THE COMMUNITY

BVFD Firehouse/Emergency Services Project

Submitted by: the Community Liaison Committee (CLC)
September 2019

As was announced last Spring and in response to the “NO” bond initiative vote, a group of concerned Bedford citizens formed the Community Liaison Committee (CLC) to explore and address issues raised by the community in regard to the new firehouse/emergency services department proposed by the Bedford Village Fire District (BVFD).

The CLC consists of members of the community with a diverse set of relevant experience. The constituents of the CLC include members of the Bedford Historical Society and Bedford Riding Lanes as well as engineers, architects, finance professionals and real estate agents. We believe the individual and collective experience of the group provides valuable technical expertise, an appreciation for the culture and history of our community, a sensitivity to seemingly ever-increasing property taxes, and a keen understanding of the varying – and sometimes opposing - interests related to the project. Importantly, the members of the CLC include individuals who voted against the initial proposal and individuals whose vote was best characterized as a “reluctant yes.”

One common aspect that the members share is a recognition of the hard work and dedication of the volunteer members of the BVFD and the need for the volunteers to operate in a safe environment that allows them to effectively and efficiently serve our community. While the CLC in no way purports to represent the views of the community, our hope is that the robust due diligence we have undertaken – and continue to undertake - will provide the community greater clarity around the project and an unbiased assurance that any new plan reflects the priorities and expectations of both the Bedford Village Fire District and the Bedford community.

The CLC has broadly organized our mandate into three primary and sequential components. We have completed work on the first two and can report the following findings:

- 1. Determine the viability of renovating the existing firehouse/emergency services department to meet state and industry codes and best practices; thereby precluding the need for an alternate site***

We began our work with the premise that remaining in the existing space would be the preferred option. To that end, we conducted a detailed review of regulatory mandates and best practices that govern emergency services in New York State, an analysis of the functionality and cost efficacy of comparable firehouses, and an exploration into the engineering practicality of such a renovation.

The result of this work was unfortunately to conclude that renovations to the current site are practically and economically prohibitive and that any renovation would be inadequate

to meet the needs of our community. There are many technical reasons why this is the case. The reasons include the limited existing footprint (1/3 acre), the inability to build on nearby land (owned by the Bedford Historical Society and leased to the post office), presence of wetlands behind the firehouse, the requirements to build an expensive piled foundation to support the equipment, and the need to have the retrofit comply with eight different sets of codes. Importantly, even if a renovation were pursued, the limits of the footprint would result in structure that could not adequately deploy the required apparatus in a timely enough manner to adequately address the current and future needs of our community.

2. *Should a new site be required, evaluate the process the BVFD used to select the location under discussion (550 Old Post Road), as well as any other potential sites*

The CLC carefully reviewed a detailed mapping of locations of highest response requirement, as well as locations from which volunteers respond with the intention of ensuring that any potential site would be centrally located to the department's service area. Additionally, traffic patterns were analyzed for their impact on response times so as to optimize the safety of our community. The CLC also reviewed the seven locations that the BVFD has considered over the past years and gained an understanding of the viability of these sites in light of cost, environmental and response-time considerations.

This review has enabled the CLC to conclude that the BVFD diligently evaluated multiple properties and that the community is best served by siting a new firehouse/emergency services department at 550 Old Post Road, as the site is significantly preferable to any other apparent alternative.

3. *Should a new firehouse be built, how can the design and construction most effectively mitigate the tax, town, and environmental impacts*

The CLC is now busy with the third component of our process, working with the BVFD on the design and construction plans for the new fire department. In summary, we are looking at how the BVFD can create a smaller and cheaper alternative to what was initially proposed, while still meeting the department's requirements and being mindful of the town's aesthetics. The contributions of architects and engineers on the CLC have greatly helped this process by providing thoughtful and creative solutions that are hashed out in collaborative and practical sessions with the BVFD. This work is ongoing.

The CLC will continue to keep the community apprised of our findings. We also welcome comments and questions by email to: CLCBFD@gmail.com

Respectfully submitted,

The Community Liaison Committee

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