

Q. I've heard that an exercise room for the first responders is being considered for the new building. Can you explain the rationale behind that decision? It seems indulgent!

A. Although there is a space that could ultimately be used as a gym, this revised proposal excludes the purchase of fitness equipment from the project budget; any fitness equipment that is added will be donated and not a taxpayer expense.

That said; New York State requires Fire Districts to provide their first responders access to physical fitness facilities. These guidelines allow our volunteer firefighters and EMTs to attain the strength, agility, and stamina needed to handle the myriad crises that they confront each day.

The vast majority of modern firehouses have in-house fitness equipment. Having this resource on site would help keep our volunteers at the firehouse, reducing emergency response times.

Additionally, there is an economic advantage to providing this important professional development resource -- currently, the BVFD spends approximately \$15,000 of taxpayer funds per year to cover the costs of gym memberships of our volunteer corps. Putting an exercise room in a 75-year facility will save money over the long term.