

# UPDATE FOR THE COMMUNITY

## REVISED BVFD Firehouse/Emergency Services Project

*Submitted by: the Community Liaison Committee (CLC)*  
*December 2019*

Since its formation last April, the Community Liaison Committee (CLC) has conducted significant due diligence around the Bedford Village Fire District's (BVFD) revised plans for a new firehouse/emergency services department facility. The credentials of the members of the CLC include experience in architecture, engineering, finance and real estate, as well as representation on the Bedford Historical Society and Bedford Riding Lanes Association. The due diligence performed by the CLC has included data requests from the BVFD, independent verification of data, visits to other fire departments, and interviews with architects and construction professionals.

**While half the members of the CLC voted against the original April 2019 bond proposal, as a result of significant changes requested by the CLC and incorporated into the revised proposal and our due diligence review of all key aspects of the revised plan, ALL the members of the CLC plan to vote IN FAVOR of the bond proposal on January 14, 2020 to fund a new firehouse and recommend that all our Bedford neighbors do the same.**

### *Here's why:*

The CLC began its work with the premise that remaining in the existing firehouse would be preferable to constructing a new facility. Unfortunately, we concluded as a result of our thorough evaluation of existing conditions and needs, the required renovations and reconstruction are so significant as to be operationally, logistically and financially not feasible at the current site. (For more details please refer to our update dated September 2019).

While the existing firehouse is not suitable to meet the needs of the Bedford Village Fire District, it can be repurposed for other uses and we look forward to seeing what will occupy this special space in our village.

Only once we concluded that the BVFD could not feasibly remain in the existing firehouse did we begin our work to understand if a new firehouse is built, how can the design and construction most effectively mitigate the tax, town, and environmental impacts?

To answer this, the CLC explored two key project aspects - cost and design:

- *Total Cost – Is the revised project being constructed in a fiscally prudent manner?*

The current proposal is less expensive than the original across several key metrics:

	<b>Original Proposal</b>	<b>Current Proposal</b>	<b>% Change</b>
<b>Total Project Cost</b>	\$21,225,000	\$15,717,000	-26%
<b>Building</b>	\$14,900,000	\$10,600,000	-28.9%
<b>Furniture, Fixtures, Equipment</b>	\$725,000	\$315,000	-56.6%

We have reviewed the work of the BVFD and its project planning committee and can confirm that tough choices on reduced space, revised strategic operating decisions and thoughtful value-engineering have driven these savings and that they do not adversely impact the day-to-day functionality of the department in any meaningful way.

We supported the District’s decision to hire a Construction Manager who helped identify areas for savings, validate and manage the construction budget. His work, along with the additional due diligence undertaken by the CLC and the BVFD, has increased our confidence that this reduced budget is realistic and achievable. Also, the additional work and value engineering addressed concerns regarding potential cost overruns due to unforeseen circumstances once construction is underway.

After researching comparable NY area firehouses and taking into consideration NY State’s applicable rules and regulations (Wick’s Law and Prevailing Wage) impacting public construction projects, including this one, our analysis indicates that the revised project size and costs are in-line with those fire districts.

- *Efficacy and Aesthetic of Design- Does the firehouse address the requirements of the community, including the volunteer corps’ need for functional, up-to-date and safe space? Can the design accommodate growth and future innovation, ensuring its suitability into the future? Does the design fit within the aesthetic of the town and the nearby Village Green?*

A newly-hired local architect who has broad experience with this type of project has developed the revised project proposal. His design, responsive to community and CLC feedback, is for a building that is significantly smaller

than the original proposal in height, square footage and interior volume, but which is still highly functional, allowing for optimized access, egress, and response, with space to accommodate future needs.

	<b>Original Proposal</b>	<b>Current Proposal</b>	<b>% Change</b>
<b>Height</b>	48 FT	39 FT	-18.8%
<b>Square Footage</b>	24,678 SF	20,189 SF	-18.2%
<b>Site Footprint</b>	13,610 SF	12,637 SF	-7.1%
<b>Volume</b>	430,515 CF	293,316 CF	-27.3%

Both the size and design are consistent with other public buildings in town and architecturally in-keeping with the character of our historic village.

Based on the diligence conducted by the CLC, we therefore concluded that:

- 1. Remaining in the existing firehouse is operationally, logistically and financially not feasible.**
- 2. The cost of the new firehouse reflects fiscal prudence and is in-line with those of similar fire districts.**
- 3. The new design is in keeping with the aesthetic of the town, is responsive to the needs of the residents and will allow the BVFD to operate in a safe and responsive manner into the future.**

The members of the CLC believe it is important to address one additional issue that has come to concern us and could impact the entire community:

WHAT IS AT RISK IF THIS REVISED BOND PROPOSAL FAILS ON JANUARY 14, 2020?

In our months of discussions with the BVFD, we have heard and take seriously the potential deleterious and demoralizing effect on the Bedford Fire Department's all-volunteer force of another defeat of the proposal to build a new firehouse that would address the inadequacies of the present facility that pose significant health and safety risks. The Department's commitment to their life-saving work has not wavered and the volunteers continue to serve our community despite the indisputably difficult and unsafe environment from which they operate.

In the course of our diligence, we have had the opportunity to speak with many members of the BVFD and their families. Based on those discussions, we have asked

ourselves if the Department could continue to attract, train and retain volunteers in such challenging conditions without a positive vote that indicates community support for the safety of the volunteers in this mission critical work. This concern is particularly strong in light of significant input from the community and the CLC that has led to a smaller, less costly and better designed proposed structure that has addressed all reasonable concerns raised by the community. As community members, we recognize the significant negative impact such a result could have on the fabric of our community and the materially increased tax burden we all would bear should the voluntary nature of the department change. The CLC hopes all citizens will keep this concern in mind at the ballot box.

Respectfully submitted,

The Community Liaison Committee

*Kirtley Cameron, Mufit Cinali, Ellis Cousens, Christina Dochtermann, Charles Goldman, Anna Kenoff, Joe McKenney, Paul Thomasset*

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#### About the CLC

The Community Liaison Committee (CLC) was formed last spring in response to community's "NO" vote on the initial new firehouse/emergency services department project proposed by the Bedford Village Fire District (BVFD). The members of the CLC include individuals who voted against the initial proposal and individuals whose vote was best characterized as a "reluctant yes." Additional information about the CLC, our membership, and our work can be found at: [www.BedfordVillageFireDistrict.com](http://www.BedfordVillageFireDistrict.com) ("New Firehouse" tab).

To obtain a complete copy of the CLC's initial opinion report and/or to share comments or ask questions, please email: [CLCBFD@gmail.com](mailto:CLCBFD@gmail.com)

Please join members of the CLC on **Wednesday, December 18<sup>th</sup> from 9:30-11:00am** at the **Bedford Presbyterian Church (Village Green)** for an information session to explain our work and answer any questions you may have of our group. Email [NFC@bedfordfire.com](mailto:NFC@bedfordfire.com) to register or with questions.