

**MINUTES FOR EXETER FACILITIES ADVISORY COMMITTEE (FAC)
MEETING, THURSDAY AUGUST 13, 2020**

TIME: 4-6:15 pm, Socially distanced Site Visit to Public Safety Complex, 20 Court Street, Exeter, NH 03833

Attendees: Kris Weeks, Vice Chair; Mark Leighton, Peter Lennon, Clerk; Daryl Brown, Select Board Representative; Fire Chief Eric Wilking, Deputy Police Chief Michael Munck; Jeff Beck, Department of Public Works (DPW) Maintenance Supervisor.

Scribe: Peter Lennon

1. **Previous Minutes:** The FAC approved the Minutes of the July 30, 2020 meeting.
2. **Site Visit:** The FAC made a site visit to the headquarters of the Exeter Police and Fire Departments in the Town Public Safety Complex. The two-story, brick and concrete block building was constructed in 1979 and is about 18,000 square feet.

The Police Department (PD) occupies about 6,500 square feet on the first and second floors, which includes the Town's Dispatch and Emergency Communications Center of about 500 square feet on the first floor. The Fire Department (FD) occupies about 11,500 square feet on the first and second floor, which includes the Town's Emergency Operations Command Center on the second floor.

Among other functions, the Police Department first floor space houses a sally port, three holding cells, an interview room, a booking/fingerprint area, PD and Town computer servers, and a lobby/reception area. The sally port is also used to store the PD motorcycle, ammunition, and other equipment. Second floor space includes offices for the Chief, Deputy Chief, Detectives and prosecutor, an interview room, uniform/equipment storage, a kitchenette/breakroom/small meeting room, and separate bath/shower rooms for male and female personnel.

All PD vehicles, with the exception of the motorcycle, are parked outdoors in an adjacent lot with limited or no protection from the winter elements.

The FD's first floor includes five drive-through equipment bays for about eight vehicles, equipment and parts storage (including Personal Protective Equipment), hazardous materials washer/dryer and conventional washers/dryers, mechanical spaces, and FD and Town government computer servers. The FD's second floor includes Chief and Assistant Chief offices, administrative space for other officers, unisex-only bath/shower facilities, and six 2-person unisex bunk rooms.

Most of the FD's vehicles are parked inside the Public Safety Complex.

Main Observations and Conclusions from Site Visit:

Police Department --

- I. The building's lobby/reception area needs additional protection upgrades according to Deputy PD Chief Munck and DPW Maintenance Supervisor Beck.

- II. According to Mr. Beck, needed entry-way repairs are on hold pending decisions about a new Public Safety Complex and potential extensive renovations to the existing structure.
- III. DChief Munck reported that replacing the building's surveillance system cameras also is on hold pending decisions about the new facility.
- IV. The PD Sergeant's Office is too small to accommodate roll call briefings encompassing the entire patrol shift, Detectives, and dispatchers during shift changes, DChief Munck reported.
- V. Computer server rooms in both the PD and FD lack fire suppression systems and adequate environmental controls to protect sensitive computers.
- VI. DChief Munck stated that the first-floor Evidence Room lacks adequate space, as do interview rooms on both floors.
- VII. Detective offices on the second floor have experienced floor settling and ice and water damage, he said.
- VIII. The entire public safety complex is almost inaccessible to the disabled due to lacking an elevator both DChief Munck and Fire Chief Wilking said.

Vice Chair Weeks asked DChief Munck whether the PD agreed with the recent Public Safety Study's findings and recommendations for the PD. DChief Munck said he and Chief Stephan Poulin thought it was "a good and fair report, and there was not a lot with which we would disagree." He did say that the Study's authors may not have understood how the Dispatch system works.

Fire Chief Wilking indicated that the Study's treatment of facilities alternatives was not as in-depth as he would have preferred, and that the Study's authors will provide some additional analysis about location alternatives.

He characterized this added information as the "beginning of the analysis of alternatives that we would continue with the PD/FD project in the new Fiscal Years 2021-2026 (FY 20-26) Capital Improvement Program (CIP)" being drafted for the upcoming Town budget cycle.

Member Leighton indicated that the FAC wanted to help in the decision-making about the facilities alternatives with the goal of identifying "how much each cost and what is affordable, and what is the most feasible and effective."

(These Minutes contain an expanded discussion of this \$400,000 project later in the meeting.)

Fire Department –

- I. Regarding ongoing facility questions, especially with the security surveillance systems, Chief Wilking asked if both departments remained in the current facility for the years it would take to acquire newer facilities, did it make sense to accomplish some of the maintenance projects now on hold?
- II. The Chief said the Study highlighted a "huge deficit" between current times to dispatch the FD and desired national standards. The Dispatch system is not automated, is too slow, and there is too much human intervention, he said. More computer-to-computer connectivity between the statewide dispatch system in Concord and Exeter's system is needed to address this issue, he said.

- III. Every bathroom in the FD is unisex and construction of another, likely unisex, bathroom/shower for all firefighters is underway.
- IV. Chief Wilking pointed out the cramped conditions of the existing building and said there was not enough space to “move around” the ladder truck in its tight garage. This garage also houses the fitness room used by both the FD and PD.
- V. The outdoor parking lot shared with the PD is too small for private vehicles owned by additional firefighters expected to be recruited in the near future, he said.
- VI. The current facility and its outdoor parking lot do not have enough space to store the FD’s Hazardous Materials Equipment Trailer, which is stored 7-10 minutes or 3.4-4.1 miles away, the Chief said.
- VII. The Chief said that the Town’s fire alarm system represented 1950’s technology and that the automated “brains of the system” are located in a non-air conditioned and non-climate controlled industrial area in the FD part of the building. The FAC noted the cramped and stifling hot conditions in this area.
- VIII. Chief Wilking showed the FAC that this tight, hot area also housed other Town information technology systems and the Town’s fiber optic system terminus.
- IX. To accommodate current staffing levels, the FD living quarters had to be expanded into a former storage closet, he said
- X. The air conditioning in the current building is fairly modern as it was replaced in the past 3-5 years, Maintenance Supervisor Beck said.

General Observations --

- I. Maintenance Supervisor Beck characterized the current building as embodying “early-to-mid 1980’s technology levels.”
3. **Discussion of the \$400,000 CIP Public Safety Project:** This FY 21-26 CIP item is Listed as an “Alternative Analysis” and “Design & Engineering” in the project request form. As proposed, it would include a space needs assessment for both Departments, the Dispatch Emergency Communications Center, and the Emergency Operations Center.

It also would accomplish a facilities analysis of alternatives and then begin design and engineering efforts to produce a construction cost estimate and construction documents and blueprints, including architectural, civil, structural, plumbing, mechanical, and electrical plans.

During the FAC’s discussion of the project, Chief Wilking said that, if plans for a new facility moved out the PD and retained the FD in a renovated current complex, he still believes the FD would need a second location in town.

Mr. Leighton said that the Town needed a new Public Safety facility for operational, security, and information technology reasons and for disabled accessibility. However, he stated that the CIP project should focus on the analysis of alternatives (AOA) and a feasibility assessment of these alternatives, and that such an effort could be obtained for \$100,000-\$150,000.

He said that such an effort “will help define the options and sell better to the voters.”

He said that “asking for \$400,000 is risky and you won’t get it,” alluding to the Town’s rejection for the current FY of a \$10.85 million Exeter Recreation Department Renovation/Expansion. He suggested that funding construction designs, blueprints, and plans as described in the Project Request Form was premature until after a full analysis of alternatives/feasibility study was completed and assessed by Town stakeholders.

He also indicated that the AOA/feasibility assessment should seek inputs from more Town stakeholders than just the PD and FD.

Vice Chair Weeks and Mr. Lennon strongly supported Mr. Leighton’s position both for the need for a new facility and for narrowing the cost and scope of the next phase of the project.

Mr. Lennon said that the Recreation Department warrant article experience demonstrated that the voters are more likely to support a less ambitious approach for a new Public Safety Complex. He suggested that the Recreation project combined study/design effort only involved Recreation Department adherents and the architect/design agent, and that, as a result, it produced a costly, “gold-plated” design rejected by the voters.

Mr. Lennon also suggested to Chief Wilking that, even if he was convinced that a second fire station still was needed after a new Public Safety facility is built, advocating for both at the same time was likely to jeopardize them.

He also said it was clear that the voters have not supported a second fire station ever since the initial recommendation for it was made in 2007. He said that two fire stations might be “the best” solution, but that it was “the enemy of the good solution or the good enough solution,” one new Public Safety building.

The FAC decided at its discussion after the site visit that it would draft a letter to the Planning Board for its August 27, 2020 meeting and/or Budget Recommendations Committee stating its position on the Public Safety CIP project. Vice Chair Weeks and Mr. Leighton volunteered to do the initial drafting of bullet points that Mr. Lennon would use in drafting the letter.