

**Facilities Advisory Committee  
Special Meeting Draft Minutes  
February 22, 2022  
5:30 pm**

Attendees: Kris Weeks, Mark Leighton, Peter Lennon, Amanda Kelly, Dave Sharples,  
Chief Wilking, Chief Poulin

- 1) Comments on the PSC
  - a) Peter Lennon presented some notional options to the Committee and Chiefs to begin a discussion of good-better-best
  - b) Mark Leighton brought up the need to compare the current and proposed programs side-by-side
  - c) Dave Sharples explained that the Town does not intend to put both departments on the ballot at the same time/in the same year
  - d) Mark Leighton suggested we review the program and Kris Weeks suggested we get some feedback on the “meat” of the various options; Peter Lennon questioned how we can do this without attaching costs
  - e) Dave Sharples suggested we could have LB do the estimate for FD taking over the whole 20 Ct. building, building a substation for FD, and building just a PD (both downtown on 32 Ct. and on Continental Dr. for comparison, after the Town vote March 8th)
  - f) Mark Leighton confirmed we should be able to ask can you show us option X and option Y and separate out the escalation factor
  - g) Amanda Kelly described a need for understanding current measurements on each line item in the facility descriptions
- 2) Questions for Town
  - a) Survey with being advertised at Voting Day on March 8<sup>th</sup>
    - i) Do you strongly prefer PD downtown? Even if significantly more expensive?
- 3) Questions for LBA
  - a) New option #4 that includes downtown
  - b) Others TBD via email to Kris
- 4) Peter Lennon moved to adjourn; Amanda Kelly seconded; the motion passed 4-0.

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## **EXETER FIRE DEPARTMENT SPATIAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Municipal Resources, Incorporated, (MRI) of Plymouth, New Hampshire was engaged by Lavallee/Brensinger Architects to conduct an independent assessment of the current and anticipated spatial needs of the Exeter Police and Fire Departments. This required an evaluation of the current Exeter Public Safety Complex located at 20 Court Street, Exeter, New Hampshire. The Exeter Fire Department (EFD) currently operates from this single centrally located/strategically positioned facility to provide the appropriate deployment of fire, rescue, emergency management and emergency medical services to the community. Although the current facility is located within the downtown area, the EFD struggles to provide rapid response times to the outlying areas of the 19.9 square miles that makeup the community.

### **METHODOLOGY**

MRI Director of Fire/EMS Services Brian Duggan met with Lavallee/Brensinger Architect Robert Robicsek. In addition, Brian also met with Fire Chief Eric Wilking and members of the command staff at the Exeter Public Safety Complex to gather an overview of practical uses of existing space needed for this assessment. Though the physical structure was assessed by an MRI team in the broader sense of a combined public safety services complex, Mr. Duggan's study was limited to the practical space use of those areas occupied and used by the EFD to obtain an overview of the use and operational limitations of existing space.

During this site visit, Mr. Robicsek described planning and design challenges to the structure due to original construction, property lines, the potential of nearby historic buildings, and other limiting factors. Chief Wilking explained that the original structure had been renovated several times since the original 1978 construction to meet the expanding needs of the Fire Department. Chief Wilking provided an overview of the station and outlined operational challenges faced by

the EFD based on the configuration and size of this critical facility. The Chief made it clear that any improvements to this station had been overshadowed by the increasing challenges presented by the expanding mission and increasing operational complexity of the EFD.

A description of the organization, expanding mission, and overall operations of the EFD was provided by Chief Wilking and Deputy Chief Matheson. This discussion identified the Department's operational challenges, immediate needs, and the level of fire, rescue, and emergency medical services (EMS) provided to the community. In addition, the discussion outlined the anticipated resources necessary to maintain the level of service expected by the community.

The current EFD facility provides workspace for 32 personnel. This includes 30 sworn fire service personnel and 2 non-sworn civilian employees. Common uses of fire rescue spaces by the command staff, fire officers, firefighters, health, fire prevention and administrative support staff and other practical users of the facilities were described and observed. Our observations, coupled with a pictorial narrative created by EFD Personnel, provided insight to the current state of space usage, proximity of linked critical tasks, frequency of use, storage, public access to needed services within the facility, safety/security, privacy, workflow, and other commonly experienced uses of the structure. Externally, we noted accessibility, parking, and physical security features of the structure, as well as externally positioned critical communications infrastructure.

During a tour of the facility, Chief Wilking detailed operational challenges and pointed out spaces that had been adapted to meet the expanding needs of the department, construction of flooring where an atrium previously existed, repurposing of hallways and storage closets, and the reduction in living space required to accommodate a new unisex shower/restroom that was recently installed to provide more appropriate facilities for female firefighters. Additional data was collected during a comprehensive tour of every fire department space within the existing structure and of the town owned footprint immediately surrounding the building.

MRI observations, and narratives developed by Exeter Fire rescue staff, provided insight to the current state of space usage, frequency of use (including some over capacity use during training and surge events), storage, public access to needed services within the facility, safety/security and privacy, workflow, and other commonly experienced challenges.

Chief Wilking also provided an overview of the staffing model is currently utilized, discussed anticipated increases in the staffing model, and identified what spatial needs specific

operational areas within the Department may require. In a discussion with our team, the Chief outlined multiuse spaces, operational workflow and the emerging need for the separation of fire service spaces based on the potential of cross contamination and infection of personnel. There was also discussion of the need for the fire service to better accommodate both male and female staff. As the EFD is a response focused organization, the impact of a personnel surge during emergency operations, meetings and training was reviewed. The communities and external agency use of these facilities for meetings and events was also discussed.

Based on our conversation with the command staff which were coupled with our own direct observation current needs for fire and EMS operations include the following critical issues:

- Organization of workspace for efficient operations.
- Appropriate offices and staff workspace for shift personnel.
- A training facility that can accommodate all personnel in the organization.
- The development ergonomic workflow through appropriate spatial design.
- Expanded administrative spaces including offices, conference rooms, fire prevention/plan review space.
- Sufficient space to accommodate public education and community functions.
- Improved records retention and storage space.
- Expanded living space.

This report concludes with recommendations for resolving immediate space needs while projecting anticipated needs of the fire department for the efficient and effective delivery of fire rescue services to the Town for the reasonably foreseeable future.

## Exeter Fire Rescue Organizational Profile



Figure 1- Exeter Fire Department Logo

Exeter Fire Rescue is a full-service life safety organization that provides the community with a wide range of emergency and non-emergency services including fire suppression, rescue, fire prevention, life safety education, public health and emergency management services.

In addition, Department provides state of the art pre-hospital emergency medical services (EMS) at the Advanced Life Support (ALS) level to the Town of Exeter 24/7 365 days a year. To facilitate the provision of transport EMS services the

Department operates two ambulances staffed 24 hours a day up to the paramedic level. The Department also delivers occasional emergency transfer services to critical patients at Exeter Hospital. The increase in demand for EMS services will require the addition of a third ambulance as a backup unit within the next two years. The current apparatus bays will not be able to accommodate this additional vehicle.

To provide the expected level of service to the community, the Department employs 34 members as detailed below:

- 32 fulltime employees,
- 2 Civilian Fulltime employees

In Exeter, the current public safety complex forms an operational platform that serves as a foundation for the response to approximately 3,400 emergency incidents per year.

Utilization of department services have steadily risen and today the organization is managing more calls for service than 10-years ago. This increase in demand coupled with an aging demographic and a slowly increasing population are the three factors that drive the specific composition of the staffing model. The current staffing pattern provides operational response shifts staffed at six or seven personnel with a minimum of five personnel on-duty on a 24/7 basis. In addition, seven administrative staff members utilize this facility during normal business hours.

The December 2020 CPSM study concluded that the operational staffing level of the EFD should increase to eight personnel assigned to each shift with a minimum on duty complement of seven personnel on a 24/7 basis. Based on our experience and observations in Exeter, we concur with the need to incrementally increase staffing to a level of eight personnel assigned to each shift and a minimum staffing complement of seven personnel on duty 24/7. It is expected that to maintain an appropriate service level to the community administrative and operational staff will both increase over the next few years increasing the strain and exceeding the capacity of the current facility. It is anticipated that fire service facilities in Exeter will need to accommodate a staff of 42 personnel within the next decade. This includes eight personnel assigned to each shift and ten administrative positions.

As is the case with most fire service organizations, EMS calls have become the most frequent response event, this high level of demand for transport EMS services can be expected to continue as the population ages and demographic changes impact the Town. This service shift

will require the addition of a third ambulance within the next two years. Exeter Fire Rescue has evolved with the needs of the community into a modern-day high quality emergency services organization.

### **Fire Service Facilities - Modern Components of a Response Platform**

A fire station supports the needs of the Fire Department and the community in which it is located. It must accommodate extremely diverse functions, including housing, recreation, administration, training, community education, equipment and vehicle storage, equipment and vehicle maintenance, and hazardous materials storage. While it is usually only occupied by trained personnel, the facility may also need to accommodate the public for community education or out-reach programs. Fire stations will vary somewhat in design depending on the specific mission, i.e., the types of emergencies that will be responded to or the types of fires that will be fought. The location of the facility is largely driven by the need to minimize response times.

Major fire station functional areas include the following:

- **Apparatus bay(s):** This is where the firefighting and emergency response vehicles are stored.
- **Apparatus bay support and vehicle maintenance:** These industrial spaces are where the vehicles and other firefighting equipment are cleaned, maintained, and stored.
- **Administrative and training areas:** These areas include offices, dispatch facilities, and training and conference rooms
- **Residential areas:** These include the dorm rooms, day room/kitchen, and residential support areas such as bathrooms and fitness spaces.
- **Decontamination Areas:** this is where contaminated personal protective equipment (PPE) and EMS gear are separated from other operational areas of the structure and properly decontaminated. Based upon the emerging knowledge relative to the occurrence of cancer in the fire service and recent

public health events, decontamination has become a critical component of every fire station.

The four primary drivers for facility layout and functional space adjacencies in a fire station are the following:

1. Ensure that internal response times can be met (time for a firefighter to reach the apparatus and be ready to depart).
2. Separate the diverse and sometimes conflicting functions such as industrial maintenance spaces and residential spaces.
3. Provision of training and educational resources.
4. Avoidance of cross contamination of operational spaces from vehicle exhaust, hazardous materials, biological agents, hydrocarbons, and byproducts of combustion.

### **APPARATUS BAYS**

Sizing the apparatus bay is critical, and it should be designed to accommodate variable vehicle sizes. Typically, the entire room is sized based on the bay size for the largest vehicle in the fleet or the largest anticipated vehicle. Bays also include vehicle exhaust removal systems, compressed air, and power drop lines, and hot and cold water connections. Bay doors must also accommodate the largest vehicle and include a manual means to open, in case of power failure. Ideally, the site will accommodate drive-through bays. Industry best practice avoids stacking multiple first response units behind one another as that could result in an extended response time as apparatus would need to be moved prior to initiating a response.

### **APPARATUS BAY SUPPORT AND VEHICLE MAINTENANCE**

Apparatus bay support functions include cleaning and maintenance areas for the firefighter's self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA), protective clothing, fire extinguishers, and other equipment. It also includes storage areas for firefighting gear and equipment and secure

storage for medical supplies. Some of these areas are specialized spaces for disinfecting protective equipment and for maintaining and recharging the SCBA in a clean environment. Separation between spaces is required for many of these functions.

Fire suppression agent storage is typically provided in a single-story structure separate from the fire station building. It should be located along the drive leading into the apparatus bay for ease of loading and unloading of firefighting agents. In some cases, it may be attached to the main structure. A vehicle maintenance bay may also be included in a fire station.

### **ADMINISTRATIVE AND TRAINING AREAS**

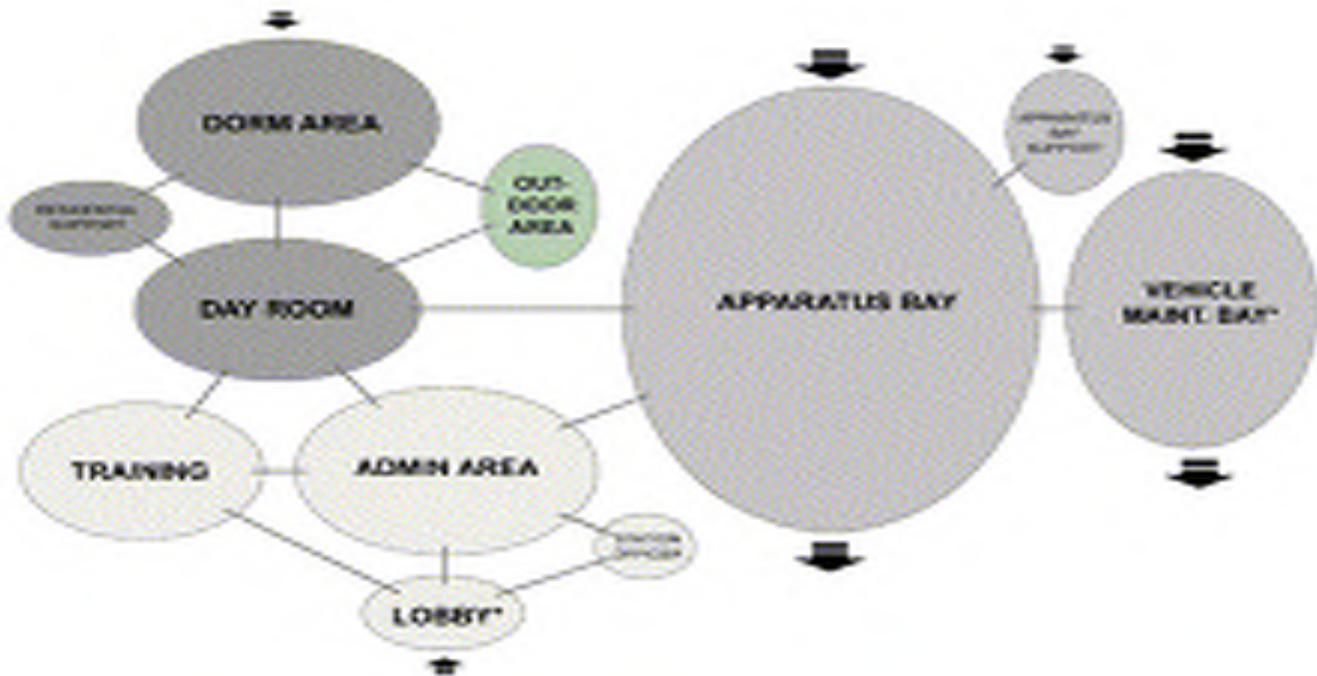
Administrative areas include standard offices and conference and training rooms. The area will also likely include additional specialized spaces such as the Chief's office with sleeping and shower facilities and computer training/testing facilities, for firefighter continuing education. Some stations may include a highly specialized dispatch room for receiving emergency calls from the public.

### **RESIDENTIAL AREAS**

The day room accommodates kitchen, dining, living and recreation functions. It is often separated into subspaces for those three functions, but an open design may also be effective to encourage interaction between the spaces. Based on generational changes many Departments find that this open concept promotes teamwork as it limits individual isolation. The dining space may also double as training or meeting space and might include provisions for audiovisual equipment.

When planning for a fire station, consideration should be given to incorporating dorm rooms into the design. Regardless if a fire station is manned fulltime or a volunteer/call fire station there are times when fire station coverage for long periods of time is needed. Prolonged weather events or disasters require long term response activities of fire personnel. Dorm room designs can vary widely from station to station and department to department. Each firefighter is provided with a place to sleep, work, and store personal items. Careful consideration should be given to the location and design of the area to ensure response times can be met. See Emerging Issues below for more information on dorm rooms.

The diagram below provides an overview of modern fire station design elements.



**Figure 2**  
**Diagram of Modern Fire Station Design Elements and Operational Flow**

Other residential areas include a laundry room, a physical fitness room, male and female bathrooms, showers, and locker rooms. Reflecting industry best practice multiple showers should be provided as personnel should be required to shower upon the return from every structure fire where they were operating in an immediately dangerous to life and health (IDLH) environment.

The diagram on the following page provides an example of the configuration of a portion of the residential area at a moderate size fire station.

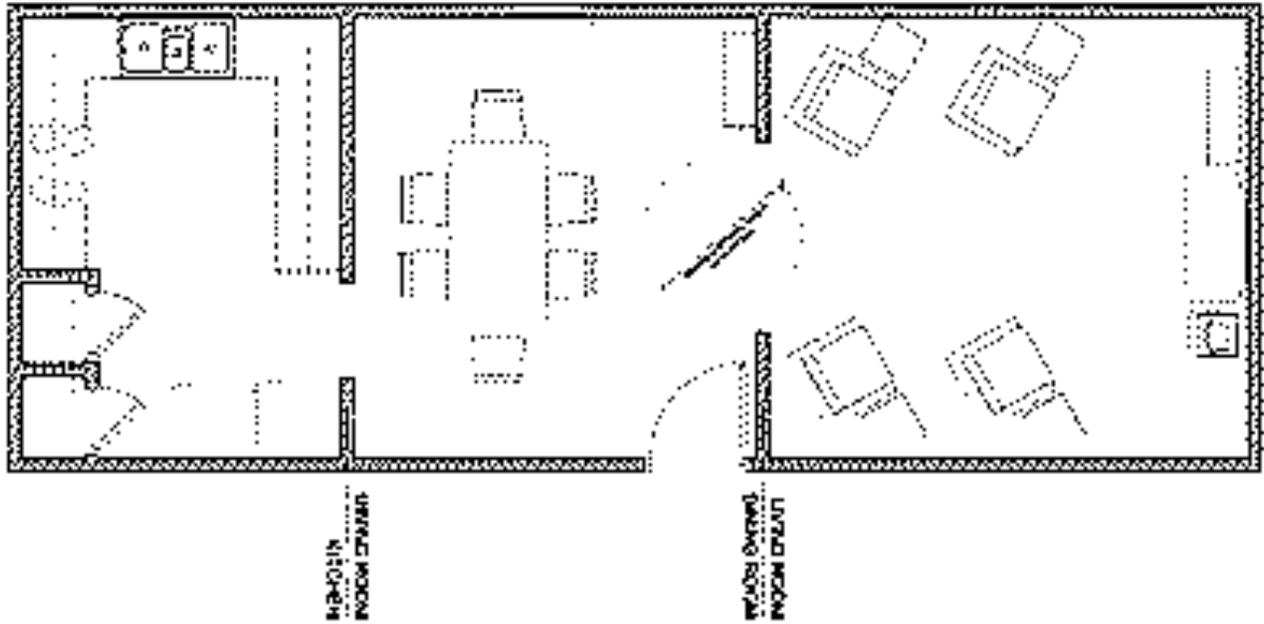


Figure 3 - Configuration of Residential Areas

## NEEDS ASSESSMENT

### Description of Fire/Rescue Facilities

#### Exeter Public Safety Complex



**Figure 4 – Exeter Public Safety Complex, 20 Court Street**

#### Facility Overview – Central Fire Station located at 20 Court Street

The public safety complex at 20 court Street is positioned within downtown Exeter and is the sole facility operated by the EFD. Serving as headquarters, this facility is the operational platform for all functions of the Department which include the following:

- Emergency medical response operations
- Fire suppression operations
- Fire and EMS training
- Fire Prevention/code enforcement
- Emergency management
- Public health
- Public safety telecommunications



**Figure 5 - Exeter Engine 4**

The current station was constructed in 1978 as a replacement for an older Central Fire Station which was located at 30 Court Street. This facility houses eight vehicles including three engines, one rescue/pumper, one Ladder, one forestry/brush trucks, and two ambulances. It is worth noting that based on a lack of space, currently six pieces of support equipment are currently stored outside this includes the following: one 49-foot aerial lift truck, one 16-foot inflatable rescue boat, one utility truck with plow, two special operations trailers and one emergency lighting unit.

The EFD is staffed with a minimum of five full time personnel that provide a rapid response force to the community, on a 24/7 basis. It is apparent that the staffing model utilized by the EFD has placed a strain on the capacity of this facility. Our analysis revealed that the current public safety complex is insufficient to meet the future fire and EMS needs of the Town.

### **Facility Configuration**

**Administrative and Training Space:** Chief's office, command staff offices, administrative office, fire prevention office, public health office, Emergency Operations Center (EOC)/training Room/report writing area.

**Residential Space:** Day Room, bunk rooms, shift commanders office, kitchen/dining room, pantry, unisex male and female restrooms and showers, laundry room/mailroom/pantry, physical fitness room.

**Other Spaces:** Public Restrooms, lobby, vestibule, communications room (public safety dispatch), EMS supply, IT, alarm processing, storage space (Communications Infrastructure)

**Apparatus Bays:** Five apparatus bays that can accommodate eight pieces of apparatus. The station currently houses eight vehicles including three engines, one rescue/pumper, one Ladder, one forestry/brush trucks, and two ambulances. Three bays exit through the congested rear parking. In addition, the physical fitness equipment is located on the apparatus floor.

**Storage Space:** Records storage, protective clothing room, tool crib and maintenance room, utility and janitorial room, seasonal storage area, equipment room, technology, communications and alarm infrastructure room and supply storage.

**Parking Lot:** This lot provides parking for approximately 30 vehicles which includes police vehicles (10 spots), exterior fire department storage (6 spots) and police/fire employee and administrative parking. The rear parking lot is also the response path for apparatus that use the three rear bays. There is also a second 10 space lot on the side which is used for public access and employee overflow. In addition, some on street parking (on Bow Street) is utilized for public access.



**Figure 6 – Rear Parking Lot (double parked vehicles to keep the parking lot response route clear).**

Considering the use of the structure and the amount of exterior public safety operational use, these spaces is not adequate to accommodate existing needs. The congestion of this space is demonstrated by the need to double park employee vehicles in an effort to maximize the use of this area. In addition, it is also difficult to maneuver apparatus around vehicles in the rear parking lot. There is a concern of apparatus entering onto Bow Street, during heavy traffic hours as this practice can elongate response times.

## Dispatch



**Figure 7 - Two of Three Dispatch Workstations.**

Dispatching operations are performed within a well-lit, clean, and comfortable appearing space. Though a thorough assessment was not performed, casual observation of electronics suggests that the radio and computer-based systems are modern and capable. Dispatchers do not have easily accessible secure space for the storage of personally owned property while on duty. Limitations of job tasks prohibits the dispatchers from taking restorative breaks away from their workspace. Gender-neutral rest facilities only feet away from the workspace substantially limits privacy. The addition of separate/private rest areas, personally owned property storage area, and equipped meal break room near the communications center is recommended.

### **Facility Needs and Deficiencies**

Overall, this station is functional and well maintained but is currently being utilized beyond its capacity. After touring the facility, we found that the largest issue is the expanding footprint of the Department which produces operational challenges based on the factors listed below:

1. Physical limitations of available space;
2. Lack of appropriate functional adjacency;

3. The station lacks the ability to provide an environment for efficient workflow.

These factors decrease the EFD's overall organizational efficiency and contribute to less than optimal response times. Although the EFD has done an excellent job adapting space in creative ways to meet organizational need, the facility lacks sufficient operational space to accommodate the current needs of the organization. The projection of additional staffing needs will increase this operational strain. The facility should be considered to be at the end of its useful life and the community should be aware that continued use will constrain operations and reduce the quality of services provided to the public.

Operational challenges include:

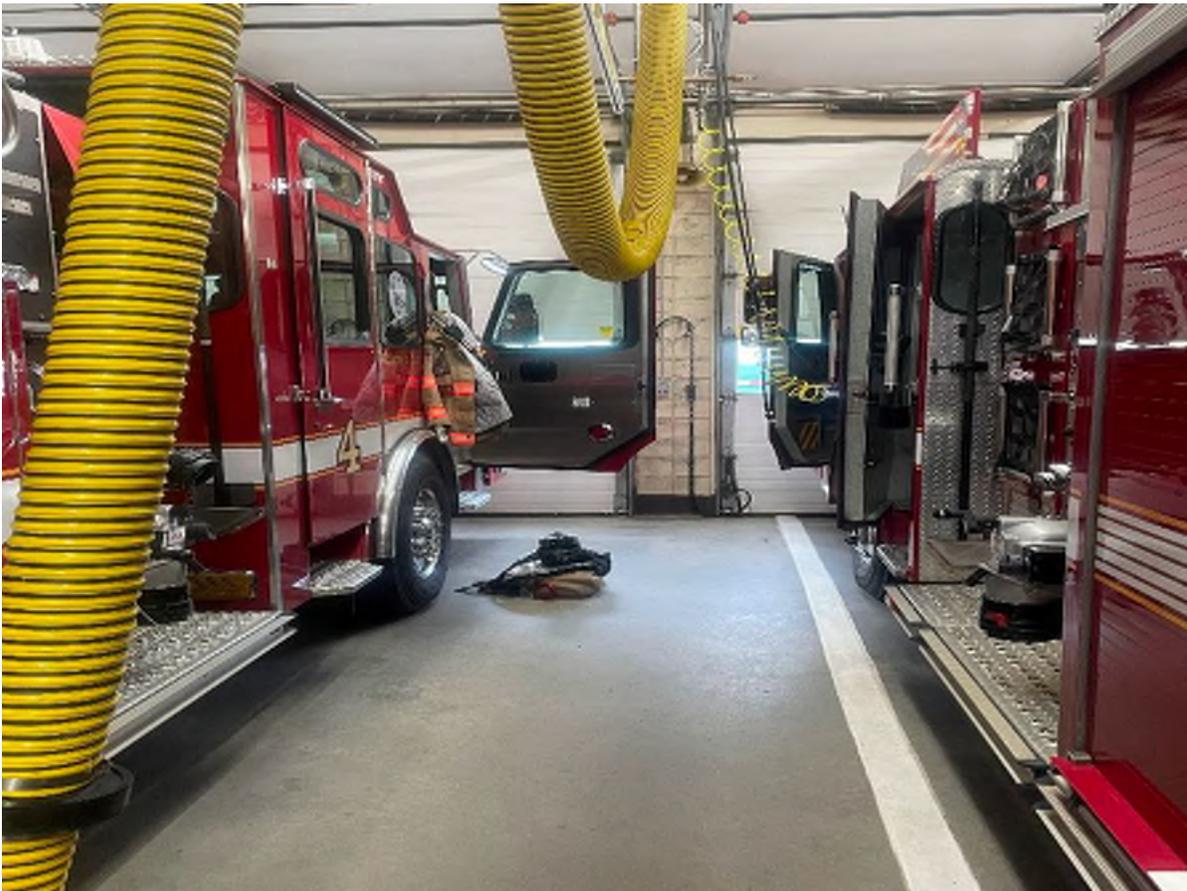
- **A lack of adequate office and administrative space, some offices have been created by moving walls or erecting temporary partitions in open areas.**
- The Public Safety Training Room doubles as the Emergency Operations Center (EOC). This space cannot accommodate a full Department meeting nor would it be suitable as a EOC during a significant community event.
- The EFD Training Room also serves as the space where incident reports are generated. This space is only available when the space is not being utilized for meetings, public safety training or as the EOC.
- **The EOC cannot accommodate additional consoles and hardware.**
- **A lack of gender separated locker rooms exists. All shower facilities and restrooms are unisex.**
- **Based on a lack of space, living quarters include a few multiple occupancy rooms. This is contrary to industry best practice and increases the risk of cross contamination and infection.**
- There is a lack of sufficient walking space in the triple occupancy dorm room.
- **The shift commander's office is combined with his dorm room which is remote from most operations. This is an inefficient practice that was developed out of necessity based on a lack of office space.**
- A lack of space exists to house additional personnel during storms or multiple operational period events.
- There is a lack of appropriate decontamination facilities for either equipment or personnel.
- **Storage areas have exceeded capacity and become multifunction rooms and even living quarters.** This has produced a lack of sufficient storage to accommodate the increasingly complex mission of the fire service.

- **There is a lack of American with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance and easy public access to some administrative areas.**
- **The apparatus bays are at capacity** and several units are stored outside.
- The rear response paths through tight spaces and onto congested street which can complicate response.
- The kitchen lacks sufficient infrastructure to accommodate 24/7 utilization by the on-duty crew.
- The ready room/day room is at capacity and cannot accommodate additional staff.
- As spaces have been adapted living space has been condensed into several cramped multiple use areas. An example is the pantry/laundry/mailroom restroom access space.
- There is no living space to accommodate additional staff.
- Limited ability to “staff up” during storms and other major events.
- Lack of living space separation exists including insufficient single occupancy bunkrooms.
- Administrative offices present with limited space and no rest rooms to accommodate the current seven-person administrative staff.
- Administrative offices have been modified to meet the organization’s needs; this has included developing modified spaces.
- Turnout gear storage on the apparatus floor without separation from dirt, soot, and other potentially carcinogenic particulates.
- A lack of separated decontamination space exists as the current decontamination area is also a restroom.
- The front apron can barely fit larger apparatus. As an example, the aerial ladder barely fits on the front apron. This requires that drivers cautiously negotiate turning onto Court Street. This has already contributed to a significant accident where the building was stuck as apparatus moved out of the station and turned onto Court Street.
- **The IT/communications infrastructure is in a closet/storage area with limited space for expansion.**
- Development of multiple use spaces which have been adapted overtime based on necessity.
- Insufficient parking exists to accommodate current operational need.
- A lack of traction-based flooring provides the potential for slip and fall injuries.
- The generator and utilities are not access protected.

**Note: Items in red were also outlined in the 2020 CPSM Staffing and Deployment Analysis.**

The following images provide a visual reference and documentation of the challenges listed above:

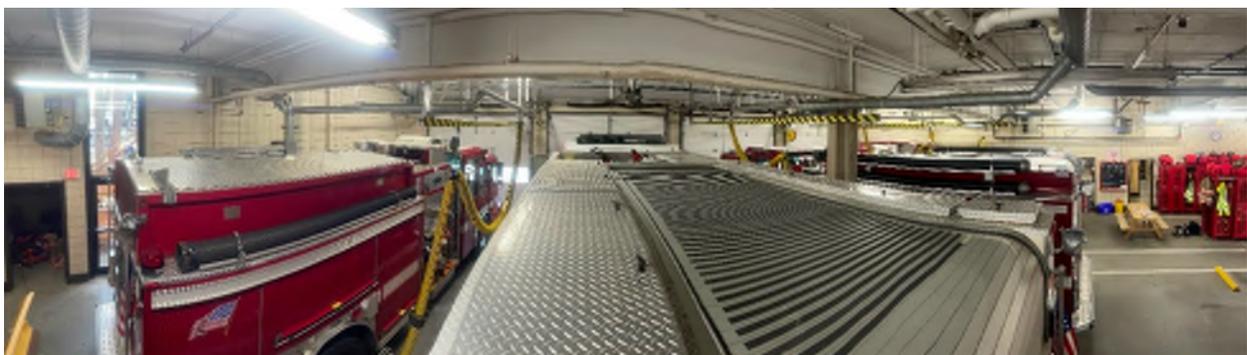
**Apparatus Floor:**



**Figure 8- Limited space Between Parked Apparatus – This space limitation can delay response, plymovents strike adjacent apparatus when they disengage from responding units. A lack of traction-based flooring provides the potential for injury.**



**Figure 9 – Personal protective Equipment Improper Storage - Turnout Gear storage in the apparatus bays decreases the useable space for apparatus, lacks particulate separation, proper ventilation, climate control or protection from UV light which deteriorates the components of turnout gear.**



**Figure 910– Lack of Clearance – Operational Inefficiency - Low ceiling height prevents easy hose loading or filling engines with water.**



Figure 11 – Rear Response Risks - Rear facing response of EMS and forestry units requires vehicles to navigate the police/fire parking lot and enter onto Bow Street which can be congested with stopped traffic.

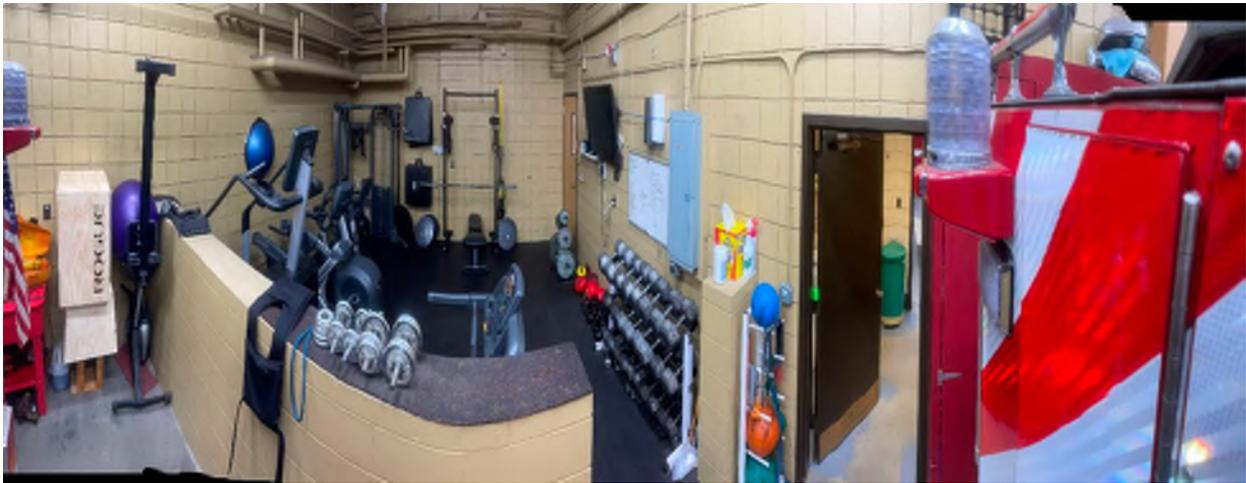


Figure 12 – Inappropriate and Undersized Space – The physical fitness area lacks sufficient space and is on the apparatus floor and exposed to dirt, soot and other particulates.



**Figure 13 – Adapted Space** - Adapted tool and maintenance are on the sides of the station. This presents an operational issue as well as the inability to properly store and secure vital tools.



**Figure 14 – Limited Space and Clearance** – this image clearly shows the space limitations that have emerged as the size of apparatus has increased.



**Figure 54 – Limited Clearance – this image demonstrates a lack of appropriate apparatus clearance which can complicate response and create difficult conditions to operate vehicles. This has already resulted in multiple incidents including one accident that caused \$27,000 in damage and placed the aerial ladder out of service for an extended period.**

### **Backup Generator**



**Figure 16 – Unsecured utilities and backup generator**

## Parking Area/Response Path/Front Apron



Figure 17 – Rear response path through parking lot



Figure 18 – Aerial ladder barely fits on the front apron

## Living Space



Figure 19 – Dorm room combined into the shift commander's office and dorm



Figure 20 – Cramped triple occupancy dorm room

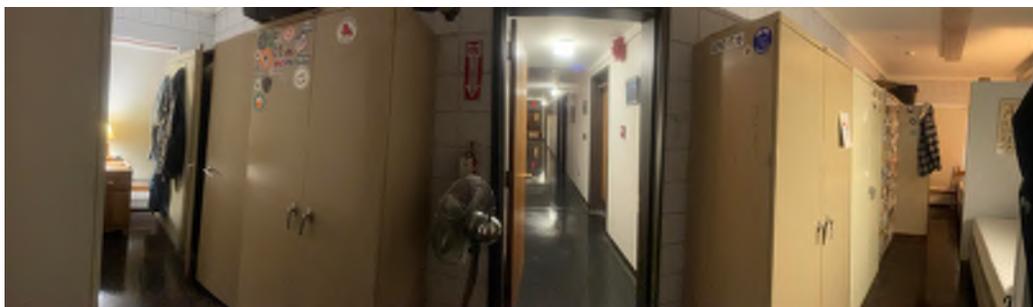


Figure 21 – Limited clearance and walking space



**Figure 22 – Kitchen/Dining area cramped based on current Staffing**



**Figure 23 – Small RV sink in the kitchen**



**Figure 24 – Adapted Multi use Space- Pantry, laundry, mailroom, restroom access space.**

## Training/EOC/Report Writing Area



Figure 245– Incident Report data Entry Space



Figure 26- Training room at capacity

## Administrative Space



Figure 27 – Adapted Administrative Space



Figure 28 – Temporary office partitions

## Conclusion

The Town of Exeter has supported the EFD and provided the necessary resources to provide the high level of fire and EMS services expected by the community. Service demand, and demographic changes will require that the staffing model utilized by Exeter Fire Rescue continue to evolve and move toward the strategic deployment of eight operational personnel and two staffed stations. This growth includes the development of a new appropriately sized and configured headquarters facility and a small two-unit quick response substation.

The fire service portion of the current Exeter Public safety Complex facility is constrained by space, lacks sufficient efficient configuration to optimize response and has limited, often congested parking. As the organization has grown the capacity of the public safety complex has been reached and, in some cases exceeded. The EFD has done a good job prolonging the life of this facility and improvising solutions that address a lack of sufficient or properly configured space. Although this public safety complex continues to serve as the only fire service facility, the spatial challenges outlined in this document will continue to intensify. Consideration should be given to developing a small two-unit quick response substation to minimize response times to developing areas of the community. The current public safety complex is rapidly approaching the end of its useful life.

Overall, It is our observation that the current facility does not provide an appropriate platform for modern fire service operations. As the Town continues to grow EFD operations will be constrained by continuing to use a facility that has exceeded its useful life.

Given the construction and limiting factors associated with this facility, if this location is to be utilized as a fire station or redeveloped public safety complex. As the EFD moves toward having two staffed stations, the Town should evaluate the impact of increasing automatic aid to enhance operational safety and meet the response requirements of OSHA 2 in 2 out and NFPA 1710.

Respectfully submitted,

Brian P. Duggan  
Director of Fire Services

## Recommendations

### Exeter Public Safety Complex – 20 Court Street

- E-1: The Town of Exeter should evaluate the development of a modern combined public safety facility or separate police and fire facilities that provide a properly sized and configured headquarters for current and future fire rescue operations.*
- E-2: The Town of Exeter should evaluate the development of a two-unit substation that should be strategically located to reduce response times.*
- E-3: If the Town of Exeter elects to construct separate Police and Fire facilities, a two-unit substation could be located within a new Police facility should that facility be appropriately located.*
- E-4: The Exeter Emergency Operations Center (EOC) should be reorganized, and cabinets created for dedicated consoles and equipment. This would further restrict space and limit capacity but optimize the use of this space in the short term.*
- E-5: The Exeter Emergency Operations Center (EOC) size limitation would prevent effective use during a significant event. A larger backup EOC should be identified for use during a large, or long-term event.*
- E-6: Existing systems should be maintained and repaired to keep this facility functional in the short term.*
- E-7: The use of automatic aid from adjacent communities for any structural response should be expanded to enhance operational safety.*
- E-8: The personal protective clothing storage area should be partitioned off from the apparatus floor and properly climate controlled, ventilated and protected from UV light.*
- E-9: The use of double occupancy rooms should be limited and only occur when staffing exceeds the number of available bunk rooms.*
- E-10: Personnel and equipment decontamination areas should be marked.*

- E-11: *Turnout gear should be restricted to the apparatus bays and extractor area. Signs should be added indicating this policy.*
- E-12: *The physical fitness area should be partitioned from the apparatus floor separated from potential contaminates.*
- E-13: *Given space constraints and to repurpose existing space, secured storage should be shifted to exterior storage containers. This should be recognized as a temporary measure which will further reduce available parking but will maximize the use of the current structure while the public safety complex is being considered.*
- E-14: *The Police and Fire Chiefs should identify if any changes to the use and configuration of the current parking areas could reduce the risk of accidents and response. The Police and Fire Chiefs should identify overflow parking options and present these to the Town. This may include dedicating spaces at Town House Common or reserving on street spaces.*
- E-15: *Turnout gear storage should be separated and moved from the apparatus floor into an appropriate personnel protective equipment storage room.*
- E-16: *The generator and utilities on the side of the structure should be secured to limit tampering or access.*
- E-17: *A video monitoring system should be installed to provide a level of security in the rear parking lot and along the side of the building where the generator and communications tower is located.*

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## **EXETER POLICE DEPARTMENT SPATIAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Municipal Resources, Incorporated, (MRI) of Plymouth, New Hampshire was engaged by Lavallee | Brensinger Architects to conduct an independent assessment of the current and anticipated spatial needs of the Town of Exeter Public Safety Complex facility located at 20 Court Street, Exeter, New Hampshire.

### **METHODOLOGY**

MRI Director of Police Services Sean Kelly met with Lavallee | Brensinger Architect Robert C. Robicsek, Exeter Police Chief Steve Poulin, Deputy Chief Michael Munck, and Lieutenant Steven Bolduc at the Exeter Public Safety Complex to gather an overview of practical uses of existing space needed for the assessment. Though the physical structure was assessed by an MRI team in the broader sense of a combined public safety services complex, Mr. Kelly's study was limited to the practical space use of those areas occupied and used by the Exeter Police Department.

Mr. Robicsek described planning and design challenges to the structure due to original construction, property lines, the potential of nearby historic buildings, and other limiting factors. Chief Poulin explained that the original structure had been renovated several times since the original 1978 construction to meet the needs of the department. During a tour of the facility, Chief Poulin pointed out spaces that had been adapted for use by closing otherwise publicly accessible areas, the installation of space sharing furniture, construction of flooring where an atrium previously existed, repurposing of hallways and storage closets et al.

Additional data was collected during a comprehensive tour of every police department space within the existing structure and of the town owned footprint immediately surrounding the building. Outbuildings at off-sight locations were briefly described but not toured. But for noting the desirable and recommended call for centralized services in one building/facility, these outbuilding spaces are not considered in this assessment.

The current Exeter Police Department facility provides workspace for forty-eight full and part-time police officers and non-sworn employees. Chief Poulin and his staff led a tour of the two-story police facility and those areas shared with the Exeter Fire Department. Senior police department staff comments were augmented by those of employees occupying/working in the spaces being toured, as applicable.

Common uses of rooms by commanders, supervisors, patrol officers, detectives, administrative support staff, records clerks, prosecutors, victim/witness services, and other practical users of the facilities were described and observed. MRI observations, and narrative by staff, provided insight to the current state of space usage, frequency of use, storage, public access to needed services within the facility, safety/security, privacy, workflow, and other commonly experienced uses of the structure. Externally, MRI noted accessibility, parking, and physical security features of the structure, as well as externally positioned critical communications infrastructure.

A description of the organization and operations of the Police Department by the leadership staff identified the departments' immediate needs, what programs are currently provided to the community, what staffing levels exist and are anticipated, what special needs each "division" within the department organizational structure may have, and what activities or other work-by-type classifications are important to be adjacent (or readily accessible) during day-to-day operations of the department. The impact of community expansion outside the historic "downtown" to areas along Routes 27, 108, and 101 was discussed relative to the ability of the department to deliver swift and effective police services.

Current and future needs for practical police operations, support services workspace, workflow, evidence retention/storage, records retention/storage, employee locker space, crime victim and witness privacy issues, conference/meeting space, training needs, agency owned property storage space, and safety/security are critical issues.

This report concludes with a summary of recommendations found within the content of the report for resolving immediate space needs while projecting anticipated needs of the police department for the efficient and effective delivery of law enforcement and police services to the Town for the reasonably foreseeable future.

## NEEDS ASSESSMENT

### Current Structure Described



Bow Street Public Safety Building Public Access

### Exeter Police Department

The Exeter Police Department is located at 20 Court Street in downtown Exeter, New Hampshire. The building is a multi-story brick façade structure with off and on-street parking on two sides of the building; property lines and fire department truck access bays on the front side of the building prohibit parking on the south and Court Street sides of the building. The exterior of the building, the grounds, and parking areas appear to be well maintained and in serviceable condition, particularly when considering the nearly 45-year age of the structure.

Limited green space and landscaping lends to a professional appearance from the street; however, parked vehicles, fencing, and narrow walkways all but hide the main entrance to the public safety building. Future approaches to the building from traditional ingress ways as well as unplanned approaches should be assessed from the perspective of crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED); if allowable under local ordinance or any restrictions associated with proximity to the Front Street historic district, the addition of secure/monitored employee parking near to the facility is recommended; and, installation of fencing and protective bollards to enable 360-degree safety/security for employees and the structure is recommended.

Though immediately apparent to MRI, building/police services accessibility limitations associated with the Towns' Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance at the public safety complex is not commented on further within this assessment report. Any remarks thereto are left to the discretion of Lavallee|Brensinger Architects.

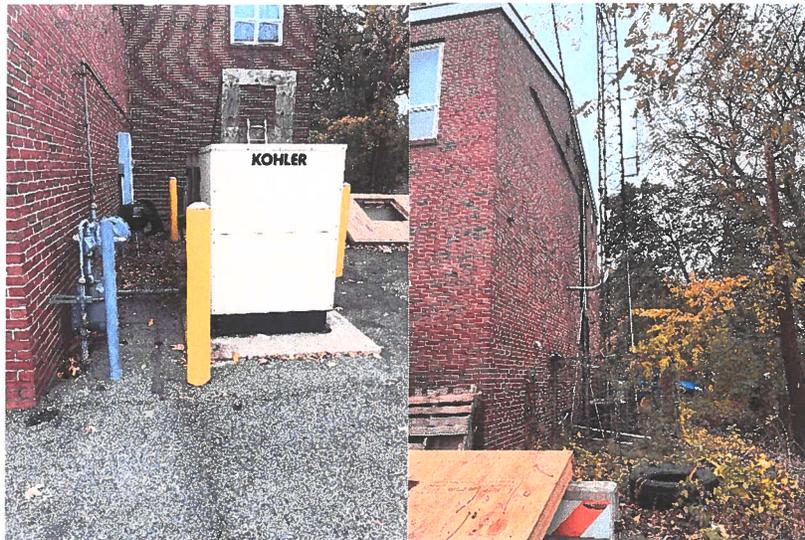
Spaces within the building that are adjacent to exterior walls have natural light from ordinary weather-tight windows that may be opened for ventilation. Except for a single fixed interior window at reception, no windows on the exterior of the structure are secure from assault; none are safe from firearms use. Interior workspaces have no natural light nor natural ventilation. Corridors, either by choice, age, or design are narrow and, in some places dimly lit. Originally designed spacious areas have been re-purposed for current workspace needs thereby reducing the possibility of further expansion within the existing facility. Again, considering the age of the facility and crowding, the interior spaces appear to be reasonably-maintained and in serviceable condition.

Certain publicly/quasi-publicly accessible interior spaces are monitored by video camera. Additions to the monitoring system with current technology is recommended and should include an increase in the number of cameras needed to monitor interior and exterior spaces associated with re-purposing and new construction, at a minimum. Reconfiguring workspace layout within the existing facility may inform the need for additional video surveillance cameras. An increase in the number of surveillance cameras internally and externally to adequately cover 100% of those spaces associated with publicly accessible areas, secure evidence storage spaces, all spaces within which interviews are conducted, and those spaces associated with movement and booking of prisoners is recommended.

Parking and access to the main entry are convenient though limited. The main entrance of the structure faces Bow Street; single lane ingress/egress ways to the department property intersect with Court Street. The property on which the structure is situated does not limit public access to one well-managed entry; access to the building can be gained from multiple places.

Tested during the site visit, MRI discovered multiple points of entry to the public safety building through which those with malicious intent would be able to access interior spaces without difficulty or detection. It is intended that the building interior may be publicly accessed by a single door from the Bow Street side only; however, intent and reality are different. Interior access from the remaining two sides is somewhat limited to authorized staff or those persons being escorted by agency personnel.

Critical to continuity of communications in emergency situations, the public safety complex antenna, alternate power source (generator), and fuel supply (gas) were found with limited protection from tampering. Seen below, the generator and fuel source are immediately visible with little protection from the road. The antenna is behind a fence, but an overgrowth of vegetation from the surrounding grounds affords concealment to those interested in tampering with the antenna and transmission lines.



Generator and fuel source (L), and the radio antenna/transmission lines (R) are accessible to tampering.

Access controlled fencing to limit vehicle and pedestrian traffic, and for the protection of communications antenna(s), alternate power source, and transmission lines is recommended. Secure doorways and policy governing access to the public safety building interior by way of the fire department truck bays, an equipment room, and a maintenance bay is recommended.

Access to the building via the above-described equipment room was described as being necessary by an unspecified “code” not familiar to the police or fire officials, nor to MRI. MRI recommends research to find such code; in the absence of such, MRI recommends immediate change of policy and practice to shore up physical security of the public safety complex.

Access to the interior spaces of the Exeter Police Department is limited by a key fob operated electronic security system installed early in 2021; staff describes that the system is not yet fully operational. It is recommended that this system be made fully operational as soon as possible. Consideration of expanded access control for the public safety complex to include protection of the multiple access ways penetrated by MRI without challenge during the site visit of October 29, 2021.

MRI noted that the interior spaces were not well ventilated; heating and airflow was inconsistent between workspaces, largely due to re-purposing spaces that were previously unoccupied. Some spaces that have been re-purposed were described by staff as being subject to leaking roofs with mold/mildew resulting to a degree that may have a negative impact on the health and wellness of some personnel.

Current fleet storage does not include protection from public access or inclement weather. Safety of agency owned property (fleet vehicles) and response time during winter may be improved by the installation of a carport and/or expansion of space used as a “sally port”. The

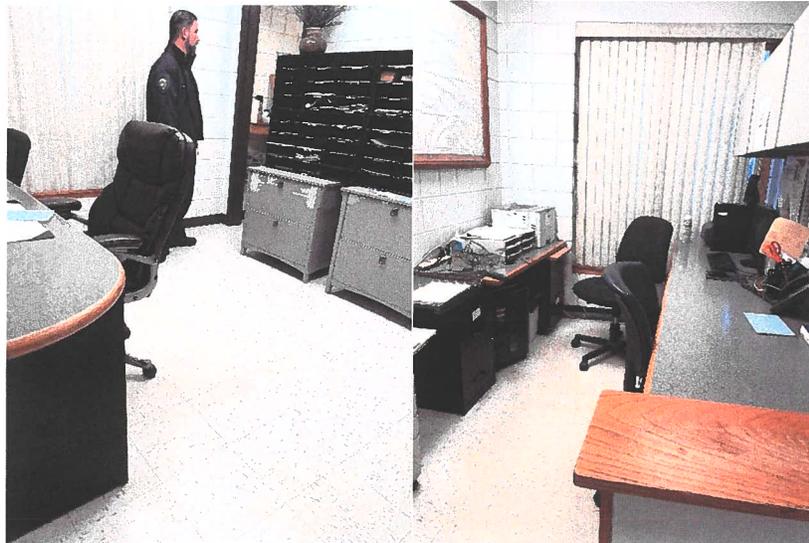
provision of a carport also reduces the chance for injured-on-duty claims due to slips and falls that can occur clearing off, entering, or exiting fleet vehicles in winter and inclement weather conditions. Operational readiness of the fleet is paramount to community safety; installation of a carport or similar weather protection structure is recommended.

## FACILITY NEEDS

Described in part below, factors imposed by external authority that impact the future facility needs of the Exeter Police Department include those that are already somewhat problematic in the current state of the facility.

### Patrol

Patrol is the largest “division” within the Exeter Police Department organizational chart. Officers and staff assigned to patrol make up the majority of staff in any work component. Predominantly, the nature of the work performed by patrol has them outside of the building using police vehicles for their day-to-day functions rather than continuous/prolonged occupation of a significant amount of space within the structure. However, key functions of patrol are performed within the building; the size of the patrol division suggests that space be expanded to accommodate immediate and forecasted functionality.



Patrol Workspace



Sergeant's workspace, doubles as roll call, this space is a repurposed hallway.

Space limitations have officers in multiple locations during shift and at shift change for report preparation and passing of information. Current practice has shifts “passing” each other at certain times of day; it is not uncommon to have up to ten police officers sharing space at shift change. Staff express frustration that the necessary briefings and report preparation are often disrupted by the routine exchanges necessitated by the shared space. Conversely, these same personnel describe the advantage of shifts passing through the same space at the same time: informal/undocumented information is often exchanged between officers that would not necessarily be part of the formal roll call briefing. Larger and contiguous space allocated for roll call to accommodate the immediate needs of staff using or passing through this space simultaneously as part of shift change/information exchange; or the re-purposing of other space for centrally located patrol operations, equipment exchange (i.e., portable radios, mail call, and replenishable materials) is desirable.

### **Prisoner Handling/Detention Spaces**

When transported to the Exeter Police Department for processing, industry standards and best practices recommends that “The length of time a detainee is held in temporary detention is measured in hours, not days and does not involve overnight housing or the provision of meals except in extenuating circumstances. Detainees should be kept in temporary detention areas no longer than necessary and should be monitored closely, particularly when they have not been through an intake and medical screening process as required in jails and holding facilities”.



Sally Port, Prisoner Cell, and Booking/Processing Spaces

Seen above on the left, the so-called “sally port” entrance to the police department booking area is multi-purposed. The photo at the far right shows the first space within the structure that a prisoner is detained for booking and processing. The middle photo is one of three cells utilized for described temporary detention. In the current configuration, access to unconventional weapons and/or implements of escape gained from within the sally port, the potential of freedom of movement within the booking area (right photo, no fixed object to “cuff” a prisoner to securely), and absent modification to mitigate the risk of self-harm (such as installation of Lexan sheeting to prevent prisoners from hanging themselves from the bars) in the cells represent significant liability to the Exeter Police Department. The nearness of the Rockingham County Department of Corrections (jail) to the Exeter Police Department, with attendant equipment and specifically trained jail officials suggests that the liability to the Town of Exeter by maintaining the cells is un-necessary. Policy and practice changes to eliminate the use of the cells is recommended. Installation of an immovable object designed and intended specifically for use during the temporary detention of prisoners in lieu of cells is recommended.

The addition of agency owned property storage for items found loose in the sally port is recommended.

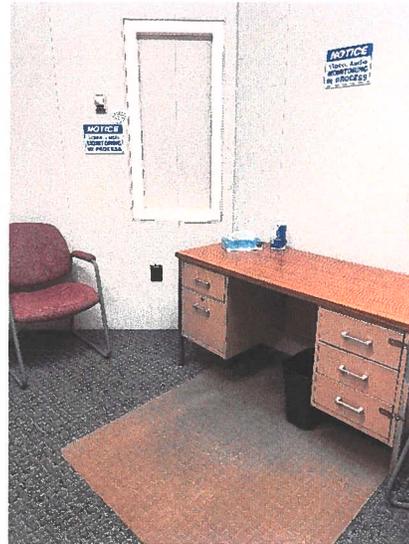
Additional parking space within the sally port is recommended.

### **Detectives**

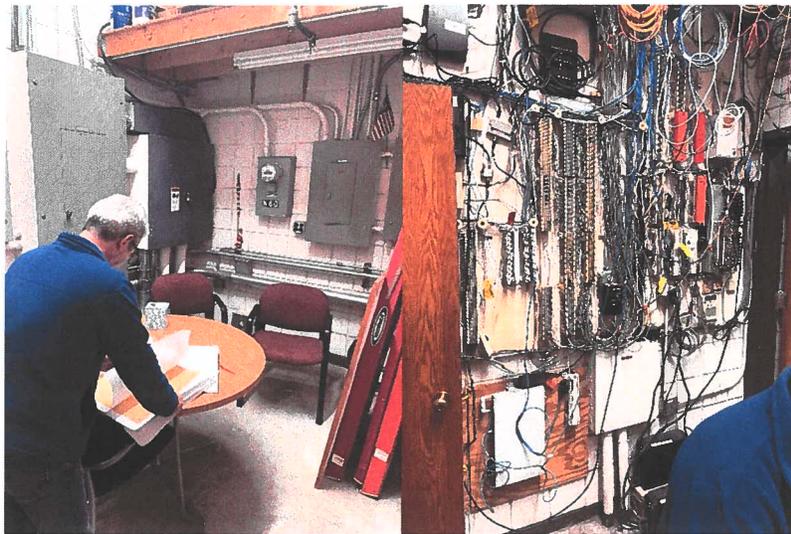
Unlike patrol, officers assigned as detectives often actively use space within the police facility for prolonged periods to further criminal investigations. Currently, space designed for use as desk space often doubles as storage of equipment and materials needed on a day-to-day basis.



**Detective Workspace**  
Re-purposed from lobby atrium  
Floors uneven Roof leaks



**Interview Room Near to Detectives**



**So-called Interview Room Adjacent to Front Lobby**  
Access to exposed wiring presents several hazard/risk factors.

Observations and inquiry suggest that limitations of the currently available space will likely find victims and witnesses in uncomfortable situations when inadequate interview space results in victims and witnesses being co-located in semi-public surroundings waiting to be interviewed. Similarly, though detectives take extraordinary measures to ensure that victims and witnesses are not exposed to persons accused of crime, due to the limitation of space, such assurances require continuous space and people management, which are not guaranteed. Accessibility to this area by any person when not occupied by a detective necessitates very careful case file management and security. The inclusion of security walls/doors, immediately accessible secure active case file storage, multiple interview rooms, interrogation rooms and a private waiting room that could double as a “soft” interview room within the detective division is desirable.

Supervisors expressed frustration with having substantially limited space needed to conduct case briefings and daily meetings that are out of the public eye. Dedicated meeting space for that purpose, so that strategy, case priority, and other notes can be discussed and white boarded without concern for public disclosure would be ideal. For the purpose of this section, “public disclosure” also includes agency employees without the express right to know of detective case activity.

There is inadequate space for evidence processing. Due to the limitations of existing space, officers find themselves using space that is not separate or secure from semi-public disclosure to process evidence, and that which makes the contamination of evidence possible. Installation of evidence processing space and pass-through lockers to the evidence room is recommended.

Though uncommonly performed by the Exeter Police Department as a primary function, the sensitive work performed by detectives assigned to investigate vice, drug, and organized crimes (VDOC) often exposes them to increased risk associated with these violence ridden crimes by type. Though not an externally imposed necessity, separate and secure facilities within the detective offices to support confidential investigation activities is desirable. The inclusion of built-in secure storage for confidential files, including a safe for buy money is desirable. Ingress and egress (can be co-located for use by detectives, generally) separate from routine use by other agency members to facilitate privacy of undercover police officers/special agents from mutual aid agencies, as well as confidential informants and cooperating individuals is also desirable. Co-location of additional interview rooms, interrogation rooms, and a waiting room within the overarching detective division is recommended. If technologically possible, having access to audio/video images from the interview/interrogation rooms in the general detective area and the VDOC detective area is desirable.

By the nature of their work, detectives often (mostly) work out of uniform and in plain clothes. They are not immune from danger nor exempt from accepting dangerous assignments. Therefore, having secure storage space within the detective area that enables immediate access to body armor, other protective equipment, additional firearms, and articles of clothing (raid jackets/hats and weather specific garments) is desirable.

## **Dispatch**

Dispatching operations are performed within a well-lit, clean, and comfortable appearing space. Though a thorough assessment was not performed, casual observation of electronics suggests that the radio and computer-based systems are modern and capable. Dispatchers do not have easily accessible secure space for the storage of personally owned property while on duty.



Two of Three Dispatch Workstations

Limitations of job tasks prohibits the dispatchers from taking restorative breaks away from their workspace. Gender-neutral rest facilities only feet away from the workspace substantially limits privacy. The addition of separate/private rest areas, personally owned property storage area, and equipped meal break room near the communications center is recommended.

### **Administration**

The current organizational chart of the Exeter Police Department has been described as likely to experience little growth through CY 2040 with calls for service and crime rates to increase at a proportionately low rate; therefore, it is likely that the Exeter Police Department will experience little need for additional commanders. Despite the absence of growth at the command level, addition to the current office space allocated for the Chief of Police and command staff should include space for confidential executive support staff, secure records storage (limited), conference/meeting space for at least eight personnel, and several more offices or space for cubicles needed for projected growth of support staff.

As a general statement, the Chief and leadership staff across the department expressed frustration with the inadequacy of available meeting space. Though the conference room that doubles as a break room has seating enough for the Chief and commanders to caucus with subordinate staff, it is inadequate for anything greater than intimate sized meetings and affords no privacy needed for command staff to discuss any sensitive subject matter; the space will not support anticipated growth of command/supervisory staffing numbers. Consideration of additional meeting space for at least eight personnel is recommended.

Support administrative staff occupies re-purposed hallways and closets. Access to these spaces is substantially limited due to the restrictions put on the space by the placement of desks and records cabinets.



**Example of Administrative Staff Workspace  
in Re-purposed Hallway**

## **Records Retention**

There are certain documents/records that are required by state law, industry standards, and best practices to be retained indefinitely, others that must be retained for 50 years, and vast numbers of records that must be retained for shorter periods. In the current facility, there is no centrally or commonly located space for records retention. Though records retention is disjointed by circumstance (cabinets are placed where there is room), MRI also noted that the Exeter Police Department records do not appear to be well-secured (cabinets stored in open and accessible spaces is exacerbated by the unsecure exterior of the public safety building). Expansion of space allocated for centrally and commonly located secure records retention is recommended. MRI recommends that vital records (at least) be secured in fire resistant cabinets or protected by a fire suppression system designed for use with paper records. At present, “archived” records are stored off-site in a space shared by multiple town departments. MRI did not tour the external storage facility; we cannot comment as to the safety and security of records stored off-site. However, Exeter Police Department should ensure that records retained offsite in a shared facility are held/secured in compliance with juvenile and other privacy laws, as applicable; and any archives that may be retained or communicated electronically are compliant with CJIS regulations, as applicable.



Electronic records for multiple departments in town government are retained within this server room (L).  
Some hard copy records for the police are retained in this secure room which is near or at capacity (R).

Having a centrally/commonly located records room central to department functions for convenient access by the most frequent authorized users of the records clerk services is desirable; for instance, ready access to the records by those persons assigned to the front desk, detectives, and prosecutors, as applicable.

### **Evidence and Property Retention**

Industry standards and best practices establish that, “The property and evidence control function should provide for the security and control of seized, recovered, evidentiary, abandoned, lost, or found property in the custody of the agency”. The current state of the Exeter Police Department evidence processing, and storage facility is dis-jointed and inadequate for department uses. In its current state, the evidence storage facility and/or agency practice do not appear to meet industry standards and best practices. The evidence storage function is not likely to meet the needs of the community over the projected timeline without policy enforcement, substantial renovation, and addition of space.

Evidence processing, packaging and storage needs imposed by law, judicial review, regulatory authority, and recommended best practices require certain evidence to be retained compliant with the statute of limitations or longer, while the bulk of evidence is retained for substantially shorter periods. Secure storage needs are exacerbated by the statutory requirement that seized non-evidentiary property that has no known owner must be retained for minimum of 180 days.



General Evidence Room and Adjacent Firearms Evidence Storage

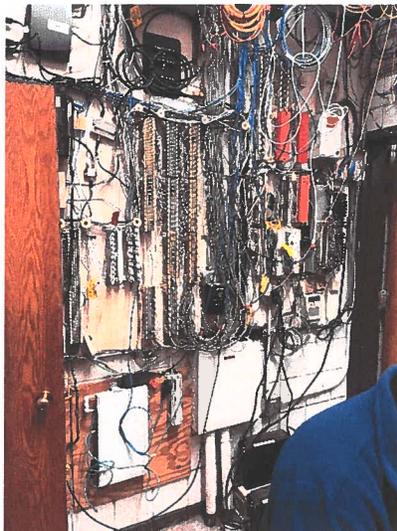
Though the Exeter Police Department staff describes engaging in aggressive compliance with statutory requirements and best practices by purging unneeded evidence and “abandoned” property in a timely way, the increase of population, calls for service, and crimes by type with the attendant receipt of new evidence and property has stressed the existing space. Without additional space, projections for the reasonably foreseeable future suggest the existing space will be overwhelmed, resulting in reduced efficiency and effectiveness of this critical police function.

Temporary secure storage of evidence and seized property is made difficult by the absence of pass-through style temporary evidence/property storage lockers. Existing temporary storage is incapable of receiving evidence or property as large as a breadbox. Space for smaller items is very limited requiring substantial intervention and management by police department evidence officers. When evidence and property cannot be securely stored, best practice and regulatory authority suggest that a qualified police officer remain in physical presence of the to-be-stored article to maintain a clear chain of custody until such time that the article can be properly stored. This step has the potential to be overly burdensome to the operations of the Exeter Police Department.

Currently, instead of a single centralized storage facility, due to the pressing storage space needs, Exeter Police Department has resorted to outplacing certain evidence and property outside of the designed evidence storage room. Specifically, bulky items, evidentiary vehicles, and those large articles being held for safekeeping are kept in off-site storage (MRI has not viewed the off-site evidence/property storage facility; we have not assessed the efficacy/security of those facilities). Outplacement of evidence and property storage may

impose sometimes difficult security maintenance and administrative tracking of such articles. Centralized secure storage rooms (long- and short-term storage) for all evidence and property that is supported by a robust software tracking system, alarms (as applicable), and video surveillance is recommended. Additional levels of security for those items of high value, cash, drugs, firearms, and other items representative of substantial liability if mis-handled or improperly stored, should be included.

### Victim and Witness Privacy Rights



Doors (hardly seen on L and R sides of the picture) of this “interview room” are accessible to the outside of the public safety complex.

Established in law, victims of crime are afforded privacy rights and are to be protected from the accused throughout any pending legal matters. The substantially limited space presently assigned for victim interviews and services does not give easy access to investigators, prosecutors, and advocates. The result is the risk of victim exposure to the accused, family/friends of the accused, or other parties associated with a case being investigated by the Exeter Police Department. Noted above, access to the public safety complex by those with nefarious intent is possible; security of victims/witnesses in criminal cases is not assured within the present structure. Appropriate alignment of space needed for victim accessibility to privacy and services is recommended. The addition of separate secure spaces for interrogation, interviews, and polygraph are recommended.

Though uncommonly performed exclusively by the Exeter Police Department, the sensitive nature of criminal investigations of vice, drugs, and organized criminal enterprises suggests that extraordinary measures be taken by the department to safely secure certain records separately from the central records room (confidential informant files), small quantities of cash (controlled buys/flash money), as well as the safety/security of cooperating individuals and witnesses from

discovery. Additional security measures needed by the detective division for these purposes, though comparatively uncommon, is recommended.

### Juvenile Privacy Rights

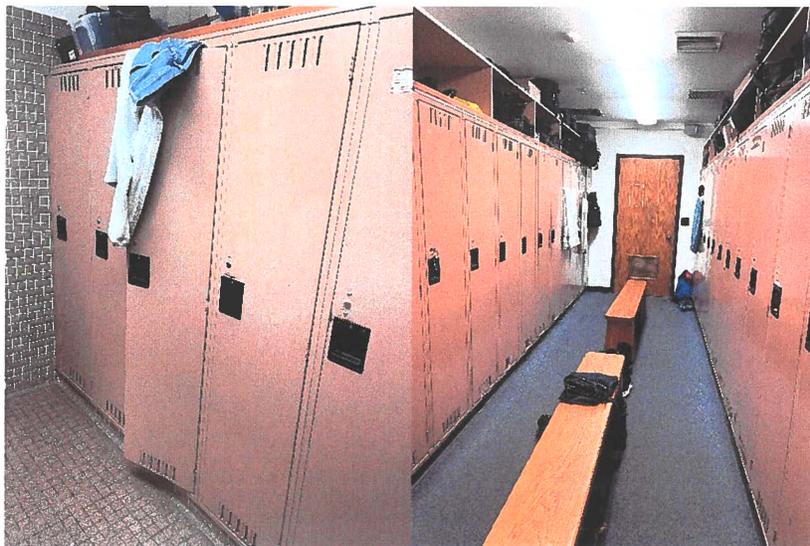
Juveniles have substantially guaranteed privacy rights found in state law and in regulations imposed by the United States Department of Justice Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJDDP). Industry standards and best practices include provisions that ensure that juveniles detained temporarily prior to court appearances (as applicable) are held separately and removed from all contact, both sight and sound, from adults. Best practices suggest that temporary pre-court detention facilities for juveniles allow for separation of juveniles by gender; the criticality of such best practice recommendations is found in law where mandatory separation of juveniles by gender is found in post-court detention requirements. Though national arrest rates for juveniles have been down-trending for more than twenty years, the imposition of law and liability risk for non-compliance suggests an operational imperative is placed on the Exeter Police Department to ensure that separate/private temporary juvenile detention within the facility is made possible by design for co-location/use in the absence of adults. Currently designed/used sight/sound separation space makes the best use of the space available to Exeter police; however, additional space with better separation is recommended.



**Temporary Juvenile Detention.  
Re-Purposed Adult Prisoner Cell.  
This space is immediately adjacent  
to booking/processing space.**

## Locker Room and Rest Facilities

NH RSA 354-A:7, Unlawful Discriminatory Practices, makes it unlawful for an employer to engage in any discriminatory practice. This statute includes provisions for ensuring that all employees enjoy freedom from discrimination in "...conditions or privileges of employment..." The current locker room facilities at the Exeter Police Department are inadequate for projected operations, gender equity, and forecasted growth of the department/community. The current space is at risk for being discriminatory in practice when considering the number of lockers available and the number of females employed by the agency while similar crowding conditions are not experienced by male employees. Consideration of hiring practices likely to yield employment by gender equity against forecasted growth of the community suggests that future locker space needs by gender/sex identity must be considered.



Female lockers in total (L); space includes rest facilities and showers (indicated by tile surfaces).  
Representative male lockers (R); though attached,  
rest facilities and showers are separate (indicated by a rug surface and painted walls).

The locker space allocated for male employees has space needed for current full-time officer staffing levels. The locker space allocated for female employees also has only that number of lockers needed for the current number of sworn female officers despite the gender-based demographics of the service area. There is no locker space anywhere within the facility for non-sworn female employees. Proximity of rest facilities in the female locker room disallows privacy. Locker space assigned to each sworn officer, regardless of gender, was observed by MRI and has been described by staff as inadequate for the storage of issued uniforms, equipment, and foul/seasonal weather gear.

Consideration to the space needs for the number of lockers needed for the current staff plus a forecasted number of lockers equivalent to gender equitable hiring for the life expectancy of

the structure as well as specialty equipment storage; and affording privacy to rest facilities while enabling storage space and additional locker space is recommended. Regardless of legal considerations, social convention suggests that the Exeter Police Department take the steps necessary to ensure equal right to access and privacy of all employees.

Replacing all locker room lockers with a model sized for secure storage of all agency issued and personally owned articles, and equipped with electrical outlets and USB ports to support flashlights, radios, cell phones and other technologies stored by officers; or renovate current lockers to include wiring lockers with electrical circuits and USB ports is desirable. This would allow certain equipment to be charged in the security of an owner/operator-managed locker between shifts.

### Break Room



Break Room doubles as conference room.

The Exeter Police Department has a unique and highly desirable opportunity to take an effective step toward reducing the toll that the physical and emotional stressors of police work have on employees. Current best practices found in the Presidents' Task Force Report on 21<sup>st</sup> Century Policing comments, "...on the irony of law enforcement's lack of services and practices to support wellness and safety, Dr. Laurence Miller observed in his testimony that supervisors would not allow an officer to go on patrol with a deficiently maintained vehicle, an un-serviced duty weapon, or a malfunctioning radio—but pay little attention to the maintenance of what is all officers' most valuable resource: their brains." By designing and equipping a break room with health, wellness, decompression, recovery, and restorative rest in mind, the Exeter Police Department can help to reduce the risk associated with vicarious, acute, and cumulative trauma. Though certainly not the cure-all, the provision of a thoughtfully designed break room is a piece of a much larger puzzle. "As (21<sup>st</sup> Century) task force member Tracey Meares observed, 'Hurt people can hurt people'; addressing this need is highly desirable.

Inclusion of space in the break room that is designed for stimulation-free quiet meditation would enable officers and staff to regroup, refocus and improve concentration and mindfulness.

The addition of a washer and dryer to the “normal” complement of recommended appliances (fridge, stove, dishwasher) enables officers to wash soiled garments before they end up tracking contaminants, dirt, and grime of work to shared spaces in the building and/or to their homes. By reducing the risk of bringing home toxins or biologics, Exeter Police Department can further support health and wellness among staff and their families.

“...cops are not given the time they need to fully recharge and unwind...the stress will just continue to pile on.” The recommendation of a break room is to encourage health and wellness by enabling officers and staff to unwind and get away from job stressors long enough to reset and recharge.

### **Training/Community Room**

The President’s Task Force on 21<sup>st</sup> Century Policing describes that police officer training and education is an operational imperative. “Though today’s law enforcement professionals are highly trained and highly skilled operationally, they must develop specialized knowledge and understanding that enable fair and procedurally just policing and allow them to meet a wide variety of new challenges and expectations. Tactical skills are important, but attitude, tolerance, and interpersonal skills are equally so. And to be effective in an ever-changing world, training must continue throughout an officer’s career.”

The introduction of a substantial room dedicated for use by the department for training that can also be used by the community for meetings and events is recommended. If adopted, this recommendation calls for such a space to have ingress/egress to the exterior of the building. Interior access only is an un-necessary burden on staff and establishes additional risk.

## **CONCLUSION**

Generally, despite the publicly facing professional appearance of external areas of the Exeter police facility, observation of the current state of the facility at 20 Court Street reveals that nearly every workspace is overcrowded, whether by personnel or storage of agency owned property.

Security and safety of employees and visitors to the Exeter Police Department is not assured within the current structure. Compliance with imposed regulations and best practices associated with victim/witness privacy, juvenile operations, evidence and property storage, records maintenance, and prisoner handling in the current structure is not assured.

Storage of needed equipment and materials that support mission effectiveness is exceeded or non-existent. Employee satisfaction needs associated with lighting, HVAC, privacy, and other quality of life matters may be negatively impacted within the current facility.

Respectfully submitted,



Municipal Resources, Inc.



## SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Municipal Resources, Incorporated has compiled the recommendations found within this report for easy reference. This list does not imply priority by the order in which it is presented.

### Parking/External Security Features

1. The addition of secure/monitored employee parking near the facility is recommended.
2. Installation of fencing and protective bollards to enable 360-degree safety/security is recommended.
3. Additions to the monitoring system with current technology is recommended.
4. An increase in the number of surveillance cameras internally and externally to adequately cover 100% of those spaces associated with publicly accessible areas, secure evidence storage spaces, all spaces which interviews are conducted, and those spaces associated with movement and booking of prisoners is recommended.
5. Access controlled fencing to limit vehicle and pedestrian traffic, and for the protection of communications antenna(s) and alternate power source is recommended. Secure doorways and policy governing access to the public safety building interior by way of the fire department truck bays, an equipment room, and a maintenance bay is recommended.
6. In the absence of code requirements, MRI recommends immediate change of policy and practice to shore up physical security of the public safety complex by securing an external equipment room door (to the right of the main entrance but before reaching the fire department truck bays/ramp).
7. Consideration of expanded access control for the public safety complex is recommended to overcome the multiple access ways penetrated by MRI without challenge during the site visit of October 29, 2021.
8. Installation of a carport or similar weather protection structure is recommended.

### Patrol

9. Larger and contiguous space allocated for roll call to accommodate the immediate needs of staff using or passing through this space simultaneously as part of shift change/information exchange; or the re-purposing of other space for centrally located patrol operations, equipment exchange (i.e., portable radios, mail call, and replenishable materials) is desirable.

### Prisoner Handling/Detention Spaces

10. The addition of agency owned property storage for items found loose in the sally port is recommended.
11. Additional parking space within the sally port is recommended.
12. Policy and practice changes to eliminate the use of the cells is recommended. Installation of an immovable object designed and intended specifically for use during the temporary

detention of prisoners in lieu of cells is recommended. Alternatively, installation of Lexan sheeting to prevent self-harm by prisoners hanging themselves from the bars, is recommended.

### **Detectives**

13. The inclusion of security walls/doors, immediately accessible secure active case file storage, multiple interview rooms, interrogation rooms and a private waiting room that could double as a “soft” interview room within the detective division is desirable.
14. Installation of evidence processing space and pass-through lockers to the evidence room is recommended.
15. The inclusion of built-in secure storage for confidential files, including a safe for buy money is desirable. Ingress and egress (can be co-located for use by detectives, generally) separate from routine use by other agency members to facilitate privacy of undercover police officers/special agents from mutual aid agencies, as well as confidential informants and cooperating individuals is also desirable. Co-location of additional interview rooms, interrogation rooms, and a waiting room within the overarching detective division is recommended.
16. Secure storage space within the detective area that enables immediate access to body armor, other protective equipment, additional firearms, investigative equipment, and articles of clothing (raid jackets/hats and weather specific garments) is desirable.
17. MRI recommends that the detective division be placed near to records due to the frequency of interaction and need.

### **Dispatch**

18. The addition of separate/private rest areas, personally owned property storage area, and equipped meal break room near to the communications center is recommended.

### **Administration**

19. Addition to the current office space allocated for the Chief of Police and command staff should include space for support staff, secure records storage (limited), conference/meeting space for at least eight personnel, and several more offices or space for cubicles needed for projected growth of support staff.

### **Records Retention**

20. Expansion of space allocated for centrally/commonly located secure records retention is recommended. MRI recommends that vital records (at least) be secured in fire resistant cabinets or protected by a fire suppression system designed for use with paper records. At present, “archived” records are stored off-site in a space shared by multiple town departments (MRI did not tour this facility; we cannot comment as to the safety/security of

records stored off-site. However, Exeter Police Department should ensure that records retained offsite in a shared facility are held/secured in compliance with juvenile and other privacy laws, as applicable; and any archives that may be retained or communicated electronically are compliant with CJIS, as applicable).

### **Evidence and Property Retention**

21. Centralized secure storage rooms (long- and short-term storage) for all evidence and property that is supported by a robust software tracking system, alarms (as applicable), and video surveillance is recommended. Additional levels of security for those items of high value, cash, drugs, firearms, and other items representative of substantial liability if mis-handled or improperly stored should be included.

### **Victim and Witness Privacy Rights**

22. Appropriate alignment of space needed for victim accessibility to privacy and services is recommended. The addition of separate secure spaces for interrogation, interviews, and polygraph are recommended.

### **Juvenile Privacy Rights**

23. The imposition of law and liability risk for non-compliance suggests an operational imperative is placed on the Exeter Police Department to ensure that separate/private temporary juvenile detention within the facility is made possible by design for co-location/use in the absence of adults. Currently designed/used sight/sound separation space makes the best use of the space available to Exeter police; however, additional space with better separation is recommended.

### **Locker Room and Rest Facilities**

24. Future locker space needs by gender/sex identity must be considered. Consideration to the space needs for the number of lockers needed for the current staff plus a forecasted number of lockers equivalent to gender equitable hiring for the life expectancy of the structure as well as specialty equipment storage; and affording privacy to rest facilities while enabling storage space and additional locker space is recommended.
25. Replacing all locker room lockers with a model equipped with electrical outlets and USB ports to support flashlights, radios, cell phones and other technologies stored by officers; or renovate current lockers to include wiring lockers with electrical circuits and USB ports is desirable.

## **Break Room**

26. The recommendation of a specifically designed and equipped break room is to encourage health and wellness by enabling officers and staff to unwind and get away from job stressors long enough to reset and recharge. Noted above in dispatch, a co-located breakroom and rest facilities that would serve all personnel equally is desirable and economical.

## **Training/Community Room**

27. The introduction of a substantial room dedicated for use by the department for training that can also be used by the community for meetings and events is recommended.

# EXETER FACILITIES ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Town Offices, 10 Front Street, Exeter NH 03833

April 21, 2022

Select Board, Town of Exeter  
Town Offices  
10 Front Street  
Exeter, NH 03833

Dear Mr. Chairman and Members of the Select Board (SB):

Voter rejection last month of the Department of Public Works (DPW) Garage Design warrant article gives Exeter the opportunity to rethink the project's design readiness and the Town's approach on how to proceed best on this needed facility.

The Facilities Advisory Committee (FAC) believes strongly that the project is not ready for any level of design for the reasons articulated in the attached point paper.

Instead, the FAC recommends that the Town follow the same process it is using to define its options for new public safety facilities and to build voter awareness and support for these facilities: (a) first, do an independent operations/deployment/staffing analysis of DPW; (b) second, based on the results of that analysis, conduct a feasibility study of facilities options for the DPW complex, including robust public input, to yield a preferred option; and (c) third, request voter approval of design and construction funds.

Accordingly, the FAC recommends that the SB direct the Town Manager, Town Planner, and the DPW director to implement this facility acquisition approach in the Fiscal Years 2023-2028 (FY23-28) Capital Improvement Program (CIP) that will be submitted to Town Boards and Committees this August through December. The FAC suggests that, depending on affordability, the SB consider funding each phase of this approach in succeeding fiscal years beginning in FY 23, or if possible, combining the first two phases in FY 23 and with the design/construction phase beginning in FY 24 or FY 25/26.

This approach also further benefits Exeter's taxpayers in that it deconflicts by at least one or two years the funding request for DPW Garage design/construction from the higher priority funding request for design/construction of the new public safety facilities.

As with the public safety facilities, the FAC believes that this process is the best way to define and achieve the most efficient, effective, affordable, and voter supported DPW facility for Exeter, and to achieve that facility without undue delay. Pursuing the current approach that was rejected by the voters only risks delaying further the building of a community-wide consensus to support a new DPW facility.

We would appreciate it greatly if this matter could be included for discussion and action on the agenda of the SB's next meeting. A FAC member would attend such a session to answer your questions.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of these views.

Cordially,

Kris Weeks, Chair  
Peter Lennon, Vice Chair  
Rob Corson  
Amanda Kelly  
Mark Leighton

Attachment: DPW Garage Guidance Point Paper

## **FAC DPW Garage Guidance**

- The FAC strongly believes that DPW is not ready now to design any new facilities and recommends that any funds allocated in FY 23 and FY 24 be used for an independent assessment of DPW, and based on that assessment, a feasibility study of facility options.
- The FAC recommends that a new DPW facility follow the same process Exeter is using to analyze the needs for new Public Safety facilities, evaluate various Police/Fire facilities options, and build voter awareness and support for a preferred option.
- There still are **major unresolved issues with the DPW project** that must be settled before any design should begin.
- **First**, there is no master plan for the DPW complex to address all facilities locations and the best traffic flow patterns and placement the new building and a new fuel island.
- **Second**, there is no compelling justification for the growth in the proposed garage from 15,000 square feet to 40,000 square feet, **or by 167%**. The claim that the growth is driven by all indoor parking, even for the most rugged plows and road graders, is unconvincing.
- **Third**, the 40,000 square foot building is based on meeting expected needs in 2050, when it is impossible to predict the DPW buildings and technologies that will be needed or available.
  - This design horizon does not consider changes in DPW vehicle and other technologies that are likely, especially with respect to electric vehicles and the need for charging stations in the near future.
  - A more predictable timeline would be meeting DPW needs for the next 20-25 years.
- **Fourth**, there are no updated cost projections to reflect the larger building and inflation. Using DPW's existing costs per square foot, **costs will grow from about \$5.1M to \$10M-\$11M**.
  - **There is no consideration of affordability in the current concept.**
- **Fifth**, DPW has not consulted yet with any Town departments, especially Parks & Rec and possibly FD and PD, about what other storage needs could be met by a new DPW building.
- **There are no objective and independent analyses of DPW operations, deployment, and staffing needs**, just the work done under contract with DPW on the greatly expanded garage and a new fuel island. Such work is not independent enough to justify costly new facilities.
- To develop the most objective, justifiable, and affordable DPW facilities options for the voters to consider Exeter should:
  - In FY 23, fund an independent, objective analysis of DPW operations, deployment and staffing now and in the more realistic future, and create a Facilities Master Plan for the DPW Complex.
  - In FY 24, fund a Feasibility Study, including robust consultation with the public to build voter awareness of DPW needs and support for more affordable facilities.
  - In FY 25 or FY 26, based on the work done in the first two phases, fund the design and construction phases of the project.
  - Combining the FY 23/24 phases into one year, if possible, might accelerate design/construction into FY 24 or FY 25.

- This approach further benefits for Exeter's taxpayers in that it deconflicts by at least one or two years the funding request for DPW Garage design/construction from the higher priority funding request for design/construction of the new public safety facilities.
- Unless this process is followed, there is little chance that Exeter's taxpayers will be willing to fund a new DPW garage, nor should they, and it is likely the project will be delayed by several years as unjustified warrant articles are put before the voters.
- Voter rejection of the DPW Garage design warrant article this year, and of the Parks & Recreation Community Center in 2020 are potent signals that a new approach is needed.
- Following the process FAC recommends – doing it right the first time, offers a more timely, analytical, and affordable path forward to modernize the DPW facilities.

**Why even going forward with a new fuel island now is premature and unnecessary:**

- We should not begin designing a fuel island until we know where all the other major facilities at the complex will be located, how big or small they are, and what is the sitewide traffic flow.
- Building a complex around the location of a fuel island turns a rational process on its head.
- **DPW has told the FAC that all past deficiencies with the fuel island have been met, and that it meets state environmental standards.**
- **DPW said that tank leakage is not the most like failure, but an issue with reporting and electronic systems. Although not what it wants, DPW has work arounds for these issues.**