

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WAKEFIELD PUBLIC SAFETY BUILDING

On June 26, 2018, a Town election will be held to determine if the Citizens of Wakefield will invest in the town's Public Safety Building. These FAQ's are intended to provide clarifying and background information on the project. They will be periodically updated as additional questions are added. If you have a question that is not addressed, please email it to: smaio@wakefield.ma.us.

1. What is the history of the Public Safety Building?

The current Public Safety Building, located at 1 Union Street, was constructed in 2004 and included a new structure which integrated the existing 1950s police station administration building and the historic fire station hose tower. The building houses both the Police and Fire Departments (each department has a "side" of the building) in approximately 49,300 square feet (SF). The 2004 project accomplished the renovation of a portion of the existing 1950's police department building and the construction of a large addition that houses an entirely new fire department.

2. If the Public Safety Building was built in 2004, why do we now need to invest in a new project?

While the Public Safety Building was completed in its present state in 2004, the vast majority of the work and investment at that time occurred on the Fire Side. The current proposal is to refurbish the Police side that was built in 1950. Of the \$8 Million requested for this project, \$6 Million is directed to the Police Side.

3. Why do we need this project I?

The project will meet two important needs:

- a. **It will provide the space and design our Police need to do their work.** The current configuration of the Police Side does not meet the spatial needs of modern law protection. The most urgent problem is that the building's lobby is only manned during normal "business" hours, or about 40 hours/week. The result is that people seeking assistance during any of the other 128 hours/week (or 80% of the time) must pick up a phone to reach an officer, causing unnecessary, and potentially dangerous, delays and distress. Policing is a 24/7 endeavor and our community deserves to receive immediate assistance upon entering the Public Safety Building. This project will relocate the 24/7 dispatch center from the 2nd floor to the lobby to ensure that all visitors get immediate attention. The records office will also be

located on the first floor for easy access to citizens. In addition, the redesign will remedy other substandard design conditions like the lack of private interview spaces for victims and placing evidence storage in close proximity to the processing area.

- b. **It will repair and replace serious building and system deficiencies.** The project will replace heating, ventilation and electrical systems that put critical response equipment in jeopardy while also impacting the work environment of our officers and fire fighters. For example, leaks and overheating have put our 911 system at risk.

4. Given that one of the big needs is space, has relocating all or certain functions to an offsite location been considered?

The Permanent Building Committee did consider relocating the Police Station to another site, but the cost of doing so would be in the \$25 million range, plus the cost of the land. It was determined that the most cost-effective option is to use the current site.

Relocating certain police functions offsite was also considered, but our Police Chief feels strongly that the decentralization of the Police function is **not** a best practice. Moving some or all of the police function would also not eliminate the need to repair the issues enumerated in number 4. b. above.

5. How will this plan alleviate the spatial issue?

The plan is to expand or “bump out” the Police side of the building for all three stories. This addition will add the necessary space to allow for the proper placement of evidence and weapons, a better detective space, adequate and private areas for family service officers and clinicians, as well as adequate space for command staff meeting. Private areas will be available for citizens to report crimes. Also, dispatch will be moved to a reworked lobby so all entering the Public Safety Building will be met by a police officer.

6. I’ve also heard that the Sally Port / Prisoner Bay is being enlarged, what and where is that?

This is the area on the Crescent Street side of the building and is where prisoners are loaded and unloaded. The area is currently too small, making it detrimental to the safety of the officers as they unload or load the prisoners. The project will include extra space to fix that problem, enhancing the safety of our officers.

7. With all of these spatial problems how is it that the Police Department continues to receive accreditation?

It is a tribute to our Police Department that their accreditation has not been impacted by the space and design issues. The accreditation process is largely about the policies and procedures of a Police Department, and Wakefield has been able to amend these to

accommodate their current facilities while continuing to following best practices in law enforcement.

8. With all of these structural changes, will any parking spaces be lost?

No, the addition in the front will be even with the Fire Side. No parking spaces will be lost.

9. Is the Fire Side adequate for the housing of any more apparatus?

Yes, the space for the Fire Department meets current and future needs and we have room to house more vehicles if necessary. The Fire Department will benefit from the replacement of the heating, electrical and ventilation systems. The ramp for the fire bay will also be replaced.

10. Will the Police Department need to be relocated during the construction?

No, the plan is to phase the construction so there is no need to relocate the Police department.

11. Will the Community Room remain?

The Community Room, located right off the lobby, will remain.

12. Why are we doing this now? Shouldn't we study this issue a little longer?

The Permanent Building Committee along with the members of the Police, Fire, Public Works and other Town Officials have spent over a year reviewing this project along with HKT Architects. Due to the increasing costs of labor, steel and rising interest rates, the costs are projected to rise 8% a year. Delaying just two years will drive what is now an \$8 million project up to an estimated \$9.3 Million. Embarking on this project now avoids cost increases and responds to an urgent community need.

13. How will the Project be paid for?

This project will be financed with a municipal bond and managed through the town's Debt Service account. Many projects have been successfully financed through this account including The Beebe Library, McCarthy Senior Center, Dolbeare School,

Woodville School, the existing Public Safety Building, recreational facilities at the High School, repairs to the Town Hall and the New Galvin School.

14. Why not just handle the repairs through the Capital Planning account?

We receive over \$6 million a year in Capital Planning requests from the different town departments and generally fund approximately \$2 million of the requests. Using this fund to fix a few of the deficiencies will not solve the overall spatial issue at the Public Safety Building and will divert funds from other critical town capital needs.

15. Will the new Public Safety Building increase my taxes?

No, the financing of the Public Safety Building will be paid via a bond. The town will make annual payments for the bond from our standard tax levy, which is limited by Proposition 2½. This project can never result in an increase in taxes over the 2 ½ tax levy without Town Meeting approval and town-wide referendum.

16. Are there State Programs available (like for the schools) which will pay half the costs?

No, there is no state program like the School Building Program. We do however, continually ask for any and all state funds. Any received will defray the cost of the project. We currently have \$500,000 in a house bond bill but often these funds do not get released.

17. What other projects is the town planning?

Wakefield has mapped out payment scenarios for repairs to the DPW garage and downtown street scape improvements all through the Debt Service Fund.

18. Will these repairs to the Public Safety Building meet our needs going forward?

Yes, we expect that this project will settle the major capital needs of the Public Safety Building for the next 50 years or more. Ongoing maintenance will be covered in the normal course of town business to ensure that the building is able to meet current and future needs once completed.

19. What has been the planning and vetting process for this Project?

Wakefield citizens approved funding for a Feasibility Study to be completed by a qualified third party at the May 2016 Town Meeting. In September of 2016, HKT Architects, a firm well known for its municipal designs and expertise in Public Safety buildings, was selected by the town to conduct the Feasibility Study. After interviews with stakeholders and a review of existing conditions, HKT Architects presented the [Wakefield Public Safety Feasibility Study](#) and design options in June of 2017.

The Study, options and costs have been reviewed by all relevant town committees, officials and elected bodies including: Police and Fire leadership, the Town Administrator and staff, the Permanent Building Committee (which will oversee construction), the Finance Committee, and the Town Council (then Board of Selectmen). The Project has been supported by unanimous vote by the Finance Committee and Town Council. It was presented at Town Meeting in May 2018 where it passed by more than the requisite 2/3 vote. Pursuant to The Town Charter a petition was forwarded to the Town Council requiring that the May 2018 Town Meeting vote be ratified by a Town-wide special election.

20. What is the timeline for the Project?

If the special election results in a positive vote, the Permanent Building Committee will request proposals for full architectural drawings and specifications. It is anticipated that the actual bids for the building will be processed in the spring of 2019 with construction to begin shortly thereafter.

21. Who will oversee Construction?

Once a contractor has been selected, the town will hire an owner's project manager to represent our interests and ensure that all contractual and design considerations are met. The Permanent Building Committee will oversee construction and report progress to town officials and the public.

22. When do we vote?

Election on this single matter will take place on Tuesday, June 26th at the Galvin Middle School, 425 Main Street, from 7am to 8pm. All precincts will vote at the Galvin Middle School. Absentee ballots are now available and can be returned up until Monday, June 25th. Results of the election will be posted on the Town Website.

23. Where can I find more information?

Additional information, including the Feasibility Study, Video and supplemental PowerPoint presentation from the May town meeting, can be found on the [Town's website](#).