



Fire Station One Project Update May 20, 2024



FS1 History

The Town's main fire station on High Street, Fire Station 1 or FS1, needs to be replaced because it is undersized, outdated, inaccessible, and was not built to support the weight of today's apparatus. This is a matter of urgency because Fire Station 1, which was built 75 years ago and has not had a major renovation since 1975, no longer meets the needs of the Westwood Fire Department or the community, and the structural issues could pose a life safety hazard to our firefighters and visitors.

Fire Station 1 was built in 1948 when the Town had an all-male, volunteer fire department. Despite renovations and additions, the station has outgrown its footprint and is now crumbling beyond repair.

The degradation of the structural integrity of these bays is progressing over time and now must be inspected quarterly by a structural engineer. The roofing over the bay leaks into storage areas, clean rooms, and dormitories; the dorm leaks have led to health concerns and necessitated air purifiers. The floor and ceilings are spalling and breaking up around piping, exposing rebar. Electrical systems are out of date. The generator does not meet today's code requirements nor is it sound attenuated, negatively impacting the fire department and its neighbors.

Firefighting gear is housed in the apparatus bay instead of a designated storage area. This setup does not allow for safe decontamination of gear and equipment. Medical supplies and office space share the operations area used for training and meetings, which limits mobility, efficiency, and privacy.

The current apparatus bay, where the fire apparatus is housed, has crumbling floors supported from below by steel beams. The degradation to the structural integrity of these bays is progressing over time and now must be inspected quarterly by a structural engineer. The living, dining, and even the bathroom areas are now inadequate for the number of firefighters and administrative personnel assigned to Station 1. The entire fire station is inaccessible for people with disabilities.

By way of history, in 2013, the Town convened a Public Safety Facilities Task Force, comprised of community members, town elected officials, and staff, to explore the options with respect to our then three aging public safety facilities – Fire Station 2 in Islington, the Police Station and Fire Station 1. The Task Force determined that both the Fire and Police Departments needed larger and more updated facilities to meet Westwood's needs in the 21st century. The Task Force conducted a disciplined analysis to arrive at its recommendation for a phased approach to address

the three public safety facilities, starting with the recommendation to rebuild the Islington fire station on the same site, followed by a rebuild of the police station behind the previously existing station. The plan also reflected the need to address Fire Station 1 in the near term.

In 2015, Town Meeting authorized the construction of the new Islington fire station and in 2016, Town Meeting authorized the construction of the new police station. Both of those projects were funded within Proposition 2 ½, without any tax increase to residents outside the limits of Prop 2 ½. Since that time, our community has focused on the capital needs of the School District with the consolidation of the Hanlon and Deerfield Elementary Schools in the Pine Hill construction project with major funding from the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA).

In 2022, the Select Board commissioned a feasibility study with respect to Fire Station 1 and an operational study of the Westwood Fire Department staffing which informed the feasibility study. These studies led to the recommendation that the Town proceed with the development of design and bid documents for a new Fire Station 1 at its existing location.

At a Special Town Meeting held on January 17, 2024, the Town voted to allocate \$2.1M, funded from free cash, to develop design and bid documents for a new Fire Station 1 - the Select Board has already voted to allocate \$1.4M in ARPA funds for the balance, contingent on Town Meeting's vote. Following the Special Town Meeting, the Town selected Dorr and Whittier as the design architect and Vertex as the Project Manager for the design and bid phase, which is underway in collaboration with the Westwood Fire Department.

The design and bid process is the ideal approach that will enable the Town to obtain a bonafide construction price on which we as a Town can decide at a future town meeting. As the design process is expected to take approximately one year, the earliest we would vote on construction would be in 2025. The design process will include the opportunity for community engagement and significant involvement from members of the Westwood Fire Department

Fire Station 1 needs to be replaced as soon as possible so that we can ensure that the Westwood Fire Department remains able to deliver the exceptional level of service upon which we all depend.