

FIRE STATION CONSOLIDATION STUDY BELMONT, MASSACHUSETTS

PHASE II REPORT

Prepared for

FIRE STATION CONSOLIDATION COMMITTEE

AND

THE TOWN OF BELMONT

Prepared by

Donham & Sweeney Inc

ARCHITECTS

1 April 2002

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TOWN OF BELMONT, MASSACHUSETTS

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William Brownsberger, Selectman
Anne Marie Mahoney, Selectman
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1 April 2002

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TOWN OF BELMONT
PHASE II REPORT**

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1 INTRODUCTION AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Donham and Sweeney, Inc. – Architects were retained in June 2001 by the Town of Belmont to assist the Fire Station Consolidation Committee in recommending sites, budgets, and schedules for a new Fire Headquarters and a new Fire Sub-station. The Committee had previously decided to recommend consolidating the Town's three stations to two. In the past 20 years the Fire Department has reduced its fire suppression and EMS staffing by 30% and its emergency response equipment by 40%; they can no longer support three stations, increasing the need for consolidation. The Committee selected fourteen site options for study.

We reached the following conclusions during the course of that earlier study:

1. The Fire Department needs approximately 33,600 gross square feet of programmed floor area housed in two buildings, in comparison to approximately 24,185 gross square feet now occupied in three buildings. The Headquarters needs 20,700 SF and the Sub-station needs 13,100 SF.
2. The Committee concluded that only 4 of the 14 sites merited serious consideration. These were Claflin Street Lot, VFW, Belmont VW, and Cushing Square.
3. The zoning for each site allows the construction of a Fire Headquarters or a Sub-station. Variances would be needed on most of the sites for a reduction in the number of required parking spaces. Some sites would need a side yard setback variance.
4. A comparative site analysis, using a numerical system for rating measurable site criteria, indicates only a modest range of differentiation among the sites. While the Claflin Street and Cushing Square sites have the highest ratings, there are sufficient non-quantifiable issues to suggest that site selection cannot be made by using this tool alone. Among the non-quantifiable issues are uncertainties surrounding contaminated soils, actual site acquisition costs, and relocation costs for tenants and businesses.
5. The Belmont VW site may have costs for remediation of contaminated soils; prior petroleum spills are on Fire Department records, but the site has not been tested.
6. Selection of any of the sites will result in surplus buildings, the sale of which could provide approximately \$3,000,000 in income to the Town to offset the cost of the project.

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In February 2002 our study contract was extended to look at:

Pleasant Street Site (Peter Fuller Dodge)

- Review the location of a fire headquarters station with possible future expansion/conversion into a public safety complex.
- Reevaluate response times in connection with potential substation locations.
- Review and revise, if necessary, response times taking into consideration re-design of Pleasant Street (Route 60) and re-construction of the former Clark Street Bridge.

Clafin Street Parking Lot

- Reevaluate footprint and location of a fire station building to minimize impacts on existing municipal parking needs.
- Coordinate efforts with BSC to study expansion of municipal parking capacity.

Cushing Square Parking Lot

- Reevaluate footprint and location of a fire station building to minimize impacts on existing municipal parking needs and to consider possible expansion of the site by acquisition of up to three adjacent parcels of land.
- Coordinate efforts with the BSC study expansion of municipal parking capacity.

Belmont VW

- Reevaluate footprint and location of a fire station building to accommodate possible private development.

To carry out this new charge we looked at pairing options as follows:

<u>Site Pair Options</u>	<u>Cost</u>
Option 1 H.Q. at Clafin Street and SUB at Belmont VW	\$12,631,000
Option 2 H.Q. at Clafin Street and SUB at Cushing Square	\$12,646,000
Option 3 H.Q. at Belmont VW and SUB at Clafin St.	\$12,683,000
Option 4 H.Q. at VFW and SUB at Clafin Street	\$13,151,000
Option 5 H.Q. at Clafin Street and SUB at VFW	\$13,153,000
Option 6 H.Q. at Pleasant Street and SUB at Harvard Lawn	\$13,389,000
Option 7 H.Q. at Pleasant Street and SUB at Belmont VW	\$14,629,000
Option 8 H.Q. at Pleasant Street and SUB at Cushing Square	\$14,644,000
Option 9 H.Q. at Pleasant Street and SUB at VFW	\$15,151,000

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The costs above are inclusive of construction, fees, equipment, land acquisition and construction of replacement parking.

The difference in response times from the Pleasant Street site if the Clark Street bridge were rebuilt was studied for the 13 September 2001 report. Page 35 of the report states that “the bridge made little or no impact on the response time.”

The improvements to Pleasant Street (Rte. 60) include installing curbs to re-pave Pleasant Street with two travel lanes each at 11 ½’ wide. If south bound traffic is backed up from Waverley Square, fire apparatus will be blocked and response time slowed. Currently, because Pleasant Street has no curbs, cars can move onto the shoulders, out of the way of fire apparatus; with curbs they can’t. Northbound traffic generally moves more freely on Pleasant Street so the installation of the curbs is not likely to have an adverse effect on response time in that direction.

The Pleasant Street site offers sufficient room for both a Fire Headquarters in the short run and a Police Headquarters in the future. The building footprints were determined by looking at the optimal ground floor space adjacencies. If both facilities are built there remains sufficient space for about 50 additional cars to be parked. However, the remaining space for public parking is so small that constructing a parking deck over that space would not increase the amount of parking by a significant amount. If a parking deck were extended over the Police Station parking as well, it could be made more efficient, but at a significant cost to construct. In addition, none of those scenarios leaves any room for commercial development.

The Fire Station Consolidation Committee has been clear from the beginning that any fire station siting proposal should be parking neutral; that is, the proposal for any given site should replace, to the fullest extent possible, any public parking cost by the placing of a fire station on the site. The proposal for a Fire Sub-Station at Cushing Square is, for all practical purposes, parking neutral. The proposal for a Fire Headquarters on the Claflin Street Parking Lot results in a loss of 6 cars, whereas the proposal for a Fire Sub-Station on the Claflin Street Parking Lot results in an increase of 19 cars.

It should be noted that a lot of the detailed information that backs up the findings in this report, such as the Detailed Space Needs Study, the description of the Response Time methodology, and the detailed Cost Estimates is to be found in the September 2001 Report.

