

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

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General

1.1 Why do we need 2 fire stations or why can't we just enlarge Station 2?

To provide the best coverage of the large size and challenging topography of Princeton, it is advantageous to have a fire station in the center of town and one in East Princeton. Chief Bennett believes it is a benefit to the town to have the 2 stations at different elevations and locations allowing the department to minimize response times.

Many insurance underwriters use a Public (or Fire) Protection Class (PPC) determined by the Insurance Services Organization (ISO) as one of the factors in setting base insurance rates. A good description of this process can be found [here](#). There are two pieces of information that feed into the PPC that are relevant to this discussion: road miles to a fire station (over 5 is considered very bad) and the amount of time it takes to get water on a fire. We need two buildings to avoid having half of Princeton residents outside of a five-mile radius of a fire station. This could increase homeowners' insurance or cause some homes to be considered uninsurable.

In addition, response times for other emergency services (ambulance, police) to the center and western regions of town would be negatively impacted.

There is limited space at the Station 2 site for adding additional drive-through bays. We would also need to accommodate the police station at a site with limited space.

1.2 Why is the Center School site a good place for Public Safety?

It is near the geographic center of town and therefore would easily service the center and western sections of town. The site is accessible and large enough to co-locate police and fire to facilitate space-sharing where appropriate, and to allow for needed drive-through bays.

1.3 Did you look at other sites (like at the DPW) for Public Safety?

Yes, the Facilities Study Committee and subsequent committees considered other sites such as the DPW site, other town-owned land, and other private parcels but decided that the advantages of having the Public Safety facility located in the center of town rendered any other sites unacceptable. There was a privately owned parcel close to the Center School site but it had issues of its own. At the 2016 Annual Town Meeting, voters didn't approve \$107k for the purchase of approximately 10 acres of the Fieldstone Farm land for future municipal use. That would probably have been a good location.

1.4 What if we need more space?

The design includes space for a future elevator so that space on the second floor might be accessed. In addition, there is room on the site to add independent dry storage space. If additional space is needed, expansion at Station 2 might be an option.

1.5 Why can't we just repair the existing public safety building?

Jones Whitsett Architects found a number of issues with the building in 2017 (listed below) that led them to conclude that “the building is not worth saving.”

- Roof sags over garages due to truss overstress (URGENT). Note that this was not addressed during stabilization work completed in 2020 because of the high cost.
- Severe chloride related damage within concrete vault space below police garage bay – threatens radio equipment. Note that this was not addressed during stabilization work completed in 2020 because of the high cost. The Selectboard instructed the Police Department to no longer use the garage for vehicles.
- Ingress of water at the rear (this was highlighted again in 2022 in a study of air quality in the building)
- All mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems are at the end of their useful life
- Fire equipment barely fits (by inches) – damaging vehicles and the building and restricting future vehicle size

1.6 Where can I get more information?

Please direct your questions to Town Administrator Sherry Patch. She will redirect them to the most appropriate person if she doesn't know the answer herself.

1.7 Why are we voting on this again? What happens if voters say NO?

The request for funding for final design and engineering services, including the production of construction documents, failed to pass by the 2/3 required at the 2021 Annual Town Meeting. There were a significant number of voters who thought the building either wasn't needed or should cost less.

Following the failed vote, the Selectboard voted to set up a committee that would meet in public and would post minutes. The Public Safety Building Committee worked with the architect and project stakeholders to investigate alternative construction methods and to reduce the size of the building. The Committee and architect trimmed space by reducing the number of bunk rooms from three to two, making corridors more efficient, optimizing radio and mechanical rooms, and dropping the fitness room. The new design has 12,870 square feet on the first floor, down from 15,509 in the design brought to voters in 2021. The new design includes the structural work necessary to have an additional 663 square feet of space for future needs on the second floor. The architects' estimate of total project cost assuming the midpoint of construction is spring of 2024 is \$12,320,000. If construction is delayed, further cost increases will apply. Though the Committee and architect investigated multiple alternative methodologies, all turned out to be more expensive.

At this point, we don't believe we can trim the design any further. We would like to secure funding for the design and construction documents. We have been told on numerous occasions by our legislators that we need to be shovel ready (have those construction documents) before we will be considered for grants. We believe that there will be infrastructure money flowing from the federal government to the state and from the state to municipalities. We would like to be prepared to lobby for assistance with our building.

The fact that we need to replace the building will not change. In the meantime, the Selectboard will continue to be judicious in choosing what to repair at the existing facility and what to let go. We will not achieve what we need through repairs.

1.8 Why is a new building needed?

Our existing police/fire complex in the center of town is:

- Inadequately sized for our functional, equipment, and staffing needs.
- Suffering from structural problems even after stabilization and is costing more to maintain.
- Missing critical spaces such as adequately sized apparatus bays, decontamination facilities, holding cells, sally port, bunk room, code compliant fitness room, and Emergency Operations Center (EOC).
- Posing life and health risks to our firefighters/EMTs (dragging risk by having firefighters too close to moving equipment as they put on their gear, carcinogen & other hazards from contaminated gear.)
- Missing required features for safe handling of prisoners putting prisoners and police at risk.

Funding

1.9 Are there any grants available?

There are no grants available for design and construction of public safety buildings that we are aware of at this time for which we qualify but that could change at any time. We will be applying for a Rural and Small Town Development Fund grant for assistance in paying for our design and construction documents. There is legislation in both the State and Federal legislative branches that might lead to grant availability. There may be an opportunity to apply for an MVP Action Grant when we get further along. There are grants for fire and police equipment which we actively pursue. For example, the fire department received a grant for washers and dryers to clean and decontaminate firefighter clothing. This equipment will be transferred to the new public safety building. The police received a grant for bullet proof vests.

1.10 Why can't the State pay for this?

In 2018, the State Legislature passed and the Governor signed a bond bill that included funding for the construction of a public safety building in Princeton. However, Princeton was one of many towns to be named in the bond bill and not every town gets funding before the bill expires in 2023. There is legislation at both the State and Federal level that allocates money to public safety buildings. If and when that legislation passes, we want to have our new public safety building be a "shovel ready" or fully designed project so we are near the top of the list for consideration. So far, Princeton has not demonstrated any real desire to build this building and we have yet to have any skin in the game. This is our goal.

We can't wait for too long for someone else to fund our building. The cost of constructing public safety buildings in Massachusetts has been increasing by approximately 5% per year though our cost estimator suggested 6% be used now. We also have an inadequate facility that needs to be replaced. The \$343,850 of stabilization we did in 2020 will tie us over for a few years but didn't solve most of the building's problems.

Have you considered other options?

1.11 Most emergency calls are for the ambulance. Can we downsize the fire department and have a smaller facility?

Neither the Fire Chief nor MRI, the company that did our recent Police and Fire/EMS assessments, believe that downsizing the department is wise or feasible. We will still have a mixture of types of fire calls. Brush fires are different from chimney fires. If we were to eliminate one station, we would have a serious gap in coverage of the town and an untenable response time. This could affect homeowner insurance with the possibility of an increase in the cost of insurance. So, we will still need to have a similar number and mix of vehicles.

We have been increasing the number of fire department personnel who are also medics or EMTs. This allows us flexibility to handle a changing mix of call types. We can't envision being able to decrease our staffing. This means that we will have the same need for lockers, restrooms, showers, decontamination facilities, gear storage, bunk rooms, and kitchen space.

The committee looked very hard at whether or not various spaces were necessary and came up with what they believe is the minimum necessary for the building to meet the Town's needs for at least the next 40 years.

1.12 Can we regionalize and save money (fire and/or police)? If we regionalize, do we need a new building?

Dispatch has been regionalized. Regionalization of specific pieces of fire equipment has been and will continue to be considered. Further regionalization of the fire department does not change the requirement for a fire station to be within 5 miles of a residence. Homes outside of a five-mile distance could see increases in their homeowner's insurance or experience difficulty obtaining insurance.

Currently no police department in Massachusetts is fully regionalized. Hardwick and New Braintree share a police chief. Princeton is part of a regional mutual aid group where police from neighboring towns will help each other. The state police are available for assistance but these arrangements are only to supplement the Princeton police as needed. The state police would not patrol our streets and respond to many of our calls. There would be a cost for further utilization of the state police, assuming they even agree to do so. There is a new medical and regional lock-up facility in West Boylston that is run by the Sheriff's Department. It only takes male adults and won't take people with drug or psychiatric issues.

1.13 Was phasing of the fire and police areas within the public safety facility considered? What are the pros and cons of phasing vs doing everything at once?

It was considered but rejected. The project is relatively small in scale and neither Caolo & Bieniek nor Jones Whitsett Architects saw any benefit to phasing this project – particularly since the proposed construction is on an unutilized site. It is likely that phasing would increase the construction costs considerably.

1.14 Was any consideration given to leaving the Police in the old building?

No. The existing building has serious flaws and limitations. There are economies derived by having the two departments share many spaces. On the plans, you will see that there are three colors used. Pink is solely for fire/ems. Blue is for police. All the areas in green are shared spaces. Many of those would have to be reproduced in some fashion in an upgrade of the existing station if the police were to remain there. Also, the long-term plan for the Bagg Hall/Library complex assumes that the Annex and Station 1 are removed to improve parking and circulation.

1.15 Can the space be reduced with fewer offices, less locker space, less bunk space, etc.? Can the offices be smaller?

The Police and Fire Departments have reviewed the design to ensure the building meets the minimum requirements of both departments and the requirements of the National Fire Protection Association and relevant Police standards. In many cases, the Chiefs opted for a larger shared workspace over multiple individual offices.

As part of the EOC we must provide sleeping quarters. We aren't asking for bunk rooms for everyone that might need sleeping quarters in emergency situations but they, along with plenty of cots, would be used. Fire/EMS personnel would also use the bunk rooms for storm stand-bys (big storm coming so reduce response time by having people in each station). If we move to 24/7 manned coverage of the ambulance, sleeping quarters would also be needed. Note that we usually have three to four mandatory, storm-related, "sleepovers" over the winter and might choose to do them for large fires. During the 2008 ice storm, we had seven overnights.

1.16 Why do we need two sergeant's offices (police)?

Police Chief Patriarca believes that there should be supervisory officers on all three shifts. Ideally, he would like to add a Lieutenant position in the next year or two. Though the offices on the plan are labeled Sergeant 1 and Sergeant 2, the Chief would have the Sergeants share and would allocate one of the offices to the Lieutenant.

1.17 Why is the Shared Patrol/Reports Space so large?

The patrol space holds 3 to 5 officers. Anytime a major incident happens, this will be needed. If two officers stay past their shift to complete arrest reports and two more officers come on duty, we will need that space. It's there if/when it is needed. We currently have 7 workstations and the new Public Safety Building (PSB) would give us 10 if you put 5 workstations in the patrol/report writing area. It's not much of an increase if we are planning for the future.

1.18 Can the Small Shared Conference (soft interview) room be used for Board and Committee meetings?

This room functions as the second Police Department Interview Room. It is sometimes referred to as a “soft” interview room. It is important to have a second interview room located away from the Booking Center for distance between a detainee and a victim or witness. The room will be outfitted with the video and audio recording equipment necessary for an interview room. When not in use by the police as an interview room, it can be used for other police/fire business or for other town meetings. The only caveat is that non-police users may be asked to leave immediately if the police need the space.

1.19 What happened to the fitness room?

In an effort to reduce the footprint of the building, the gym was removed. Though physical fitness is important to all of our public safety employees and the ability to work out during a shift is an important incentive in many departments (including for our per diem EMS employees and for police officers in neighboring towns), the departments understand the need to trim space. At the current time, we do not have enough police officers working a shift to allow any of them to exercise during their shift.

1.20 What is the space on the 2nd floor for?

The space is reserved for future department needs. It might be used for storage until needed for something else.

1.21 Why is there space for a future elevator?

If the space on the second floor needs to be used for a function that requires ADA compliance, we will need to have an elevator.

1.22 What is an EOC and why do we need such a large one?

The Emergency Operations Center (EOC) is a central facility, planned and prepared for in advance, used by government officials for coordinating the response and recovery efforts needed during any type of disaster or critical incident. The facility must have the physical resources required to support the government officials as they gather information and direct operations. To better understand the need for the EOC, see Public Safety’s [letter to residents](#) on EOCs. Our EOC is designed to hold up to 18 people per EOC best practices.

Princeton has secured over \$500,000 in public safety grants since 2009. We are not eligible for grants from FEMA, MEMA, or CMRPC if we do not have an operational EOC that meets NFPA and NIOSH standards. If we were audited today, the room we use at Station 2 for our EOC would not meet their standards. These are our only sources of grants so giving up the EOC would be a huge loss for future funding.

Our EOC is designed to also be used for training and for Board and Committee meetings and other purposes when not needed as an EOC. In these situations, the building code dictates that a maximum of 60 people can use the room. The fire department has weekly training sessions on Tuesday evenings

which about 40 people attend. Once a month, this is expanded to include EMTs and the police attend. The Chiefs believe a 60-person occupancy is a good size for our training needs.

The police department currently has no space for their own training. This room will allow them to have space for quite a bit of their mandatory training. In addition, the police department would be able to host training, which would cut down on training costs since the hosting agency typically gets some seats for free. In addition, there is a lot of goodwill built up and networking enabled by hosting training events.

1.23 Have you considered renting or buying the old “photo panels” facility on Worcester Road? Could you do something like was done for the Senior and Community Center?

None of the buildings meet the requirements of the police or fire department. The garage bays are not large enough to fit the fire trucks. Sprinkler and ventilation systems would need to be installed. It would be more cost effective to tear down the buildings and build a new facility. In addition, it is important to have the fire equipment more centrally located and nearer the top of a hill. It is very hard to get a fully loaded water tanker quickly up a hill. Given our lack of pressurized hydrants, we rely heavily on “water on wheels.”

1.24 Could we save money by having someone else build the building and either lease or sell it to us?

Though Sterilite built a wonderful station and sold it to Townsend for \$1, attempts to bypass public procurement laws by entering into deals ahead of time for that intent do not work. Without a benefactor such as Sterilite, we will be paying prevailing wages and hiring an Owner’s Project Manager for this project. Both of these make public construction significantly more expensive than private construction.

1.25 Could the Town save money by having our DPW do things such as site work, well drilling, and septic installation?

Our DPW has neither the skills nor the time to take on these types of projects. If we had to get outside assistance, we would need to follow procurement law which means we would be paying prevailing wages.

1.26 Why do we heat the apparatus bays?

Per the NFPA, ambulance bays must be heated to 60 degrees. We also have tanker trucks full of water that cannot freeze. Our firefighters and EMTs work in these bays and 60 degrees is considered to be the minimum acceptable temperature.

1.27 What is a gear/decontamination room and is there space allocated for expansion of this space?

It is a segregated space for cleaning and decontaminating gear when returning from a fire. Fire fighters are frequently exposed to a host of hazardous chemical agents when fighting fires. First responders also run the risk of fentanyl exposure. Standard guidelines cite a number of recommendations for limiting exposure – one of which is a segregated space for cleaning and decontamination. This is an area in which regulation seems to be increasing. One concern is that we may be required to have separate decontamination facilities for biologics and chemicals. Another concern is that we may need to move several people through decontamination very quickly. Since this is expensive space to build and it would be hard to retrofit other parts of the station later, there is the ability to expand into space labeled “storage” if needed.

1.28 Why do we need 2 holding cells? Who can be in them? What if we have more detainees than cells? Why are they so expensive?

We need a safe and secure place to hold our detainees. Not only do we need to ensure the safety of the detainees but also of our employees. We are only allowed to hold one adult per cell and juveniles CANNOT be held in cells. A person arrested on a domestic must be held for a six-hour hold. A prisoner would be held until they are bailed or until they can be transported to court, once it's open (if arrested Friday evening, that might be until court opens on Monday). There have been times when we made more than one arrest. Worcester Regional Lockup is accepting prisoners, however they do not except female prisoners or many males and the police department is required to complete its reports before they can transport a prisoner to the facility. A prisoner has to be “medically cleared” for them to accept the prisoner. If they are not cleared, they would need to be taken back to our department.

If we had a third prisoner, we would have to reach out to area departments to hold them. Because of the liability surrounding detention, area Chiefs may be reluctant to agree. We would also need to send one of our officers to that department to watch the prisoner, requiring us to call in another officer to cover their shift or shifts. Note that Princeton could use a matron to watch a prisoner in town if we had a holding cell and that would be more cost effective than using an officer.

Note that the POST Commission is working on guidelines for a required certification of police departments. Currently there is an accreditation process that specifies that we can only keep our detainees chained to the ring for two hours. Chief Patriarca says that it might take him two hours to find a second officer to come in and help the officer on duty.

As of May 5th, we have had 26 incidents where an individual could have been arrested. In 2022, there were 44 incidents where an individual could have been arrested. In-custody arrests are avoided in favor of issuing a paper summons if at all possible due to the lack of holding facilities and the increase in unruly arrestees. Every arrestee will end up in a cell. How long is dependent on whether or not they are bailed and when they get bailed. Officers have personally paid the bail fee to release prisoners so we would not have to hold them at the Police Department and then hoped to retrieve the bail fee at arraignment the following day.

The Department of Public Health dictates many aspects of holding cells: materials, fixtures, audio/visual equipment, etc. It also dictates many aspects of the entire booking area.

1.29 Why do we need a second bay in the Sally Port?

We need the ability to store a vehicle as evidence so that police can maintain a chain of custody. The evidence found in the vehicle may hold an essential key to solving that particular investigation. The types of evidence that may be found in the vehicle will be dependent on the criminal act that is being committed.

As an example, a burglary to the vehicle may yield fingerprints to identify a person who gained entry into the vehicle. Whereas a vehicle that was used in a homicide involving the shooting, stabbing, or transporting of a victim may yield an assortment of physical evidence.

We would hold a vehicle for evidence processing, photographing, DNA retrieval, pending search warrant execution, etc. This process could be tainted if the vehicle was not secured properly. Tainted evidence may equal no conviction of a criminal and a victim left re-victimized because of poor investigative measures.

1.30 Where do firefighters keep their gear?

The only personnel that are allowed to keep their gear in their vehicles at this time are officers. We must get apparatus to the scene, so everyone else keeps their turnout gear at the station. There is a high risk from a contamination standpoint when personnel keep their gear in personal vehicles. The officers that keep their gear in their vehicles have special gear totes to maintain separation. It may become mandatory in the very near future for all turnout gear to be stored in a gear storage room.

1.31 What are the differences between Option B (voted on 5/2021) and Option D (current conceptual design)?

The Committee and architect trimmed space by reducing the number of bunk rooms from three to two, making corridors more efficient, optimizing radio and mechanical rooms, and dropping the fitness room. The new design has 12,870 square feet on the first floor, down from 15,509 in the design brought to voters in 2021. The new design includes the structural work necessary to have 663 square feet of space for future needs on the second floor. That is in addition to the 12,870 square feet on the first floor.

1.32 Why is there no basement? Couldn't we save money by using Princeton Center's basement?

The existing basement has various levels (perhaps because there was ledge), insufficient headroom, and at most about 2000 square feet of space. In addition, we have no use for basement space and it wouldn't be cost effective. Caolo & Bienek developed several plans which used below ground space but nobody involved believed the design was efficient or effective.

Zoning/Wetlands Issues

1.33 Has the Conservation Commission looked at the field as far as wetlands are concerned?

To ensure that the work being done by Caolo & Bieniek was as comprehensive as possible, the Town arranged for several studies to be done. One was a complete look at the site from an environmental perspective. Berkshire Design identified wetlands at the north-west corner and an intermittent stream running through part of the lot that will need to be worked around. It will restrict underground storage of drain water. Another finding was ledge that further restricts the location of some pieces of the building infrastructure. Caolo & Bieniek and Ian Catlow met with the Conservation Commission to go over the conceptual designs and to discuss site issues. There will be a more formal review by the Conservation Commission when actual designs have been developed.

1.34 Can we build a building of this size now that we have a new bylaw requiring increased setbacks for buildings over 10,000 square feet?

This bylaw was amended to include an exemption for municipal buildings.

1.35 What is the status of the well and septic at the Princeton Center School?

The existing well cannot be used because it would be under part of the building. A new well will need to be drilled. Further inspection of the septic system will need to be done as it will have to meet Title V requirements. Given site constraints, the only logical place for the septic system is where it is now, in the front of the building on the grassy area.

Cost-related questions

1.36 Could alternative materials and techniques be used to keep cost down?

The architect will make a recommendation on what building materials are most appropriate to suit safety needs in addition to required building codes and standards. Caolo & Bieniek had several discussions with their cost estimators about the cost savings that might be realized through the use of other materials:

1. Pre-engineered metal building or framing: Unless we incorporate a complete metal building system (pre-engineered steel framing, metal siding and metal roof) we wouldn't reduce any cost. It is the building team's opinion that the Town would prefer to have something less industrial-looking in the historic residential neighborhood.
2. Precast wall panels: The building is too small to see a savings. A precast concrete panel system would also require onsite installation of insulation and wall finishes to meet the energy code. All onsite work is subject to prevailing wages.
3. Metal Stud Framing: If any building material is likely to see a sharp cost increase, it will be light gauge metals. The proposed wood framed system with pre-fab trusses is the most economical and a system that all commercial general contractors can install.

The Public Safety Building Committee investigated ICF (insulated concrete forms) after hearing about a building in NH that used the material and came in pretty low in cost. After much discussion with the architects and the manufacturer of the ICF, it turns out that it would be more expensive to go with that construction methodology for our building.

The Committee also looked into using pre-fab or modular construction. Again, after discussions with the manufacturers, it turns out that would be a more expensive model.

The architects and the Committee believe that the stick-built construction methodology we are using is the most cost efficient.

To learn more about the investigation into some of these alternatives, see this [writeup](#).

1.37 What drives the costs of construction, particularly for a truck bay?

The building enclosure is typically in the 20-25% range of the total building cost. The site work, mechanical, electrical, plumbing, and finish costs account for the remainder. While the truck bay is not as complicated as other portions of the building, it still contains all of those systems and utilities, including heating, plumbing, electrical, and specialty items such as vehicle exhaust and runoff capture systems.

1.38 Why are public safety buildings so expensive to build?

The construction is required to adhere to federal and state laws and regulations as well as a variety of other standards and guidelines including building code, prevailing wage, Owner's Project Manager (OPM), procurement laws, OSHA requirements, Department of Public Health, and National Fire Protection Association guidelines.

It is difficult to say what the difference is between public and private construction costs because we never build the exact same project with public funds and private funds which would allow us to make that comparison. However, prevailing wage is approximately 3 times local wage rates. In addition, municipal construction requires an owner's project manager (OPM) for projects over \$1.5 million. The additional cost of having an OPM is projected to be approximately \$330,000 for Option D.

1.39 Why are all new furnishings included in the design and cost estimates?

Many of the existing furnishings are very old and in quite bad repair. Former Police Chief Charlie Schmohl acquired most of the desks and filing cabinets used by the Police for free over ten years ago. Drawers no longer open easily. The departments will make every effort to re-use as much as they can to reduce the cost to the Town.

1.40 Can anything from the existing building be re-used?

As part of the Public Safety Stabilization project that was completed in 2019, we installed an exhaust evacuation system in the apparatus bays. We hope to move that to the new building and only pay for installation and expansion. We also have a large generator that we received through a grant. We will need to determine whether or not it is the right size for the new building. We do not plan on replacing our expensive communication equipment but, depending upon many factors, may need to add some equipment to maintain good communication with Holden Dispatch and the Mountain.

1.41 How does Princeton's proposed public safety facility compare to other similar projects?

Princeton's facility is small and that is due to the excellent working relationship between the two departments. Caolo & Bieniek has had to design buildings where much of what we have as shared space has to be duplicated because those departments aren't as willing to share.

We have been asked many times to look at why another building appears to have been built for significantly less than is being proposed. After accounting for inflation, it usually comes down to costs outside the actual building cost. Carl Soderberg broke down the costs that were presented at the 2021 ATM. The actual building costs only accounted for 50% of the total. Factors that need to be taken into consideration when comparing building projects are site work, demolition, water, sewer, fire suppression, ledge, and hazardous materials abatement. If you compare with an out-of-state project, you need to factor in that Massachusetts has a prevailing wage law. Note that 13% of the projected costs were in escalation and contingency. This is an industry standard buffer that may or may not be spent. Caolo & Bieniek has had projects come in under budget.

1.42 Why is Fire Suppression expensive?

Our building will need to have a full sprinkler system. Since we are not on town water and a normal well wouldn't be sufficient, we will need to have a large underground water storage tank that is dedicated to fire suppression.

1.43 What do you expect construction costs to do in the next few years?

Caolo & Bieniek has calls into AM Fogarty regarding the construction inflation costs he is seeing now and what is predicted for next year. We are using 6% inflation on this project which is slightly higher than past years (past years were 5%). We are seeing more contractors bidding from greater distances but the material costs continue to increase. Caolo & Bieniek does not anticipate any cost going down next year.

Other

1.44 Is the Town planning to tear down the Princeton Center School?

No formal decision has been made to date, but the building is currently closed for use and it is not needed for town operations. The Selectboard has been reluctant to do any repairs to the building and it is falling further and further into disrepair. At some point, the Selectboard may have to decide to raze the building.

1.45 The field behind the Princeton Center School is used by many walkers; will this be affected?

It is likely the field will be available for use by the public. Because of the lot limitations (really long and narrow), the building and associated parking lots and driveways encroach over the existing softball field. However, much of the field will remain. In addition, we hope to have several dedicated parking spaces that can be used by the public to access the field.

1.46 How long will this new station meet the Town's needs?

The new Public Safety building should meet Town needs for the foreseeable future. Princeton's population grew a modest 1.8% from 2000 to 2010 and 2.4% between 2010 and 2020 (per the Division of Local Services). It is anticipated that growth in this range will continue. We assume this building will be used for at least 40 years. Our "new" station (in East Princeton) was built in 1984. It will be over 50 years old when the new building comes on line and we still plan on using it. We have designed in a little bit of expansion capacity. Should the need arise to expand the Public Safety operations beyond that, there is room for expansion on the second floor of the new building and sufficient area to do so at the East Princeton Station 2 site as well.

1.47 What staffing assumptions were made for Police in the development of the design?

We currently have the Chief, six full-time officers (2 of whom are sergeants), five part-time officers, and a full-time Administrative Assistant. Chief Patriarca is asking for an additional two patrol officers in his FY24 budget. We currently operate with 3 shifts a day. Of those 21 shifts a week, we typically have 15 shifts covered or partially covered with only officer (and that may be by one of the sergeants). During week days, we typically have a Sergeant on the road for a couple of hours and then in the station and the Administrative Assistant and Chief in the office. We could have officers in the station doing training during their shift.

Though the Town is not growing quickly, there are several areas where we may need to add staff over the next five to ten years. The 15 shifts covered by only one officer are a concern and we may decide to have 2 people working on more shifts. In addition, we may decide to add a full-time detective position instead of dedicating one shift a week to detective work. The detective investigates and follows up on cases, writes search warrants and subpoenas, and maybe covers open shifts. Investigations are taking up an increasing amount of time due to the increase in computer related crimes including social media investigations. The detective would typically work any shift they needed to work on the investigation. We may also decide at some point to add a Lieutenant position. This person would help the Chief with administrative tasks and would be a non-unionized supervisor. The department's best estimate is that these three changes would result in up to four additional officers in the station during certain shifts.

All officers currently have lockers to store their gear at the current police station and would all need lockers at the new facility. We have designed the locker area with the expected future staffing in mind.

1.48 What staffing assumptions were made for Fire/EMS in the development of the design?

The current roster of the fire and EMS department is 40 including our per diem crew (manning the station in case of a medical emergency, 7 days a week from 7am to 5pm). As we face difficulty filling shifts, we add more people to our roster.

The number of people on the roster affects the size of the turnout gear area. Each person has their own dedicated gear that needs space. The gear is sized to the individual and cannot be shared.

Though we don't have any plans at this time to move to a full-time department, we have been moving toward having more time covered by medics and/or EMTs (our per diem crew). Chief Bennett is asking to expand our per diem program by adding one person from 5pm to 7am, seven days a week because our response time is inadequate in the early morning hours. If response time for calls continues to suffer, we may need to expand our per diem program or consider adding 4-6 full-time staff over the next few years. That expansion isn't expected to cause problems with locker room space. Local full-time departments typically don't exceed a crew of 8 on any given shift. The locker room is designed for our projected needs.

1.49 How does OSHA affect this project?

On March 9, 2018, Governor Charlie Baker signed the Massachusetts Workers Safety Bill extending OSHA standards protections to municipal workers. Police and Fire Departments in Massachusetts are now required to comply with minimum OSHA regulations.

The following are some highlights of OSHA Requirements for Fire/EMS related to facilities. The new public safety facility will bring Princeton Fire/EMS to full compliance.

Facility Safety

- Electrical wiring (**Princeton Not Compliant**)
- Stairways, railings, and floor maintenance to prevent slip-trips (**Princeton Not Compliant**)

Cancer Prevention

- Respirator program for inhalation of smoke or soot
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) program for skin contact with smoke or soot
- Procedures to prevent migration of soot contamination in firehouse
- Decontamination facilities for gear and personnel (**Princeton Not Compliant for personnel but we do have laundry equipment for gear**)

1.50 Why is there a tight tank next to the septic area in front?

There are three tanks in our plan. One is the septic tank that works with the leach field. It will be located in front. The second is an oil / water separator that will serve all the garages (washdown and snow melt water) and the extractors (laundry for gear). Ideally it will be located in a grassy area where a pump truck can access it. This water may be contaminated not just with oil but also with any number of bad substances (fentanyl, carcinogens, PFAS) and cannot be piped into our septic system. The third tank is water for fire suppression (sprinklers). The tank locations will be determined during the final design process.

1.51 What are you planning on doing with the large antenna?

We will most likely recommend leaving the antenna where it is, inside a fenced enclosure, with the equipment necessary to keep it running. We would then have a smaller antenna on the new building which communicates with the big antenna. The equipment that is under the closed sally port in the existing building can remain there indefinitely but, at some point, the Town might consider moving it into a small hardened concrete building next to the antenna.

1.52 Why are the apparatus bays so large?

We have 4' 0" clearance at all locations around each truck which is Building Code compliant and a typical amount of clearance in fire stations for line-of sight for safety.

1.53 Why do we need a third apparatus bay?

This extra bay will allow us to keep all of our vehicles and equipment in secure, covered, heated space. Per the MRI Report, the Town has a large investment in its equipment and apparatus and should keep it under cover. Today, we drain the water out of our two forestry trucks (engine 3 and engine 4) and put them in storage before freezing temperatures will cause damage. During dry winters or late fall/early winter, before we have too much snow, the risk of forest or brush fires remains and we are significantly less prepared to fight them.

Sensitive equipment in Car 25, which we use for personnel transport and also command functions, will no longer be at risk from high summer temperatures.

Our vehicles also suffer weather/sunlight related damage that is costly and could be disruptive. We replace hoses and tires more frequently on our vehicles that need to be stored outside. We also experience electrical damage from rodents and heat damage to expensive communication gear. Theft from the vehicles, some of which can't be secured, is also a problem.

We also need to be prepared for needs that might arise during the life of the new building. For example, we might determine we need an additional Class 1 Ambulance to adequately respond to medical emergencies.

Response time is critical with firefighting and medical emergencies. We need to make sure that our vehicles are ready to roll when we need them. We also need to make sure that they are close to where the first responders will be. The fire fighters and EMTs will rush to the station, don their gear, jump into the vehicles, and go. The trucks can't be stored in some out of the way, less central space. In addition, Ladder 1 has air brakes that are currently filled by revving the engine for about 5 minutes before it is safe to move the truck. In the new station, each vehicle will be served by 3 drops from overhead: power, exhaust evacuation, and air. This will improve Ladder 1's response time.

1.54 Why is the water system so expensive?

Per MassDEP, our expected usage of the station requires us to put in a public water supply. This is more expensive to install than a typical domestic well. In addition, the site is in an area of high PFAS

concentrations and we expect that we will need to put in an appropriately sized point of entry treatment system and perhaps a water softener.

1.55 How will we heat/cool the new building? What will do this to the Town's energy bill?

Some early thinking is to use radiant floor heating in the apparatus bays and forced air elsewhere. Radiant is frequently used for the bays because it works well at keeping the apparatus bays at a constant temperature and is more economical than alternatives. It is too early to determine the type of fuel that will be used and whether solar is a component. The building team will work closely with the Environmental Action Committee to explore and evaluate options. Per the building code, the roof must be strong enough to support solar panels. It is important to note that our existing building is lacking adequate ventilation and air exchanges so therefore may cost less than it should.

1.56 Which alternative construction methodologies did the committee explore and what did they learn?

The committee investigated ICF (insulated concrete forms) after hearing about a building in NH that used the material and came in pretty low in cost. After much discussion with the architects and the manufacturer of the ICF, it turns out that it would be more expensive to go with that construction methodology for our building.

We also looked into using pre-fab or modular construction. Again, after discussions with the manufacturers, it turns out that would be a more expensive model.

We believe that the stick-built construction methodology we are using is the most cost efficient.

For a more thorough understanding of what was investigated, please see [this writeup](#).

1.57 Will there be a vestibule with cameras that will be unlocked where people can go if afraid (road rage, stalker, abuse)?

There should be cameras throughout the facility. The outer doors for the vestibule should be left unlocked. The inner doors which lead to the lobby would be locked and able to be opened by dispatch to allow people into the lobby, which would provide some security from anyone on the outside of the building. The lobby area would be secured so no one could enter the building any further without an escort.

1.58 Definitions

- Department of Public Health (DPH)
- National Fire Protection Association (NFPA)
- National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH)
- Massachusetts Architectural Access Board (MAAB)
- Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)

1.59 What is the estimated tax impact of the new building?

We need to talk not just about the \$ impact for houses of various values but also about how this project fits into the overall debt schedule. How will the town be positioned for future project needs?

If we build the building right after completing the design and construction documents, we would be borrowing approximately \$11,330,000. Our Finance Department calculated the tax impact of this forty-year borrowing. The annual impact on the owner of a \$500,000 home would range from \$400 to \$430. See their calculations [here](#).

1.60 Construction cost is listed at an estimate of \$11 million. Does this price tag include the estimated design and construction document cost of \$1 million?

The total cost of the project is estimated at \$12.32 million. \$11 million is the building and site construction costs. You can see a breakdown of the costs from back in 2021 [here](#).

1.61 What year did we start talking about the need for a new public safety building?

There is a reference in the current master plan to the 1975 master plan which mentioned a new public safety building. We don't know if it came to a Town Meeting before 2018.

1.62 How much have we spent on the stopgap repairs to Station 1 in the years we've continued to vote down funding for a new building?

We spent about \$345,000 on stabilization of Station 1 in 2018/2019. To keep it that low, we didn't do anything about the sagging roof truss and the Police sally port (garage) floor. These two items were on the highest priority list but were very expensive. The Police asked the Selectboard in 2022 for a car port to put the cruisers under cover before snow arrived. An environmental study requested by the Police Chief and officers in 2022 indicated air quality problems that should be fixed soon.

1.63 Are there other towns in the Commonwealth who have perennially failed to provide their public servants with a building that enables them to render the necessary and sometimes dangerous services that keep us all safe?

According to State Senator Anne Gobi, many small towns, particularly in the western part of the State, struggle with issues similar to ours. Numerous bills are working their way through the State legislature in an attempt to assist. None of the bills provide funding. There are bills moving through the Federal legislature that would allocate \$750m towards public safety buildings.

1.64 Does the state ever inspect local police and fire stations, in a kind of accreditation process?

No. At some point, we could have a complaint that brings in OSHA. The State might also get involved if we had an incident with a prisoner. One aspect of Police Reform that is still under discussion is what will be involved in the mandatory accreditation (certification) process for police departments. We do not know if the building will be a factor.

1.65 Why are we replacing the existing Fire Station in East Princeton? Is it too small? Not up to code?

We have no plans to replace the East Princeton fire station at this point in time. We are planning on replacing the Police/Fire building that is behind Town Hall with a new building on Boylston Av.

1.66 What are you doing to ensure the building fits into the residential neighborhood?

The Historical Commission has asked to have a member on the Building Team during the design process to ensure that the building fits into the historic neighborhood. The Building Team fully supported that idea. Architect and Historical Commission member Carl Soderberg was a member of this Committee.

1.67 How much will the Town's property insurance increase with the new building?

Our insurance agent estimates that the cost for insuring a \$12 million dollar building today would be \$7200 more than what we pay to insure the current building.

1.68 Why is the building more expensive now than the larger building we voted on at the 2021 Annual Town Meeting?

Municipal construction increases faster than other types of construction. We are facing supply chain disruptions, labor shortages, and high inflation rates. What isn't shown in the total construction costs is that the cost of

borrowing will be higher than it would have been if we did the project several years ago. We do not expect to see record low interest rates again.

When comparing the project cost in 2021 to the cost today, it is important to look beyond just the square footage differences.

Our cost estimators have seen project costs increase by 6% per year over the past few years.