

Board Action Request

SUBJECT: Station #1 Board Memo
DATE: May 27, 2020
FROM: Cheryl Horvath, Fire Chief

Background:

Staff prepared a response to the recommendations put forth by the Station #1 committee. As a reminder the Station #1 committee consisted of members of the public only with no experience in emergency services, have never lived or worked in a fire station, and have no fire station design experience. I was given the opportunity as fire chief to answer a series of questions in writing only for the committee's first meeting. I participated as an audience member in the committee's first meeting to follow-up on any information that I had provided to them. I was asked one question directly by the committee, which I answered, and I also took that opportunity to clarify mis-information that was discussed during the meeting and invite the committee in groups of two to tour the current facility. I was not invited nor did I participate or attend subsequent committee meetings. A representative of the Tubac firefighters attended every committee meeting telephonically and was not given the opportunity to contribute to any of the discussions. The committee also did not complete a walk-through of the current Station #1 facility or speak directly with any staff members about the deficiencies with the current structure.

The firefighters of Tubac Fire District support this staff memo and are eager to be heard and be part of the planning committee for a new fire station.

The replacement of Station #1 is not a recent topic and has been a public issue since 2007/2008.

As part of the 2008 bond election, Station #1 was listed as one of the six projects to be supported by the bond. Here is the breakdown of the six projects presented to the fire board in 2008 and publicly advertised as part of the \$15 million bond package:

1. Station #3 - \$3.3 million (to be completed in 2010)
2. Station #4 - \$3.3 million (to be completed in 2010)
3. Station #1 - \$4.2 million (to be completed by 2011)
4. Administration Offices - \$1.1 million
5. Training - \$1.1 million
6. Fire Apparatus - \$2 million

As advertised in the bond announcement, the District's intent at the time was to relocate Station #1 to the donated land and construct an administration building and training center adjacent to new Station #1 for a total cost estimate of \$6.4 million. All buildings were to be designed to be functional for at least 30 to 40 years. The training center was intended to be available to all citizens of Santa Cruz County for

training and meetings. The current site for Station #1 was to be retained by the District and converted to a fleet maintenance facility, available to public safety agencies, and serve as a staging area for various events in the Tubac area.

The 2008 \$15 million bond authorization was approved by the voters of Tubac Fire District.

In 2008, the District received a land donation for a new station in Tubac, administration offices, training site, and fleet facility. This donation was contingent on the District utilizing the site within five years of accepting the donation. Unfortunately, due to the recession the District was not able to build on the site and the donation was rescinded.

It is now twelve years after the bond passed and nine years after Station #1 was due to be replaced. The fire district has experienced significant recovery economically from the recession. The replacement of Station #1 was included in the 2018/19 Capital Improvement Plan. When staff first presented the current conditions at Station #1 with WSM Architects in 2019, we briefly discussed what it would cost to complete minimal upgrades to Station #1, such as a new apparatus bay. When the cost estimate exceeded \$1 million, we felt it was financially responsible to look at a replacement structure in lieu of adding onto a 50-year old building at such a high price tag.

Staff has reviewed the two proposals as presented by the Station #1 committee and we do not recommend that the fire district take a firm stand to support remodeling the current facility. Here are the shortfalls with the two remodel options as presented by the fire station committee:

1. Option A - \$892,000 (estimate does not include site work, paving, or grading)
 - a. Firefighters living quarters remain a 20 plus year old single wide trailer
 - b. Firefighters must walk outside from their living quarters to enter the apparatus bay to respond to emergency calls
 - c. This option does not address the apparatus bay spaces being too small or having safe circulation. The District's busiest emergency unit, Medic 731, would still respond out of the back of the facility due to inadequate ceiling height in the front facing apparatus bay.
 - d. There is no patient care area or lobby separate from the fire station or the administrative offices
 - e. There is no consideration for adding firefighters to staff Station #1 responding units.
2. Option B - \$2.6 million (estimate does not include site work, paving, or grading)
 - a. Emergency units respond out of the back of the property which is not ideal. Although this is the current arrangement for our response vehicles, this is not preferred but due to the low apparatus bay ceilings we are forced to respond out of the back. Also, the new apparatus bays will not be drive through bays.

Shortfalls that are common with both proposals are:

- a. No automatic sprinkler or fire alarm systems in the living areas or office areas (a requirement for public buildings in Santa Cruz County)

- b. Does not address external drainage issues that impact administration offices or apparatus bays
- c. No training or public meeting space
- d. No paved areas on the outside of the structure, thus limiting access for handicapped residents
- e. There is no security (fencing, gates, etc.) added to the exterior of the structure. The entire facility is unsecured, including the apparatus bays, firefighter living quarters, emergency generator, and staff parking
- f. Administration needs such as increased climate-controlled storage, small conference meeting spaces separate from employee break areas or public spaces, increased office sizes, lobby security issues, and upgrades are not addressed. An examples of administration upgrades would be windows and roofs that do not leak and a tighter building envelope that does not allow rodents and bugs. Also, neither proposal contemplates any increase in administrative staffing.

Staff understands that there is a difference of opinion on the fire board regarding the need for a training and/or meeting space. Of the four fire stations within Tubac Fire District, Station #1 is the only facility without a training or meeting space. This means that any shift training or large meeting will be held at another TFD station, taking the Station #1 crews out of their response area and a distance of at least 14 miles from the northern boundary of the fire district (Amado), and at least 8 miles from Tubac. We are also unable to schedule and support community education classes (like CPR or active shooter training) in Tubac due to a lack of meeting space. As presented previously to the fire board, the Community Center in Tubac does not have the availability to host TFD community education classes. In fact, TFD CPR classes were held at the Community Center in years past and that practice was discontinued due to lack of availability at the Community Center.

The \$900K to \$2.6 million price tags on the two proposals are estimates only that will likely increase once any remodeling begins. Staff does not believe it is prudent to spend that amount of money on a remodel versus exploring a full replacement.

Fiscal Impact:

There are various options available to fund a new fire station and administration offices, including capital funds, lease purchase options (including interest free lease purchase), bond capacity, and the potential for private funds for use of the Station #1 tower and/or facilities.

Alternate Option:

Information Only

Legal Review: N/A

Staff Recommendation:

Staff is recommending not to adopt the alternative solutions for remodel as presented by the Station #1 committee.

Proposed Motion:

Information Only