

Article 4: \$75,000 for a Fire Station Feasibility Study

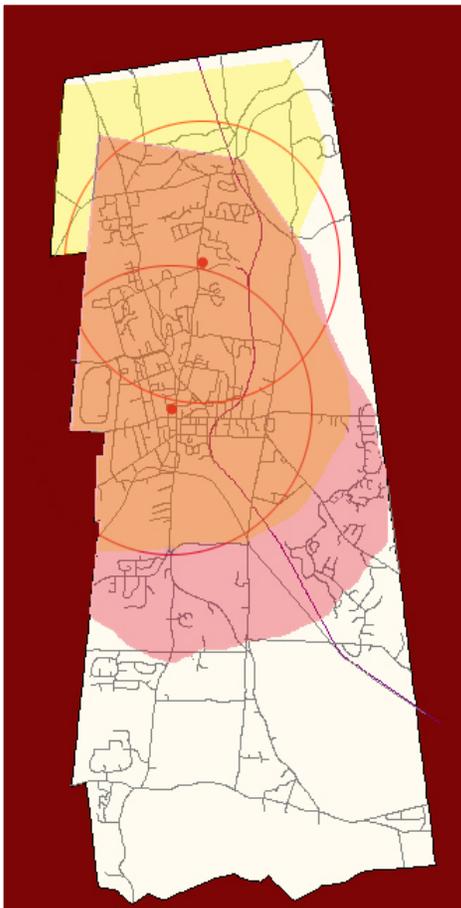
Why a new fire station?

The central fire station at 68 North Pleasant St. was built in 1929, when fire vehicles were much smaller, and the department answered about 150 calls a year. By 1975 when a second fire station opened at 603 East Pleasant St., annual fire and emergency medical services (EMS) calls totaled about 2,000. Today, fire trucks and ambulances must be custom-built to fit through Central Fire Station's doors. The department handles close to 6,500 EMS and fire calls a year.

Can we put this off?

No. It has already been put off for five decades. Studies conducted in 1966, 1983 and 2006 all pointed out that emergency responses to parts of South and East Amherst are dangerously delayed due to their distance from the central fire station. All three studies recommended replacing the station with a new one located somewhat south of the downtown. The full 2006 report can be found at

<http://www.amherstma.gov/DocumentCenter/Home/View/33791>



Current station coverage



Coverage with new south station

Where would a new fire station be located?

The 2006 study recommended that it should be along the South Pleasant Street corridor, roughly in the vicinity of the Mill Lane intersection, in order to improve response times to South Amherst while maintaining adequate coverage for the areas where most calls come from – downtown, University Drive, and the University of Massachusetts. Evaluation of possible sites would be part of the feasibility study. The current location of the Department of Public Works (DPW) is one of those sites.

What is a “feasibility study”? Why does the Town need a consultant to do one?

Based on interviews with Amherst Fire Department staff, and a review of current state and national standards for fire stations, the consultant would develop space requirements for the department’s programs. Using that information, up to three potential sites would be identified, followed by a conceptual design and floor plans and preliminary cost estimates. Much of this work is technical and depends on deep knowledge of requirements for and best practices in the field of fire protection and emergency medical services. Once funds for the study are approved, the Town would contract with a consultant that has extensive experience in designing and completing fire stations.

When will the feasibility study be finished? What next?

The study would be completed by March 2017. We would come back to a future Town Meeting to request more funding for a detailed schematic design. We do not yet have a cost estimate for that, but our committee is currently requesting \$350,000 for a schematic design of a new DPW facility.

How much would a new fire station cost?

The feasibility study would help refine that estimate.



September 17, 2016