Town of Thomaston, Maine

Fire Department Needs Study

March 22, 2024

PORT CITY
ARCHITECTURE

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Executive Summary

Purpose of the Study

Port City Architecture (PCA) was hired by the Town of Thomaston, Maine, in 2023 to evaluate their fire operations, their existing facilities, and their current and future facility space requirements. The purpose of this study is to recommend the best and most efficient operational practices for the fire department and to provide them with a facility plan well suited to achieving these operational goals.

Team

Port City Architecture, Public Safety Design specialist
Neil Courtney, Municipal Fire Protection Consultant

Facility Assessment

Our first task was to interview the fire department and determine the physical space requirements necessary to meet the needs of the Town for the next 50 years. We based the space program on Thomaston's unique current and future needs and compared them to benchmarks from other similar sized towns employing modern firefighting practices.

We then examined the existing fire station in town to determine the existing physical condition and the ability to accommodate the town's future space requirements. The fire station was extremely inadequate in both its physical condition and functional layout to accommodate modern firefighting and EMR needs. The most obvious problem with the site is that it is too small to accommodate the required space program.

Facility Recommendations

Based on our review and the conclusions of Neil's study (see appendix A) we are recommending that the existing fire station be sold and that a new fire station be constructed on land owned by the town located at the Thomaston Green. A better site location with access to the main drive is beneficial to the town.

Cost

Th estimated turn-key cost of constructing the new 15,100 sf Fire Department building at an estimated cost of $525/sf is $7,927,500. There is currently an opportunity of acquiring $1 million to $2 million of federal funds to offset this cost.

Community Profile and Public Safety Services

The town of Thomaston covers an area of 11.54 square miles, and according to the U.S Census Bureau, the town's 2020 population stood at 2,739 year-round residents. The median age of Thomaston residents as of 2017 was 44.7 years, whereas the 2010 Census revealed the median age was 44 years. As is the case with many communities throughout Maine, the residential population continues to grow older.

The town's governance is by a five-member board of selectman/town manager form of government, and the budgetary cycle is fiscal year. The mil rate for fiscal 2023 was $21.82. The town assessor has Thomaston's valuation set at $438,109,219. The State of Maine Department of Revenue for 2023 has the town's valuation figured at $455,750,000. The most recent iteration of Thomaston Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 2020.

Public safety in Thomaston is a municipal function and consists of a full-time police department, an on-call fire department, and an emergency transport ambulance service that is now staffed around the clock with two per diem emergency medical service providers. The police department operates from the Thomaston Municipal Building at 13 Valley Street. The department currently consists of eight officers, including the chief, and one of those officers is assigned the duties of harbormaster. Both the fire department and the ambulance department, which are two separate agencies, operate from the fire station located at 6 Knox Street. Until the end of June 2023, the town's emergency management agency was overseen by an appointed, stipend EMA director. With the creation of the new full-time position of ambulance chief that was authorized with the passage of the fiscal 2024 budget, the duties of the EMA director were rolled into the responsibilities of the Thomaston Ambulance Chief. The new position will be deemed a "working chief," which means the chief will typically fill several duty shifts per week.

E-911 communications for Thomaston and all Knox County communities is provided by the Knox County Regional Communications Center, a function of the county government. The fee for service for Thomaston in 2024 is $99,807.04, and was $85,439.40 in 2023.

The Thomaston Fire Department

The fire department operates from a single station located at #6 Knox Street. Constructed in 1956, the three-wide, two-deep apparatus bays house the bulk of the apparatus, with the exception of the aerial ladder, which is located in a single transverse bay to the rear of the station.

The fire department consists of 25 "paid on-call" members and two junior fire fighters. Of this group, there are 18 who are qualified as "Interior Fire

Fighters." Fourteen members of the fire department also serve on the ambulance department as well. The fire chief and the three ranking chief officers are stipend. The operating budget for fiscal 2024 is $196,315.

There is a non-profit organization named the Thomaston Fireman's Association. The association, which is not affiliated with the municipality, serves as the benevolent and fund raising auxiliary of the fire department.

The Thomaston Ambulance Department

The Thomaston Ambulance Department is a separate municipally operated entity and not a sub-division of any other town public safety department. The department is headed by an EMS chief, consists of a cadre of on-call and part-time employees, and operates out of the Thomaston Fire Station. According to the fiscal 2023 annual town report, the department had 26 committed personnel. However, at present, the department has a roster of 35. Of those members, nine are strictly ambulance drivers, 11 are Basic EMT's, eight are Advanced EMT's, and seven are Paramedics. To reiterate, 14 of these members are also assigned to the Thomaston Fire Department.

At the annual town meeting in June 2023, the voters approved hiring a full-time EMS chief. The voters also approved additional funding to provide around the clock coverage by having two on-duty personnel. Because the fire station is not suitable for overnight occupancy, members assigned to a night shift may eventually share living quarters with the police department at their facility. Otherwise, for the moment, the plan is to allow EMT's who cover the night shift to reside at home and respond to the station and deploy to the call. Personnel who are assigned night shifts must meet certain criteria with regards to the how far from the fire station they live.

Introduction and Study Approach

Port City Architecture (PCA) was hired by the Town of Thomaston, Maine, in 2022 to evaluate their fire operations, their existing facilities, and their current and future facility space requirements. We evaluated the current facility's physical condition, code compliance, site location, and operational suitability. The purpose of this study is to recommend the best and most efficient operational practices for the fire department and to provide them with a facility plan well suited to achieve these operational goals.

To achieve these objectives, Port City and our Municipal Fire Consultant embarked on the following process. We began with Neil researching and interviewing the Fire Department. His objective was to determine the most efficient mix of personnel and apparatus. In addition, he reviewed the department's geographical history of call locations to determine the best locations to site a future station for the fastest response times to the majority of future calls.

While Neil was assessing the fire department's operations, Port City interviewed the fire department to determine how much space is needed to efficiently operate using modern fire protocols. The spaces and square footage requested by the department was compared to other modern departments in similar sized towns and was modified if necessary to respond to the projected growth needs of the departments for the next fifty to seventy-five years.

Once the space needs matrix was reviewed and approved by the town and aligned with the personnel and apparatus needs from Neil's investigation, we proceeded to design a schematic floor plan and site plan indicating how the facility would be efficiently arranged.

The ideal location is on town owned land that also matches the location threshold from Neil's study. The site on Thomaston Green is an ideal site. We modified the floor plans as necessary to accommodate the site and provide a rendered site plan and 3D model of the facility. We will also fine tune the cost estimate. With this information in hand the town can determine the best funding plan for the facility. This plan may include municipal bonds, tiffs, and grants. Currently there are Federal grants available for fire stations that may offset one to two million dollars or more in costs. We expect the grants to be available for one to two more years.

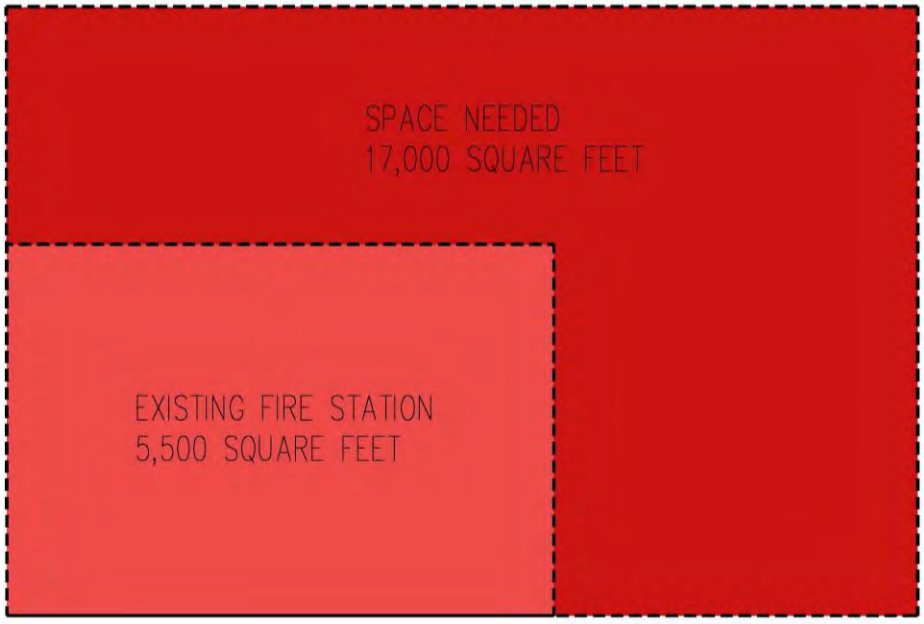
Space Needs Assessments

Our first task was to interview members of the Fire Department to determine the physical space requirements necessary to meet the needs of the town. We based the space program on the town's specific requirements and projected growth and compared them to benchmarks from similar sized towns employing modern fire and EMS practices to get the appropriate space needs for the town. The space programming findings show that the department is very deficient in space. (See Appendix "A")

Fire Department

The fire department is deficient by approximately 75% of their required space. This is due largely to insufficient apparatus bay requirements. The other major deficiency of the fire department is the number of bunk rooms required. In most municipalities in the country, volunteer departments are diminishing, requiring towns to hire paid staff. Thomaston still seems to have a very robust volunteer department and we have designed around that remaining, but still have the possibility to have paid staff if that ever does change in the future. The growing number of paid firefighters and EMS responders requires an increase in sleeping accommodations for the shifts. The department needs to provide sleeping arrangements to meet the changing shift in staff requirements possibly in the future.

Fire Department Space Comparison



Over triple the existing square footage is needed for the Fire Department

Insufficient Dayroom, Workroom, kitchen

Insufficient App Bays with modified floor

The fire department currently has 8 different pieces of apparatus, and the EMS force has 2 ambulances.

Support spaces were also deficient. There is no training room, which if larger would be used as an emergency operations command post. There is no fitness area, which is necessary to help mitigate the physical and emotional stress of first responders. The exterior spaces required for the department are insufficient. Besides parking, the turnout radii for the apparatus were severely hindered by the site constraints.

Existing Buildings Assessments

We have reviewed all the building for functionality, lot size, code compliance, physical conditions, as well as structural, mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems in the building.

Knox Street Fire Station Building Assessment

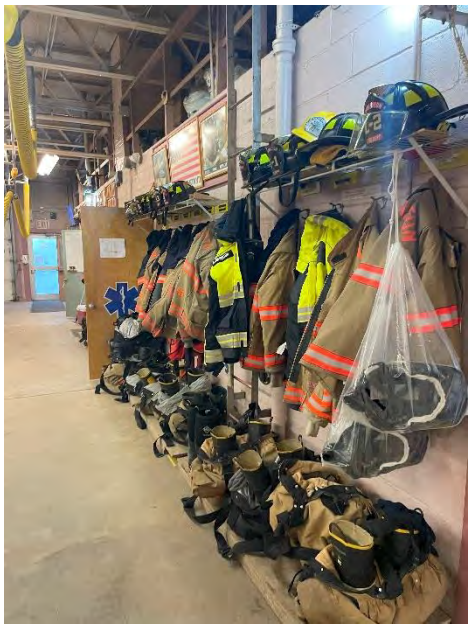
The Knox Street Fire Station does not meet modern firefighting/EMS needs or health and safety requirements, and it does not contain many of the required support spaces. The overall condition of the building from the exterior looks fair, but on deeper inspection, many concerning issues arise.

Knox Street Fire Station, Thomaston, Maine

Knox Street Station Site Plan showing insufficient lot size

The site is surrounded by two buildings with a shared passage between the three buildings. One building has apartments and the other building is a gas station. There is an apparatus bay door that must use the gas station parking lot to access the bay. This can be problematic when responding to calls and there are public vehicles blocking the path out of the bay. The other 3 apparatus bay doors open directly onto Knox Street with a 20-foot apron. The apron is too small to pull out apparatus safely. There are 7 total parking spots available down the side of the building and only 3 of the spots have “Fire department parking only” signs. Parking can become a problem on site. There are other street parking spots, but this is public and could become problematic. There are no more available expansions that could happen to the building because the footprint takes up the entirety of the site.

The apparatus bays contain many carcinogens related to diesel exhaust and to fire and smoke particulates that remain on the equipment after a call. The apparatus are attached to a Plymovent exhaust system which helps remove the exhaust, but there is no system to keep contaminated air from entering the working/living portions of the building. In addition, the turn out gear is presently stored inside the apparatus bays along with a lot of random storage. This is a hazard to the health of the firefighters. Clean turnout gear is exposed immediately after being cleaned.



Turnout gear improperly stored in app bay

Vehicle Exhaust System

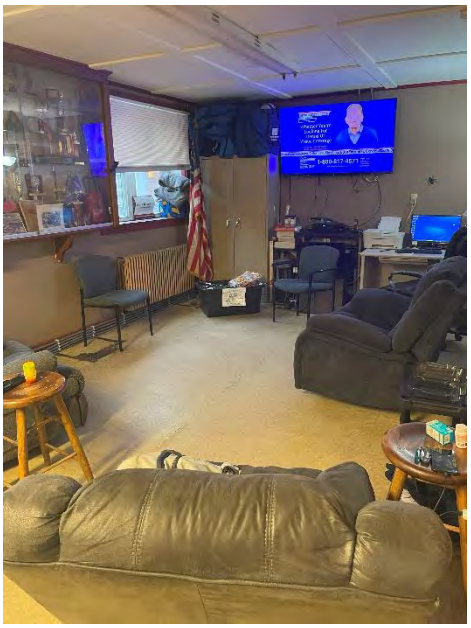
The current living space is attached to the apparatus bay. It has a work desk, a computer desk, television, a couple lounge chairs, and tiny kitchen off it. There are two tiny offices in the building. This building has no bunkrooms for any firefighters staying overnight. The kitchen is very small. The only spots to have any privacy from other inhabitants are the tiny offices.

The building envelope was not inspected for insulation, but we can determine that the building does not meet current energy codes because of the year the building was built, and it does not have the continuous insulation required.

ADA code compliance is not met. There are multiple floor level changes between the apparatus bays and the living space, which cannot be accessed to someone in a wheelchair. There is no ADA entry into the building. The bathroom and kitchen also do not meet ADA clearances.

Electrical fixtures are outdated. All fixtures should be updated to LED for energy efficiency. There is a back-up generator that seems to be in working condition. The heating system was upgraded a few years back and is still in good condition.

Kitchen area



Dayroom area

The “essential facility” code comes from the International Building Code chapter 16 risk category 4 requirements. Risk category 4 is the most stringent in the code. It requires greater seismic, flood, and structural resistance for fire stations, police stations, hospitals, and other facilities considered essential in a potential disaster situation. Any significant renovation to the building would require that the entire existing building comply with risk category 4 requirements. Structurally, it appears this building will not meet essential facility code requirements, without significant structural upgrades. Even if the building was demolished and replaced, the site is far too small to accommodate an expansion.

Knox Street Station Deficiencies

- **Poorly Insulated**
- **Lot size insufficient**
- **No Sprinkler System**
- **Does not meet Essential Facility Structural Code**
- **Turn-out Gear stored in Apparatus Bay**
- **No Bunkrooms**
- **No Decontamination Room**
- **Major Need of Storage**
- **Poor Apparatus Apron for rapid call response**
- **ADA code compliance is not met (door clearances and room sizing)**
- **Electrical Service and Fixtures outdated**
- **Inadequate ventilation and separation of living and garage areas**

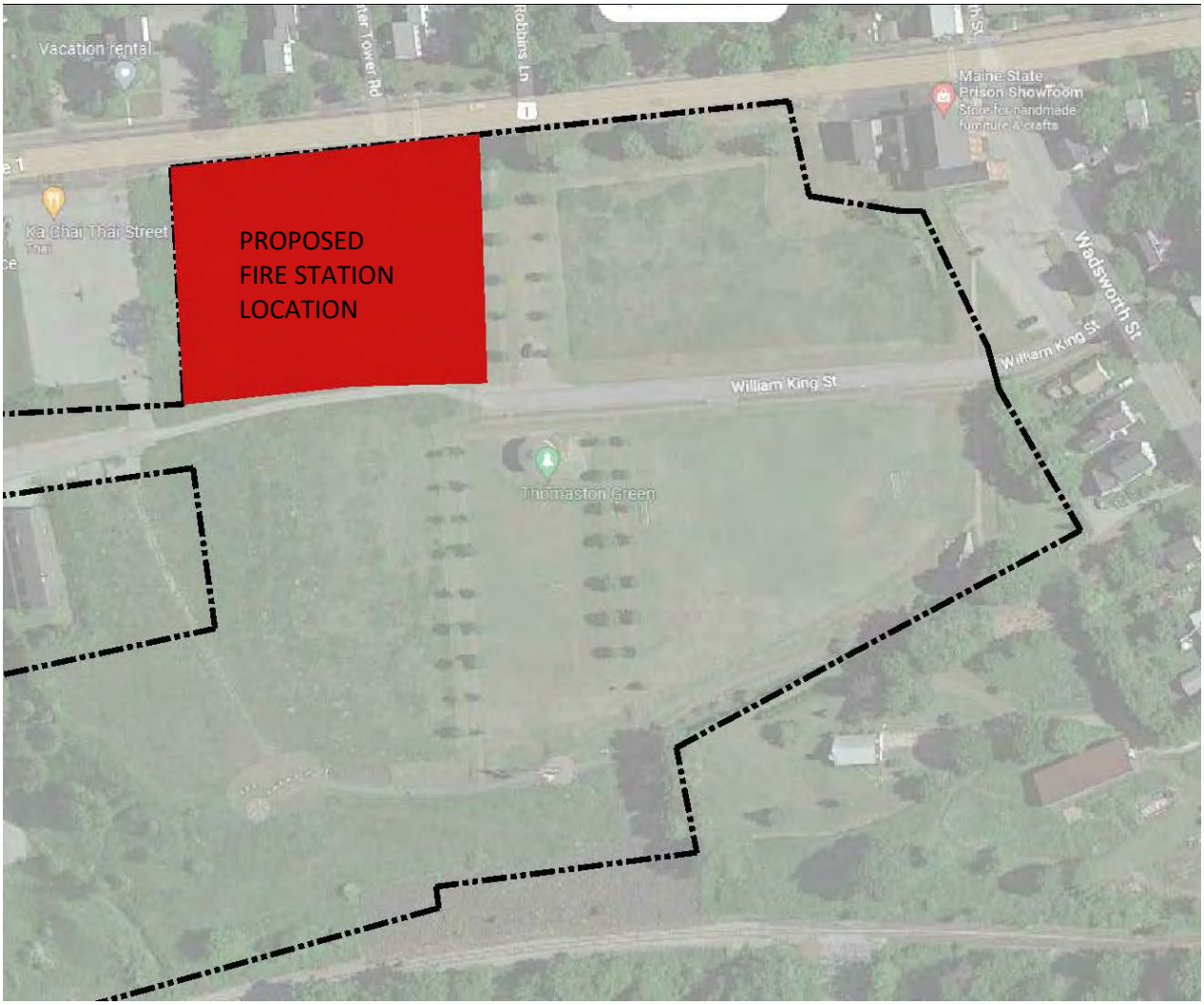
Recommendation

Construct a New Fire Station to replace the existing station

The overall condition of the existing fire station is deficient. It is deficient in space needs, apparatus bay needs, and code compliance with essential facilities and ADA. The electrical and plumbing systems are functional but beyond their life expectancies. The overall cost to bring the facility up to code compliance would be extensive, but this is a moot point as the site of the facility does not allow for the required expansion for space requirements to be met. Because of these factors we recommend a new single fire station on a site centrally located to the call frequency.

Site Selection recommendation

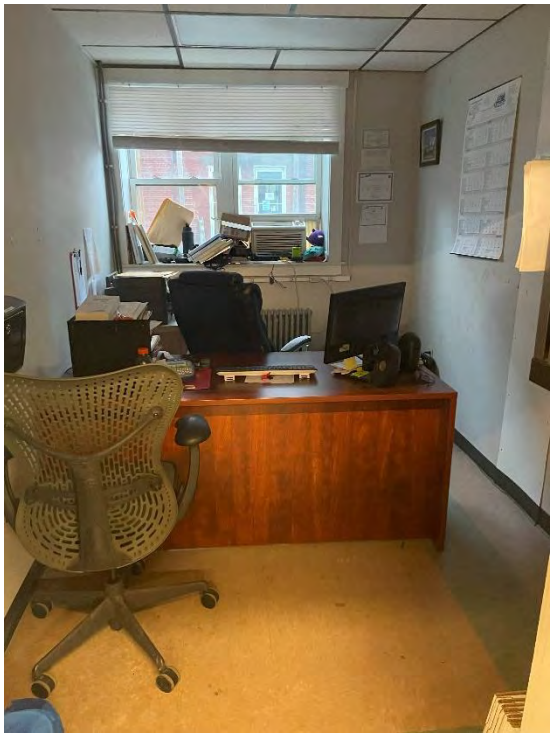
The town of Thomaston is lucky in the fact that they have town-owned land that is well suited for a new Fire Station: a 2.7-acre parcel of town owned property that is located at #436 Main Street (Note: this is an unofficial street designation) on the Thomaston Green. The location is less than a mile from the existing station. The site has great sightlines for apparatus to pull out onto Route 1 and a secondary route in the rear of the site onto William King Drive. This allows for flexibility and efficiency in call response for the Fire Department. The town has already received approval from the voters to allow the Fire Station in the proposed area.



Map of site location for the new Fire Station

Estimated Turnkey Construction Costs

Construction costs for municipal projects are currently estimated at $500 to $550 per square foot for a turn-key project. This includes all furnishings, soft-costs, fees, and any other costs required for the town to move into a fully operational building. With these costs in mind, we have a rough cost of about **$7,927,500** for this Fire Station building. Preliminary building layouts and alternate construction methods could reduce the overall costs of the building. We will be able to refine this cost once a site has been chosen. We would also like to note that there are Federal grants currently available for public safety buildings, hopefully, for another year or two. Similar clients are receiving one to two million dollars for their projects.



Small Office space

Non-ADA Compliant Bathroom

Study Conclusion

Our review of the existing current station revealed that the fire station at Knox Street is severely deficient in serving the needs of the community efficiently and effectively. It does not meet modern firefighting/EMS needs or health and safety requirements. The current apparatus aprons are inadequate to perform their services as the apparatus needs to pull into Knox Street to get out of the bay. The overall missing program spaces and support spaces is making the working environment insufficient for the current staff.

The land at the Thomaston Green is an ideal location for a new fire station that would meet the needs of Thomaston and its community. It provides sufficient access onto Route 1 with an adequately sized apron. The efficiency of a new station will reduce response times to calls. The voters have approved the use of this land for the location of the fire station and our report supports the use of this land for a fire station would be beneficial for Thomaston. The space is large enough for drive-through bays and an adequately sized station for the town.

Our initial space program discovered that 13,622 square feet of space is needed for an adequate fire station for Thomaston. We estimated a 25% circulation factor which brought the initial building size to 17,028 square feet. Through an efficient layout and working with the staff, we were able to bring the sufficient square footage down to 15,100 square feet. This will serve the town of Thomaston for the next 40 years with preparation for paid staffing in the future.

We are currently estimating $525 a square foot as the turn-key cost for a new fire station. This number includes all soft costs like design, engineering, permitting, and furniture as well as the hard costs for the construction. The total cost for the project we are estimating to be **$7,927,500.** The town could potentially gain funding from federal grants that are currently available to offset this cost.

In conclusion, we recommend that a new station be built at the Thomaston Green because the Knox Street station is highly deficient and does not properly meet the current needs, much less the future needs, of the town.

APPENDIX "A"

Fire Department Additional Space Needs					
	Room Name:	# spots	Proposed sqft:	Proposed sqft:	Notes
Outdoor spaces					
	Fire employee parking	30			17 staff plus visitors or training
	General Parking				
Sub-Total Square Footage for Fire Department					
Circulation Factor of 15%					
Total outdoor additional space needs for Fire Department					
	Room Name:	# of rooms	Proposed sqft:	total sqft:	
Admin/Office Area					
	Airlock	1	56	56	
	Lobby	1	225	225	Trophy Case, hand pump in Augusta, glass wall view from street
	Fire Chief Office	1	180	180	Room for 4 chairs at a table small meetings, review plans, murphy bed
	Dep. Chief Office	1	144	144	
	EMS Chief	1	144	144	
	Small Conference Room	1	160	160	Room for 8, shift meetings
	Private Bath	1	60	60	Toilet with shower for chiefs
	Training Room/EOC	1	1000	1000	For 60 (can reduce) Audio/Video setup, murphy beds
	Training room Restrooms	2	60	120	pulic and training use
	Training Room Storage	1	100	100	tables, chains, training props
	Records/Storage/workroom	1	120	120	Work room, file storage, office supplies, copier
	Radio Room/Watch Desk	1	120	120	off of lobby
Living Quarter Area					
	Fitness Room	1	300	300	2 cardio, 1 free weight, bike, treadmill
	Bunkroom	6	108	648	
	Bunkroom Bath/Shower	3	90	270	
	Bunkroom Storage	1	120	120	With MOP room
	Laundry (General)	1	120	120	One with 1 d, stack unit
	Kitchen/dining	1	450	450	for eight
	Dayroom	1	300	300	for eight

Fire Department Space Program

APPENDIX "A" (cont.)

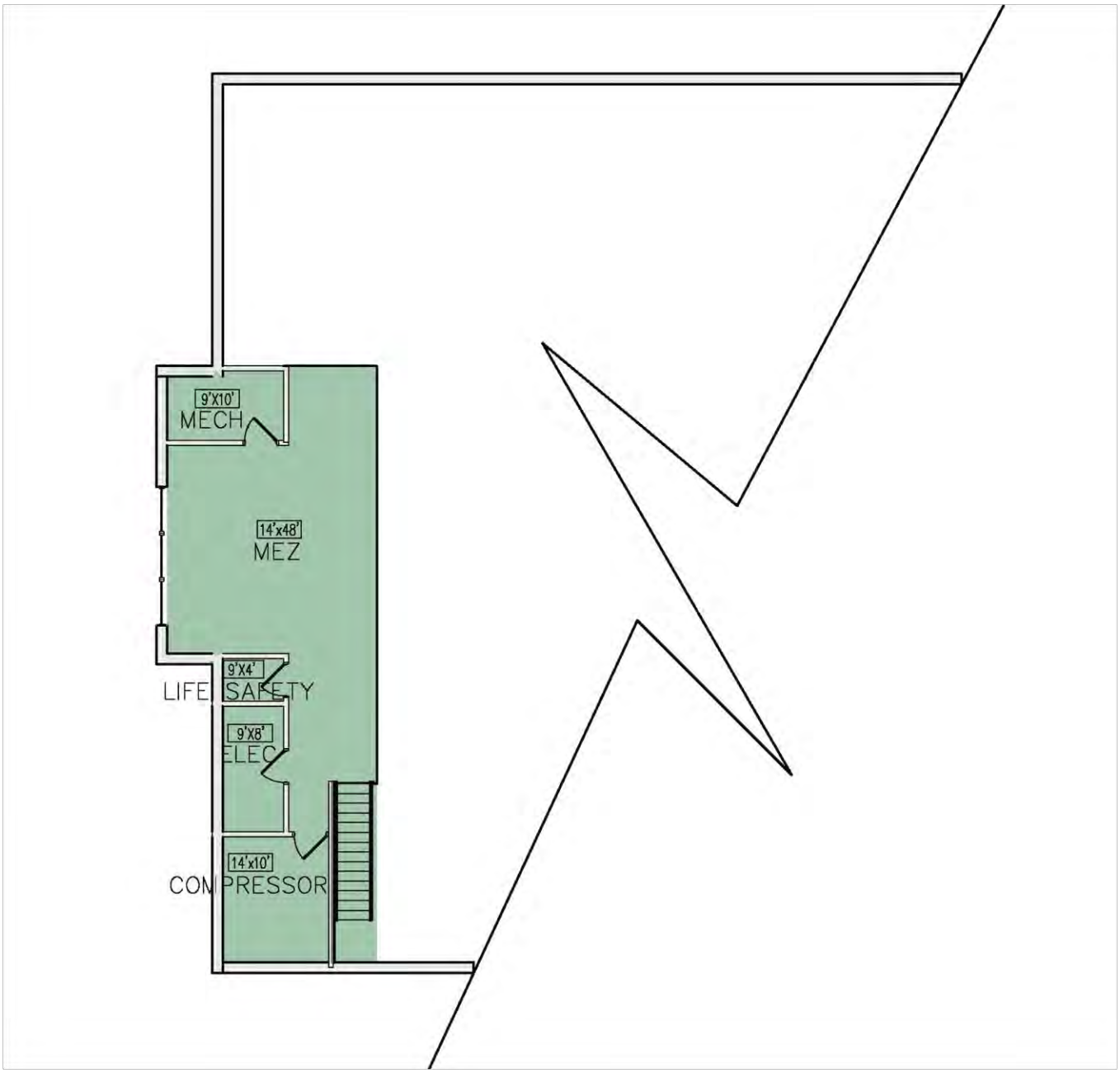
App Bay Area					
	App Bays	5	1400	7000	wagh trucks where they are, 4 double with small; 1 chief, 1 boat, 1 utility, 1 ladder, 3 engines, -, 1 ambulance, 1937 Buffalo
	Restrooms	1	60	60	
	Decon.	1	320	320	add slop sink; 1 extractor, 1 dyer, ` shower, 3 bay suit, 1 scuba cleaner
	Turnout Gear/lockers	1	400	400	40 lockers + 1 rolling rack of 10; remember to call company
	Gear Storage Room, extra	1	150	150	
	EMS supply Storage	1	150	150	
	SCBA Filling Storage	1	100	100	Outside door. Fill station New.
	Projects(Machine Shop)	1	120	120	Work room with utility sink/dirty sink, separate compressor
	Mezz.			0	
	Hose Tower/Training tower		250	0	
				0	
				0	
				0	
Support Spaces					
	Mechanical Room(s)	1	60	60	
	Janitor Room(s)	1	60	60	Living/Admin Area
	Life Safety Electric Room	1	145	145	
	Sprinkler Room	1	120	120	
	Electrical Room(s)	1	60	60	
	IT/Server Room	1	120	120	
	Generator Room	1	120	120	ATS
				0	
				0	
				0	
Sub-Total Square Footage Space Needs for Fire Department				**13622**	
Circulation Factor of 25%				**3406**	
Total indoor additional space needs for Fire Department				**17028**	

Fire Department Space Program

APPENDIX "B"

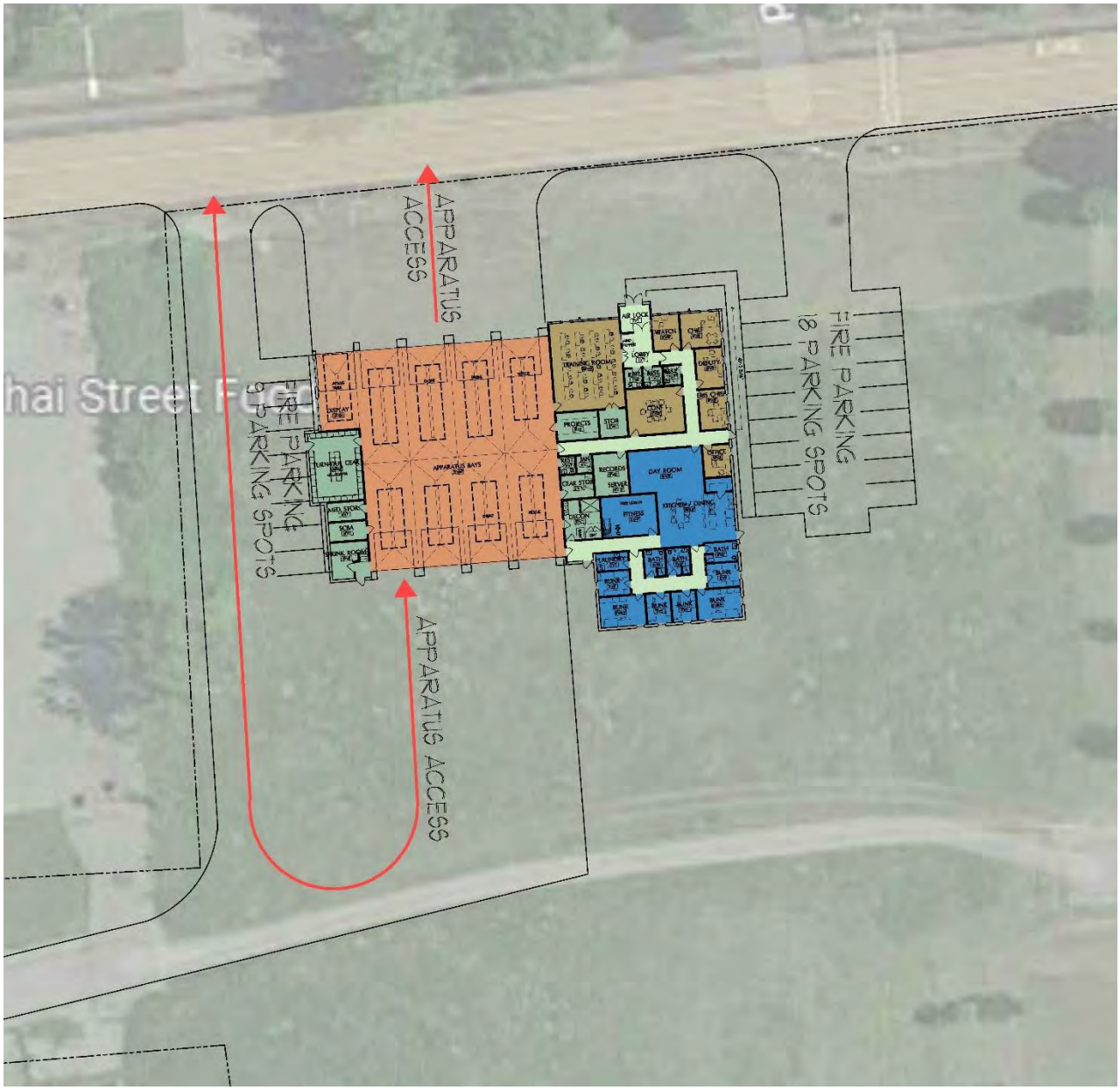
Fire Station Schematic Floor Plan Possible Layout

APPENDIX "B" cont.



Fire Station Schematic Mezzanine Plan Potential Layout

APPENDIX "B" cont.



Conceptual Site Layout

APPENDIX "B" cont.

Front Entry

Parking Area

APPENDIX "B" cont.

Front Apparatus Bays

Rear Apparatus Bays

APPENDIX "C"

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TOWN OF THOMASTON, MAINE
FIRE AND AMBULANCE DEPARTMENTS
FACILITY STUDY

Draft Report

October 2023

Neil D Courtney

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The Thomaston Fire Department - (From the fire department's website)

Mission Statement

It is the goal of the Thomaston Fire Department to prevent the loss of life and to control or reduce the loss of property; promote public safety; and foster community support services by applying all of our professional knowledge and resources.

Core Values

The members of the Thomaston Fire Department are:

Prepared for Duty

Serving with Integrity

Responding with Compassion

Committed to Professional Excellence

Our members will do everything possible to ensure that our organization is at an optimum state of readiness when called upon to respond at a moment's notice. Our team members will be properly trained, equipped, supported, and focused on safe immediate response and services.

We strive to serve our community and department to the best of our ability. We want to preserve and carry forward the legacy of those who served before us.

The Thomaston Ambulance Department - (From the ambulance department's website)

Mission Statement

The Mission of Thomaston Ambulance is to provide accessible, high quality pre-hospital health care services to the people and organizations we serve in Thomaston.

Our Vision

Excellence, innovation and collaboration in pre-hospital healthcare. Thomaston Ambulance is a 911 ambulance service we also are getting more involved with educating throughout Knox County, with hands only CPR and stop the bleed programs.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There are a number of initiatives, both local and regional, that are in place that serve to enhance, support and fortify fire protection and emergency medical services in Thomaston.

- Knox County Mutual Aid Association
- Knox County Fire Training Academy / The St. George Fire Training Facility
- Knox County Emergency Management Agency
- Mid-Coast School of Technology - Career and Technical Education (CTE) at the High School level. Students can become certified fire fighters and Emergency Medical Technicians.
- Collaboration - Automatic and Mutual-Aid protocols among the region's fire departments and ambulance services
- Mid-Coast Maine EMS Region #6
- Thomaston Fire Department Junior Fire Fighter program
- Thomaston Fireman's Association: The mission of the Thomaston Firefighters' Association is to support the activities of the Thomaston Fire and Ambulance Departments
- The recent creation of a full-time chief 's position of the Thomaston Ambulance Department
- The fiscal 2024 funding increase to provide around the clock ambulance coverage
- Initial steps taken in a project to the replace the Thomaston Fire Station

OVERVIEW

The town of Thomaston covers an area of 11.54 square miles, and according to the U.S Census Bureau, the town's 2020 population stood at 2,739 year-round residents. The median age of Thomaston residents as of 2017 was 44.7 years, whereas the 2010 Census revealed the median age was 44 years. As is the case with many communities throughout Maine, the residential population continues to grow older.

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There is a non-profit organization named the Thomaston Fireman's Association. The association, which is not affiliated with the municipality, serves as the benevolent and fund raising auxiliary of the fire department.

Thomaston Fire Department Fiscal Year Operational Budget:

Fiscal Year	Allocation
2024	$196,315
2023	$183,522
2022	$169,181
2021	$166,269
2020	$144,680

Although not part of the operational budget, the town pays an annual sum to the water distribution company known as the Fire Hydrant Rental Fee. The town has approximately 110 pressurized fire hydrants throughout the community, and the hydrant rental fee for fiscal 2024 is $173,275.

Not included in the fire department budget is the cost of all insurances. These expenses are bundled with all other municipal insurances in a separate account.

The town typically sets aside a certain amount of money in reserve accounts that are dedicated to future capital expenses. As of August 2023, the balances in each of those accounts was:

Fire Apparatus Account	$302,211
Fire & EMS Capital Account	$ 95,136+

+This joint account is dedicated to both future unclassified fire and EMS expenditures

Fleet of Fire Department Apparatus

Designation	Manufacturer	Pump/Water Tank Size	Specifics
Engine #1	1994 Freightliner E-1 4 door cab	1000 gpm/1000 gal	
Engine #3	2013 KME Custom 4 door cab	1500 gpm/1000 gal	Light Tower
Engine #4	2003 Central States 4 door cab	1250 gpm/1000 gal	Foam
Ladder #2	2003 Central States Quint 4 dr cab	1250 gpm/ 500 gal	75' aerial ladder
Utility #5	2013 Chevy 4 wheel drive/4 dr cab	Service Body	Utility*
Boat	12' Inflatable / 25 HP Outboard	Trailer mounted	

* The fire department owns a "portable skid unit" that is designed to slide into the cargo area of Utility #5. The purpose of a skid unit is for wildland fire fighting where it can be mounted on a smaller truck, such as Thomaston's Utility #5, allowing for easy access to off-road outside vegetation fires. Currently, the skid unit is stored at the public works building as the fire station lacks space for it.

Not included in the list of apparatus is the town's antique, a 1937 Buffalo pumper. This apparatus is housed in one of the fire station bays and is a treasured artifact of the Thomaston Fire Department's history. (Note: As of October 2023, this apparatus has been moved out of the fire station).

The Fire department is not equipped with the standard array of tools used in auto extrication incidents. Should the need arise, the department will request assistance, first from Rockland, and if Rockland is not available, either the Warren or South Thomaston departments will be called upon for mutual aid.

Thomaston Fire Department annual calls for service

Year	Number of Calls^
2022	161
2021	130
2020	140
2019	136
2018	127

^Note: Calls for service are recorded from January to December

Public (Fire) Protection Classification for Thomaston

For the town of Thomaston, the Public Protection Classification (PPC) was assigned a split classification 4/4Y after its scheduled assessment was completed in 2018. The Insurance Services Office (ISO) PPC program measures and evaluates the effectiveness of fire mitigation services in communities throughout the country. For each fire protection area, the ISO assigns a PPC code—a number from 1 to 10. Class 1 represents exemplary fire protection, and Class 10 indicates that the area's fire-suppression program

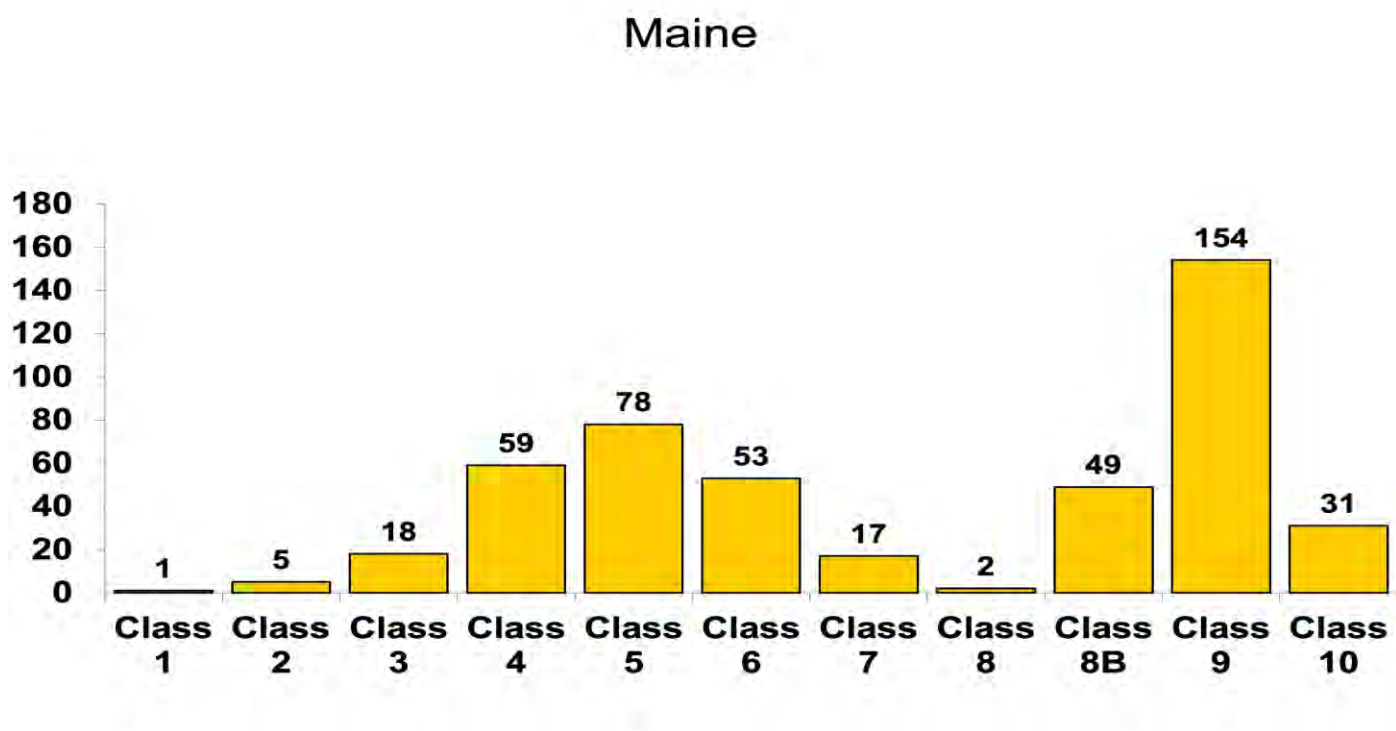
does not meet ISO's minimum criteria. This grading system is utilized by the insurance industry to set fire insurance premiums.

The Class 4 rating applies to those areas of Thomaston that are within five miles of a fire station, and within 1,000 feet of a credible water supply, such as a pressurized fire hydrant, or alternate water supply. The second number in the split classification, 4Y, applies to those areas of town that are within five miles of a fire station but beyond 1,000 feet of a credible water supply.

When considering ISO's PPC, it must be noted that any region within a community that is beyond a five-mile distance from a fire station is deemed unprotected.

ISO's Basic Fire Flow requirement for Thomaston is 3,000 gallons per minute. To meet this criterion, ISO identifies a minimum of a three-engine company response to all first-alarm building fires. Thomaston Fire Department is recognized as having a three-engine company response capability.

Of the 467 fire departments or fire districts in Maine, Thomaston is positioned within the top 18% of the total number of departments with regard to its Public Protection Classification. (See Table Below)



The Thomaston Fire Department registers calls for service electronically, and the information is uploaded into the state of Maine Fire Incident Reporting System (MEFIRS). The MEFIRS program is an information and data gathering system initiated and supported by the Office of State Fire Marshal. The goal of the system is to

encourage the use of a standardized incident reporting system as a means of addressing the state's fire problem and related emergency service issues. MEFIRS can play a major role in reducing injuries, fatalities, and economic losses from fire and related emergencies by facilitating the collection, compilation, analysis, and use of data to produce and disseminate the information needed by decision makers. Maine statute, Title 25 MRSA 2395 requires that fire chiefs shall submit to the State Fire Marshal an incident report for each response made, regardless of whether or not an actual fire occurred.

It should be noted that in order to qualify for federal grant funding through the U. S. Department of Homeland Security, a fire department must participate with the Office of the Maine State Fire Marshal in filing activity reports. The Thomaston Fire Department does participate in MEFIRS.

The Thomaston Ambulance Department

The Thomaston Ambulance Department is a separate municipally operated entity and not a sub-division of any other town public safety department. The department is headed by an EMS chief, consists of a cadre of on-call and part-time employees, and operates out of the Thomaston Fire Station. According to the fiscal 2023 annual town report, the department had 26 committed personnel. However, at present, the department has a roster of 35. Of those members, nine are strictly ambulance drivers, 11 are Basic EMT's, eight are Advanced EMT's, and seven are Paramedics. To reiterate, 14 of these members are also assigned to the Thomaston Fire Department.

At the annual town meeting in June 2023, the voters approved hiring a full-time EMS chief. The voters also approved additional funding to provide around the clock coverage by having two on-duty personnel. Because the fire station is not suitable for overnight occupancy, members assigned to a night shift may eventually share living quarters with the police department at their facility. Otherwise, for the moment, the plan is to allow EMT's who cover the night shift to reside at home and respond to the station and deploy to the call. Personnel who are assigned night shifts must meet certain criteria with regards to the how far from the fire station they live.

<u>The town owns and operates a single ambulance</u>

Ambulance	Year
Type III	2017

<u>Thomaston Ambulance Department fiscal year Operational Budget</u>

Fiscal Year	Allocation
2024	$616,015+
2023	$396,934
2022	$360,402
2021	$331,788
2020	$205,859

+ The figure is the result of two separate articles in the fiscal 2024 town warrant where the operational budget of $502,390 and an additional $113,625 was appropriated that provides overnight ambulance coverage with two on-duty EMS providers.

With the exception of a medical malpractice insurance policy, which is included in the ambulance department's operational budget, all associated policies are bundled together with all other municipal insurances in a separate account.

The town typically sets aside a certain amount of money in reserve accounts that are dedicated to future capital expenses. As of August 2023, the balances in each of those accounts was:

Ambulance Replacement Account	$155,144
Ambulance Equipment Account	$ 16,056

The ambulance department was recently awarded a $17,000 grant that provided funds to purchase an automatic cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) device. This piece of equipment frees up EMT's from having to administer manual CPR.

Thomaston Ambulance Department annual calls for service

Year	Calls for Service^
2022	490
2021	416
2020	421
2019	366

^Note: Calls for service are recorded from January to December

The town contracts with a third party ambulance billing service. The ambulance generates revenue and for the past four years has recouped the following sums. This revenue is deposited into the town's general fund.

Fiscal Year	Revenue Generated
2023	$168,893
2022	$105,547
2021	$124,067
2020	$142,249

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recognize the Ambulance Department within the "Thomaston Ordinances, Chapter 1, Government & Organization" document.

The town should consider drafting an ordinance that pertains to the mission of the municipal ambulance service. The police, fire and emergency management departments are identified, whereas the ambulance is not. This recommendation, however, may be moot, should the town decide to merge the fire and ambulance departments, at which time a revised ordinance would be necessitated.

Construct a new public safety building

The town has acknowledged the deficiencies and inadequacies of the current 67 year-old fire station and has initiated a program to replace the facility. The town should proceed in earnest to the next phase in the planning process.

Thomaston has identified a 2.7 acre parcel of town owned property that is located at #436 Main Street (Note: this is an unofficial street designation) for a proposed new fire station. To the rear of and Parallel to this Main Street lot is William King Drive. The configuration of this lot will allow for the fire station to have drive-through or rear facing bays with overhead doors, similar to those in the front. The front facing apparatus bays will allow for direct access onto Route #1 for expedient deployment of fire and ambulance vehicles.

Traffic Signal Preemption

Should the town proceed with the construction of a new fire station at the proposed Route #1 site, the eventual need to install traffic control devices along the busy road may become necessary, despite the fact there are just a handful of traffic lights in Thomaston.

Traffic signal preemption, also called traffic signal prioritization, is a system that allows an operator to override the normal operation of traffic lights. The most common use of these systems manipulates traffic signals in the path of an emergency vehicle, halting conflicting traffic and allowing the emergency vehicle right-of-way, thereby reducing response times and enhancing traffic safety.

Consider Dedicating the Generated Ambulance Revenue to a Capital Account

The town should contemplate channeling all receivables from ambulance billing into a special account, often referred to as an "Enterprise Account," for the sole purpose of purchasing fire apparatus and ambulances. This policy may negate having to allocate

funds each year at town meeting into the fire apparatus reserve account and ambulance reserve account.

Over the past four years, ambulance billing has generated $540,756 in receivables, which averages out to $135,189 per year. Currently, this revenue is deposited into the town's undesignated general fund. At the annual town meetings in June of each year, the fire apparatus reserve account has typically been funded at the $30,000 to $35,000 level, and $25,000 for ambulances, for a total of $55,000 to $60,000 each year. As of August 2023, the fire apparatus fund balance was $302,211 and the ambulance fund balance stood at $155,144. In essence, appropriating the ambulance billing revenue into an enterprise fund may keep better pace with the anticipated cost of fire and EMS vehicles as the distribution has been of greater value.

Develop a Capital Improvement Program (CIP)

Although the town sets aside funds in reserve accounts for vehicles and equipment, the town should develop and formalize a plan for the eventual replacement and the inclusion of new equipment. CIP's are working templates used to project future identified municipally funded projects. Sequencing the replacement of certain assets that have anticipated life spans is considered a practical municipal management tool in forecasting the needs of each town department. Devising, occasionally revising, and adhering to a CIP provides administrators a guide as to the predictable costs of projects.

According to source documents, the town currently anticipates purchasing a replacement ambulance every ten years. This example could be used as a catalyst to include other municipal needs as well in the development of a CIP.

Furthermore, the town has put aside money in dedicated reserve accounts for future purchases of large ticket items. Over the past few years, Thomaston has typically allocated $30,000 to $35,000 towards the future purchase of fire apparatus, $25,000 to replace the ambulance, and incremental funding for emergency medical equipment for the ambulance department. Although this programmatic approach is noteworthy, it must be understood that the amount of money set aside for fire trucks or ambulances may not keep pace with actual purchase price at the time replacement. As of 2023, the average price of a fire department pumper is in the realm of $750,000 and more, and an ambulance can average $350,000. Each year going forward, a rule of thumb inflation factor of 10% to 15% should be taken into account when forecasting the purchase of these types of vehicles. In short, if the town's modus operandi is to pay for large capital expenses by having sufficient funds on hand at the time the project is to be undertaken, then increasing the annual allocation to the respective reserve accounts by a certain factor should be considered. On the other hand, if it is more plausible to have a respectable amount of cash on hand when the time comes to execute the purchase, then additional funds will need to be found. All the same, the development, implementation and routine tweaking of a capital improvement program is a worthy assignment.

As part of crafting a CIP, the town administration and the fire and ambulance department heads should develop a consensus in establishing time-lines for the replacement of vehicles and equipment. Of particular emphasis is the fleet of fire apparatus. The fleet consists of three Class "A" pumpers, a combination aerial ladder/pumper known as a quint, and a utility truck. The town should consider establishing timeframes as to the life span of in-service apparatus. The fire service in general terms considers front line pumpers should serve about 15 years before being relegated to a less demanding role. As a reserve, secondary or back-up apparatus, the yardstick goes to another 10 to 15 years before being decommissioned and replaced. Currently, Thomaston Engine #1 is a 1994 model and nearing 30 years of service.

Streamline the Fleet of Major Fire Apparatus

Over the course of the next ten-year period, the town of Thomaston should consider the following apparatus replacement program:

1. Replace Engine #1 by 2028 with a new pumper
2. Replace Engine #4 and Ladder #2 with a single unit, a quint by 2033

Currently, the fleet consists of three pumpers and the quint, but trending into the future, the need for four major pieces of apparatus may not be necessary. By reducing the fleet by one Class "A" pumper, the fire department may not experience any degradation in service capacity. What may be necessary is to ensure several features are included in future service delivery planning. Those issues include the following:

> All future fire apparatus purchases should have a pump capacity of no less than 1,500 gallons per minute (GPM). Currently, only the newest pumper, Engine #3 has a rated pump capacity of that volume. The other apparatus are either 1,000 or 1,250 GPM.

> Should the town pursue the replacement of the quint in 2033, consideration should be given to procuring a 100-foot aerial ladder as opposed to the current 75-foot aerial. Here again, the quint should have a pump with no less than 1,500 gallons per minute capacity.

> Any plan to reduce the Thomaston fleet from four to three major pieces should include a revisit to the region's mutual aid compact. Reported and assumed building fires should be responded to by multiple agencies in an effort to achieve the best possible outcome from the onset of an incident, to stay in concert with modern fire service industry's "best practices," and to follow related National Fire Protection Association recommended practices and standards.

Collaborative Deployment

Mutual Aid: Outside assistance requested by one community from another after a fire has occurred. Assistance by the outside fire department is rendered upon request. The long-standing practice of fire departments assisting one another is known as "Mutual Aid." Mutual aid allows for reciprocal, cross-border responses between prescribed fire departments, in order to provide additional resources during moderate to large-scale emergency incidents. These resources are deployed on an "as needed" basis under mutual aid compacts. To an extent, mutual aid was the precursor to today's automatic aid.

Automatic Aid: Outside assistance that responds immediately on the first alarm to reported building fires beyond their boundaries. Two or more departments that participate in an automatic-aid arrangement operate as one fire department for dispatching fire apparatus.

A robust "Automatic Aid" response program among a cluster of communities, in some cases, can meet ISO's five-mile distance criteria without individual communities having to add or retain multiple fire rescue stations. The ISO will recognize engine companies and ladder companies that respond from another community as part of a predetermined deployment arrangement between two or more fire departments. Automatic aid agreements must be formalized, definitive, well versed and practiced consistently in order for ISO to qualify the relationship and quantify the allowable credit.

Not only does having automatic aid companies fulfill the advantage of having the closest fire apparatus respond to structural fire incidents, automatic aid is designed to bring sufficient numbers of fire fighting resources needed to mitigate those emergencies from the very onset of the incident and without hesitation. This has become of ever increasing nationwide importance with the reduction in the number of volunteer and on-call fire fighters.

Another benefit of an automatic aid program may be the avoidance of having to expand a community's fire department. The need for additional fire stations and apparatus may be unnecessary if the location of an existing neighboring town's fire station can effectively protect an adjacent area of that community which may be under protected by its own department. To reiterate, in order to be considered "protected" by ISO standards, a property must be within five miles of a fire station. A number of Maine communities have areas that are more than five miles from the closest fire station within their boundaries, but are closer to a fire station located in a neighboring town. Under a bona fide automatic aid program, the ISO will give credit to those areas of town that may be better served by another town's fire station, which could also impact fire insurance premiums.

Automatic aid and mutual aid response protocols to Thomaston from participating communities are currently in place. Automatic aid procedures should be qualified and validated to ensure full compliance with ISO standards of practice in order to attain

maximum credit. Here again, well-grounded programs that qualify the process could result in both cost savings and enhanced service delivery, in essence, achieving economies of scale.

Strive to Meet the Objectives of NFPA 1720

NFPA 1720, the standard: *For the Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations, and Special Operations to the Public by Volunteer Fire Departments,* is the nationally recognized consensus on staffing and deployment by volunteer and on-call fire and rescue departments.

"The standard includes minimum requirements relating to the organization and deployment of fire suppression operations, emergency medical operations, and special operations to the public by volunteer and combination departments. The requirements address functions and outcomes of fire department emergency service delivery, response capabilities, and resources. This standard also contains minimum requirements for managing resources and systems, such as health and safety, incident management, training, communications, and pre-incident planning. This standard addresses the strategic and system issues involving the organization, operation, and deployment of a fire department and does not address tactical operations at a specific emergency incident."

NFPA 1720 establishes strategic objectives for the organization and operation of agencies similar to the Thomaston Fire Department. The standard has become the benchmark yardstick that the United States Department of Homeland Security utilizes when evaluating applications for staffing grants under the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER).

This may be a lofty pursuit, but it is a template that should be followed in formulating a fire rescue department's method of operation. The crux of this standard is directly correlated with ISO's PPC and the value associated with "Automatic Aid." The number of fire companies and personnel assigned to first alarm fire incidents within a prescribed time frame can have significant outcomes with regards to fire suppression efforts as well as fire fighter safety. In many small to medium size communities, the realization is that most fire departments cannot effectively handle a typical building fire with their own resources, thus the reliance on outside agencies from the onset may be paramount.

Consider Merging the Fire and Ambulance Departments

Although the Thomaston Fire and Thomaston Ambulance Departments are municipal agencies, yet independent of one another, they are well integrated. They work from the same facility, share many of the same personnel, and exhibit many of the same attributes.

With the newly created full-time ambulance department chief, the town also assigned the duties and responsibilities of the Emergency Management Director to the ambulance chief's job description. Formerly, the position of EMA director was separate and held by an individual who was appointed to the stipend position. It must be noted that whomever holds the position of ambulance chief can also be a member of the fire department, to include holding a chief officers' position within the department. In the recent job posting for the position, advanced fire fighting skills were listed as a preferred experience along with EMS competencies.

Anecdotally, a number of individuals who were interviewed for this project foresaw the benefits and were in support of merging the two departments at some point in the future. The opportunity to streamline and enhance public safety services by combining the talents, assets, operations, funding mechanism, management and administrative functions into a single, cohesive organization is emerging as a logical enterprise. Candidly, the incumbent Thomaston Fire Chief has stated that he anticipates his retirement in the not to distant future. At that juncture, the opportunity to merge the fire department, the ambulance department, and emergency management into single agency directed by an administrator entitled "Thomaston Fire Rescue Chief" could be achieved at an opportune moment. This reorganization should not be construed as a divisive maneuver, but as a prudent alignment to become more efficient and effective in managing and delivering essential municipally operated public safety services.

Spare/Reserve Ambulance

The town should consider adopting a program where there would eventually be two in-service ambulances. There would be a primary ambulance, which is generally the newer model, and there would be a back-up or reserve ambulance that would augment the town's EMS capacity. It must be noted that although the town has not adopted a formal capital improvement program, it is understood that the ambulance reserve account is structured to replace the ambulance at the ten-year mark. With that in mind, the current 2017 ambulance would be slated for replacement in 2027.

Should the town eventually build a replacement fire and rescue station, and develop a CIP, the ambulance replacement program may need to go to a seven or eight-year schedule, especially if having two in-service ambulances is deemed prudent, call volume continues to increase, and supply chain issues continue to vex the procurement of essential vehicles and equipment with elongated delivery times.

This recommendation cannot be accomplished at this time, as the fire station lacks adequate space to house an additional vehicle. However, the fire department's Utility #5 could be pressed into service as a secondary EMS response vehicle in the near term. There may be some current logistical impediments that would need to be overcome, as the fire and ambulance departments are two separate agencies. This may be yet another reason to merge the two departments into a single public safety unit.

Command Vehicle

Typically, a full-time fire rescue chief is provided a vehicle. Should the fire and ambulance departments merge, and the position of ambulance chief is reclassified to that of Thomaston Fire Rescue Chief, the chief would be issued a vehicle for carrying out his or her duties. Although the position of a fire rescue chief is usually salaried for a 40-hour workweek, the chief must always be available and expected to answer certain emergency calls for service, go to meetings, attend in-service training opportunities, and to manage the workforce at any given moment. A vehicle assigned the chief is considered part of an employee benefit package.

Support the Adoption of a Statewide Length of Services Award Program (LOSAP)

In the 130th Maine Legislature, the bill LD 1083, entitled "An act to attract and retain firefighters and Emergency Medical Services through the Maine Length of Services Award Program," is moving through the Maine legislative channels that would provide a statewide annuity based retirement program for volunteer, on-call, and per diem fire fighters and emergency medical technicians. Seen as a potential aid in enlisting new and keeping hold of the current troupe of emergency first responders for the long-term, this endeavor may entice people to remain active in their local department knowing there is a financial reward at the end of their community service.

Laws in at least 40 states authorize LOSAP plans and nearly 20% of the volunteer firefighters in America participate in some form of LOSAP. Most follow a model, which involves an annual minimum of training and service hours, with financial credit given toward a LOSAP program. After receiving a minimum number of years of credit, and beginning at a specified age, the volunteer is eligible for a monthly annuity.

The program will establish a statewide pension type program under which Maine volunteers will be paid "length of service awards" for performing qualified services. The term "qualified services" are defined in the bill as firefighting and prevention services, emergency medical services, and ambulance services. Under the program, volunteers will have a program account which will be credited with an annual contribution as of the end of each year during which the volunteer participated in a minimum required level of volunteer activities set forth by the Maine Length of Service Award Program Board of Trustees.

When a volunteer reaches the age of sixty, and has attained a vested status in the program—met the minimum requirements for at least five years—he or she will be paid the contributions credited to his or her program account, plus the net investment income earned on those contributions.

Members would also have to pass all physical requirements set in place by the Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ). If during any year a member did not meet requirements then that year would not be counted as usable time. In addition, training must include the

mandates set forth by the Maine Bureau of Labor Standards (MBLS). The terms volunteer, paid on-call and per diem are synonymous with regard to the LOSAP program.

Fire fighters from the towns of Berwick and North Berwick, Maine have been enrolled in a LOSAP retirement program offered through the Volunteer Fireman's Insurance Services (VFIS) for many years. These programs are afforded the fire fighters by their individual communities and are not part of any statewide program.

(Note: Alna, Maine {population 710} At the March 26, 2022 town meeting, voters approved $18,000 to establish its own LOSAP with the expectation of integrating their program with that of the State of Maine's once it is fully operational)

Apply for Grants

There are several competitive federal grant programs that communities can pursue in an effort to minimize the local fiscal impact that always comes with any plan to improve public safety services.

During the past couple of years, a multitude of Maine cities and towns have either been granted or are in-line to be granted federal funds to build new fire and EMS facilities. These appropriations must be applied for and typically provide but a portion of the expected cost of construction. The town will need to contact the Maine senators' offices to learn about "Congressionally Directed Spending" opportunities. Some of the communities that have been tapped to receive funding for new fire and rescue station construction projects include Belfast, Bath, Bradford, Brownfield, Hancock, Limerick, Newburgh, North Anson, Plymouth, Randolph, Sinclair and Van Buren. With Thomaston pursuing the replacement of the Knox Street Fire Station, these federal appropriations may provide an opportunity to reduce the overall cost of the project, should the grant application be processed and hopefully approved.

There are additional grant programs available through the Knox County Emergency Management Agency, the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry, the Stephen and Tabitha King Foundation, and the Maine Municipal Association. There are several other related grants that could be considered. In particular, there is the AFG program and the SAFER program. The Assistance to Fire Fighters program disperses federal funds for departments to purchase tools, equipment and pay for essential training programs and improve upon the delivery of emergency medical services. The Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response grants are utilized in providing financial resources to help communities pay for programs that enhance staffing levels in departments that there is an identifiable shortfall. It must be understood that these are "matching" Federal Homeland Security grants where the community has to allocate a certain percentage toward the total cost of the endeavor.

It was recently announced that the Augusta Fire Department was approved to hire eight new fire fighter/EMT's through the SAFER grant program. Augusta was granted nearly

$2.5 million to achieve this. Other communities were Kennebunk, Orono, and Sabattus. These fire and rescue departments were to hire additional career personnel in an effort to bolster the number of first responders.

It should be noted that the Thomaston Fire Department has received donations in the past. The boat was donated to the department by a town resident, and the Maine Lobster Festival Committee donated $50,000 towards the replacement of the department's utility truck. Additional funds from the Thomaston Fireman's Association were added in order to complete the outfitting, with a trailer for the boat and a utility body for the truck.

Consider procuring a Light Set of Extrication Equipment

Thomaston does not own a set of extrication tools, known by most as the "Jaws of Life." In the event of an incident in Thomaston that requires specialized equipment to disentangle imperiled victims of motor vehicle collisions, industrial and agricultural accidents and other types of incidents, the Rockland Fire and EMS Department is summoned, as they are so equipped. Should Rockland be unavailable, either the South Thomaston or Warren Fire Departments are next in line.

Thomaston should consider procuring set of battery powered extrication tools that would be carried on the fire department's primary engine company. In unison, both the fire department and the ambulance department could apply for grants in an effort to get this equipment for the town of Thomaston.

Staffing Projection - Incremental Approach

The position of ambulance chief is the only career position in either the fire or ambulance department. The ambulance has recently enhanced the level of service by having two personnel on duty around the clock. Those that are assigned the ambulance are deemed per diem employees, meaning they are paid an hourly wage based upon their skill level. Typically, per diem personnel use this opportunity to augment their income and usually have other means of employment. More often than not, these positions are exempt from any benefit package the town may offer its municipal full-time employees.

Many small to medium size fire and ambulance departments rely upon the per diem system to fill the personnel needs for duty shifts. However, some communities over the course of time recognize the need to transition to a more definitive organizational structure, which means creating full-time positions. In all likelihood, Thomaston will eventually face the need to create career positions, as the public safety per diem model is not considered a long-term strategy in sustaining a well-grounded emergency services agency.

Should the fire department and the ambulance department merge and become the Thomaston Fire and Rescue Department, and the need to hire full-time career personnel

becomes apparent, the town should require those employees be multifaceted employees, versed in both emergency medical treatment, fire fighting and other associated skills.

When that moment in time is reached and the need to hire full time staff becomes evident, the town can approach implementation in a phased manner. Initially, the impetus would be to have one full time fire fighter/EMT assigned to one of four individual shifts. This would require 168 hours of time in a one week period, divided into four - 42-hour segments averaged over the course of an eight-week cycle. If this strategy was to be endorsed by the town, the hiring would require at least three new fire fighter/EMT positions to be created, as the ambulance chief would continue to fill one of the four duty shift slots in this segmented staffing phase of development.

During this phase of development, a per diem or on-call member of the department would fill the second position on each shift, alongside the career member. This arrangement would be predicated on the viability and availability of this pool of non-career personnel. At some point in time, the need to go to the next phase of bolstering the on duty crew strength may warrant adding four additional personnel to the roster of career fire fighter/EMT's.

What may alter this strategy somewhat is if and when the fire and ambulance departments amalgamate. If the two become one agency, then the position of ambulance chief should be reclassified to that of Thomaston Fire Rescue Chief. At that juncture, the position of ambulance chief, which is currently required to work shift duty in addition to fulfilling the administrative responsibilities, would have to veer away from covering duty shifts in order to focus on managing the day-to-day operations of the fire rescue department. In this illustration, an additional full time fire fighter/EMT position would have to be created. This eventual scenario would have a single fire rescue chief overseeing a career workforce of eight personnel and a cadre of on-call fire fighters and Emergency Medical Technicians.

One very important aspect of hiring career personnel for public safety service positions is the need to ensure the candidates meet specific physical fitness and medical profile criterion as required in relevant State of Maine Department of Labor public safety sector regulations and suggested in related National Fire Protection Association standards regarding fire fighters. The town should follow the fire fighter medical requirement even if the need to hire full time personnel is initially for the ambulance, knowing that the fire and ambulance department may not merge until sometime into future. The sequence of future events the town may undertake in reorganizing may not follow a chronological order in achieving the long-term desired results.

Community Paramedicine Program

Community paramedicine is an effort to bring fundamental services to people where they live. The program can be viewed as a proactive outreach agenda that renders non-emergency medical interaction.

It is a relatively new and evolving healthcare model and is considered a small town and rural community initiative. It allows paramedics and EMTs to operate in expanded roles by assisting with public health and primary healthcare and preventative services to underserved populations within a community. The goal is to improve access to care and avoid duplicating existing services. Initiating this proactive program may be a long-term objective for the town to endeavor.

APPENDIX "D”

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Fire/EMS Building Committee
Thursday, August 25, 2022 at 4:30 p.m.
Select Board Room

AGENDA

Fire/EMS Building Discussion Items:

1. Approve July 14, 2022 Minutes

2. Review report to the Select Board on the needs for a new Fire/EMS building.

    a. Items Discussed previously:

    - Introduction with summary of what the Committee has done so far
    - Findings of the condition of the current building
    - Needs for the EMS Department
    - Needs for the Fire Department
    - Conclusion-recommend a Request for Qualifications goes out

3. Potential location for station

Fire/EMS Building Committee
Thursday, July 14, 2022-4 p.m.
Meeting #4 Minutes

Members Present: Mike Mazzeo, Bobby Coombs, Carrie Adams, Amy Drinkwater, Kara George

Meeting called to order at 4:10 p.m. in the Select Board Room

1. **Approve 5/27/21 and 9/16/21 Minutes-** A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes. Vote: All approved

2. **Discuss drafting a formal report to the Select Board on the needs for a new Fire/EMS building.**

   The Committee discussed an outline for drafting the report:

   - Introduction with summary of what the Committee has done so far (Amy and Carrie)
   - Findings of the condition of the current building (Mike Mazzeo)
   - Needs for the EMS Department (Amy & EMS Dept.)
   - Needs for the Fire Department (Mike & Fire Dept.)
   - Conclusion-recommend a Request for Qualifications goes out (Kara)

   The Committee discussed Route 1 access for a new station and the need to check with MDOT on the requirements. Other topics included going to a Town Meeting vote for said project before proceeding with an RFQ.

   The Committee wants to open the current station for the public to see the conditions. They have also requested an aerial map of the Knox Street station showing the land boundaries from Dave Martucci.

3. **Schedule next meeting date-** Next Building Committee meeting is scheduled for Monday, August 8th at 4:30 p.m. Presentation to the Select Board scheduled for Monday, August 22nd at 6 p.m.

Fire & EMS Building Committee Report

September ____, 2022

DRAFT

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Fire & EMS Building Committee Members:

EMS Chief Amy Drinkwater

Fire Chief Mike Mazzeo

Deputy EMS Chief Carrie Adams

EMS Captain J.T. O'Hare

Deputy Fire Chief Jamie Leo

Assistant Fire Chief Tony Leo

Assistant Fire Chief Bobby Coombs

Town Manager Kara George

AD-HOC FIRE/EMS BUILDING COMMITTEE
DIRECTIVE 2021

BACKGROUND:

The Thomaston Fire & EMS Station is 65 years old and first opened for service in 1956. It currently houses one (1) ambulance, one (1) ladder fire truck, three (3) other fire apparatus, a Utility/Brush truck, a boat and trailer, and an antique fire engine (the Buffalo.)

The need is evident for a station that meets specifications to appropriately house modern-day Fire and EMS apparatus and to meet the growing service needs of our community into the future.

MEMBERS:

Members of the Committee include the Ambulance and Fire Chiefs, five members of the Fire/EMS departments, and the Town Manager.

OBJECTIVE:

To develop a recommendation for the Select Board to either renovate and expand the existing station located at 6 Knox Street or to build a new station at a new location. The Committee shall operate until the completion of the Fire/EMS Building project.

GOALS:

1) Visit and tour other Maine Fire/EMS stations that were recently built.
2) Determine list of facility needs and wants and the estimated project cost for each.
3) Guide and recommend final project scope of work, including total budget consideration.
4) Conduct a feasibility study that includes:

- Existing conditions of the 6 Knox Street station.
- Needs analysis for fire and rescue services in the Thomaston area-presently and in the future.
- Preliminary design options and alternatives for a new Fire/EMS station.
- Possible sites for a new station.
- Preliminary cost analysis and funding alternatives.

5) Review the feasibility study results.
5) Present and report all findings and recommendations to the Select Board.
6) Carry through directives of the Select Board through project planning and design.

Approved June 14, 2021

Committee Meeting Minutes

Meeting #1 April 15, 2021

Discuss first steps.

- The Committee discussed the existing station building on Knox Street. The structure would not support a second floor being added on. There is little room to expand out as the building is surrounded by other structures on three sides.
- Location of a new station was discussed. Land discussed was the Thomaston Green and the land located across from Booker Street at the end of the Thomaston Mall. Potential locations discussed in past years was the land beside the Academy and the land abutting the Thomaston Green where Doug's Seafood is now located. Direct Route 1 access from the station was determined to be priority.
- The Committee reviewed impacts of a station with multi-floors vs. a station with one floor. A one floor station has a larger footprint. What are the cost differences between a one floor and a multi-floor station?
- There are several new stations throughout Maine in the communities of Hallowell, Cumberland, Farmingdale, Randolph, Yarmouth, Berwick, and Pittston.
- The current Knox Street station had a study completed between 15-20 years ago. A structural assessment is needed on the current building.

Discuss job tasks of each member for next meeting.

- The Building Committee members are to contact some of the communities that have new stations to set up a tour. Goals are to discuss the challenges with building new stations, what these communities liked or disliked about the process, and what their recommendations are.
- The Building Committee members are to also list inefficiencies and challenges with the current Knox Street station and compile a list of needs and goals for a new station.
- The Town Manager is going to draft a directive for the Fire/EMS Building Committee for the next meeting.

Meeting #2 May 27, 2021

A. Approve Minutes from 4/15/21

B. Review new station buildings that Committee members visited and toured.

J.T. O'Hare presented picture slides of the four stations that Thomaston Fire/EMS employees toured.

1) Station #3-Augusta

- The building is a single level and is 3 years old. Total cost $4.3 million.
- Contains an Alert System
- Noted that the building had poor roof design where water runoff has already caused rot.
- The station has bunk rooms, washing station, air-controlled gear room, and a fitness room.

2) Hartford Station-Augusta

- CO sensors for the bay doors, in which, the sensors detect if there is too much carbon dioxide in the air and automatically opens the bay doors.
- Exterior wall panels that radiate heat to save on heating costs.
- Red and green dock lights for drivers to signal when it is safe to pull out of the station.

3) Farmingdale Station

- Single level with a mezzanine.
- Contains high bay doors with high sensors.

4) Hallowell Station

- Station cost $2 million.
- Contains kitchen, breakroom, laundry.
- The second level uses valuable apparatus space on the lower level.
- The station used folding bay doors that cost $63,000 each. Was a safety hazard for a child.

The Committee discussed the high expense of a drive thru bay doors.

C) Discuss the Committee Directive.

The Committee amended the directive to include additional equipment that is currently housed at the station. The directive will go to the Select Board at their next meeting on June 14th.

D) Assign tasks for the next meeting.

1) The Committee decided to research architects that specialize in Fire and EMS buildings.

2) Additionally, the Committee will start drafting an RFP for a feasibility study.

3) The Town Manager will call Gartley & Dorskey to discuss the new Rockport Fire Station, what next steps are, and if they would be willing to come in and talk to the Committee.

Meeting #3 September 16, 2021

The Committee met with Bill Lane from Gartley and Dorsky and Amanda Austin from 2A Architects to discuss next steps for building a new Fire/EMS station. Bill and Amanda are currently working on the new fire station in West Rockport.

Topics Discussed:

- The building height allowed at the Thomaston Green and the number of acreages. Any new station would need to be in keeping with a traditional New England style.
- Existing conditions report typically costs around $17,000 to complete. A general contractor can assess the existing building as well.
- A Request for Qualifications (RFQ) was recommended to review scope of work, resumes, and experience of potential architects.
- An information night was suggested or an open house of the current station for the public to tour.
- General discussion happened about the needs of a new station, the current conditions of the existing station, and potential locations for a new building.

Meeting #4 July 14, 2022

A) Approve 5/27/21 and 9/16/21 Minutes- A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes. Vote: All approved

B) Discuss drafting a formal report to the Select Board on the needs for a new Fire/EMS building.

The Committee discussed an outline for drafting the report:

- Introduction with summary of what the Committee has done so far (Amy and Carrie)
- Findings of the condition of the current building (Mike Mazzeo)
- Needs for the EMS Department (Amy & EMS Dept.)
- Needs for the Fire Department (Mike & Fire Dept.)
- Conclusion-recommend a Request for Qualifications goes out (Kara)

The Committee discussed Route 1 access for a new station and the need to check with MDOT on the requirements. Other topics included going to a Town Meeting vote for said project before proceeding with an RFQ.

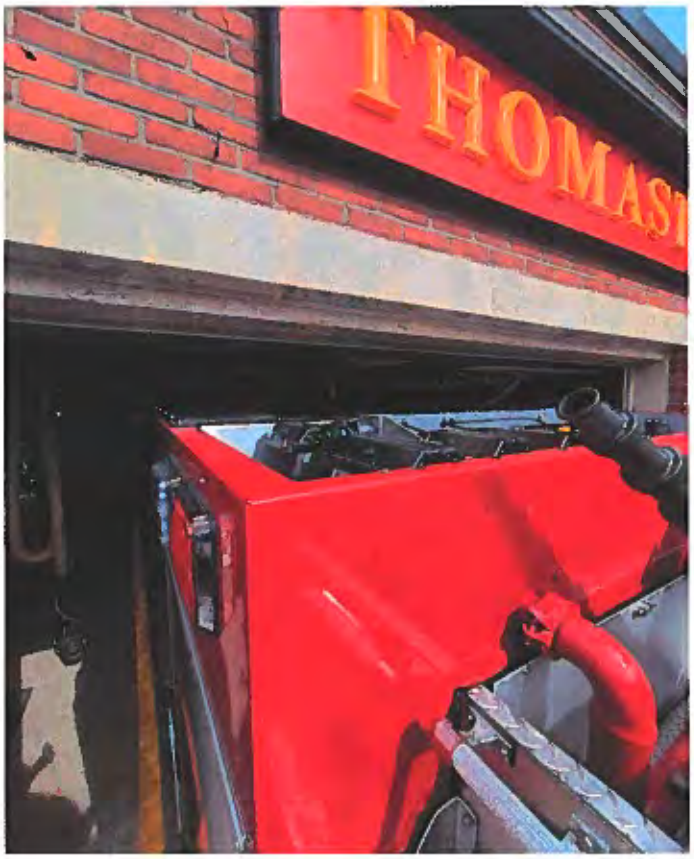
The Committee wants to open the current station for the public to see the conditions. They have also requested an aerial map of the Knox Street station showing the land boundaries from Dave Martucci.

Meeting #5 August 25, 2022

Review of the final report to present to the Select Board.

Current Station Images
EXTERIOR

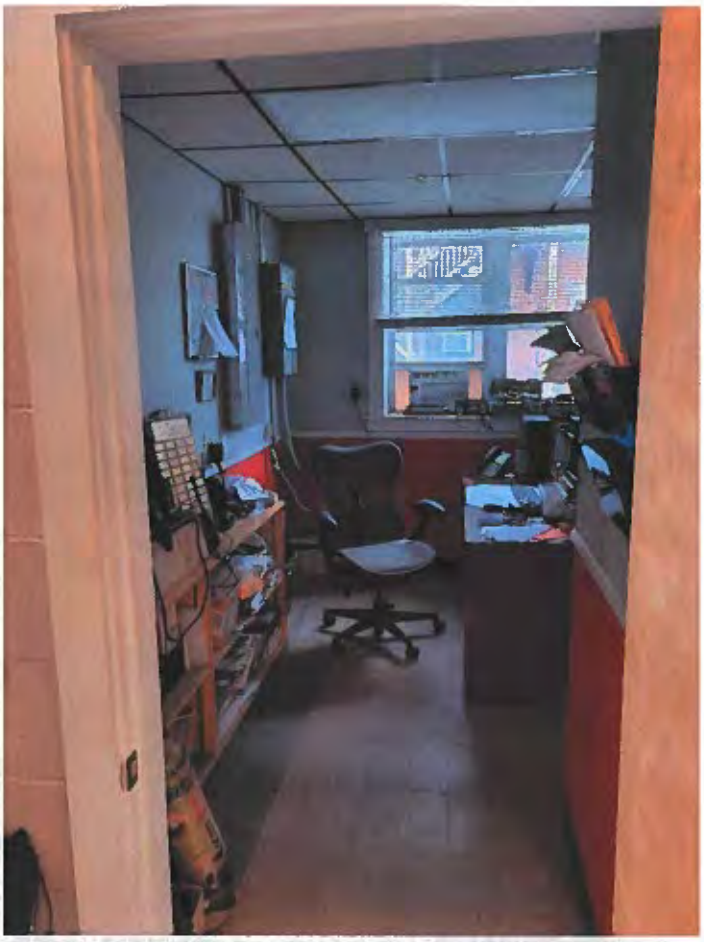
Vehicle Clearance

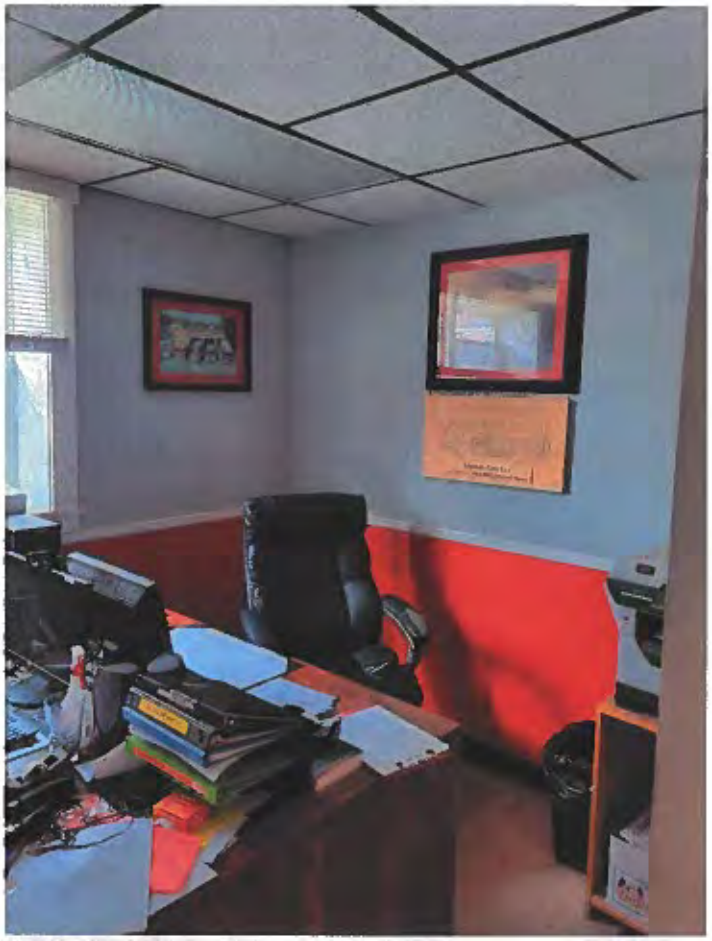


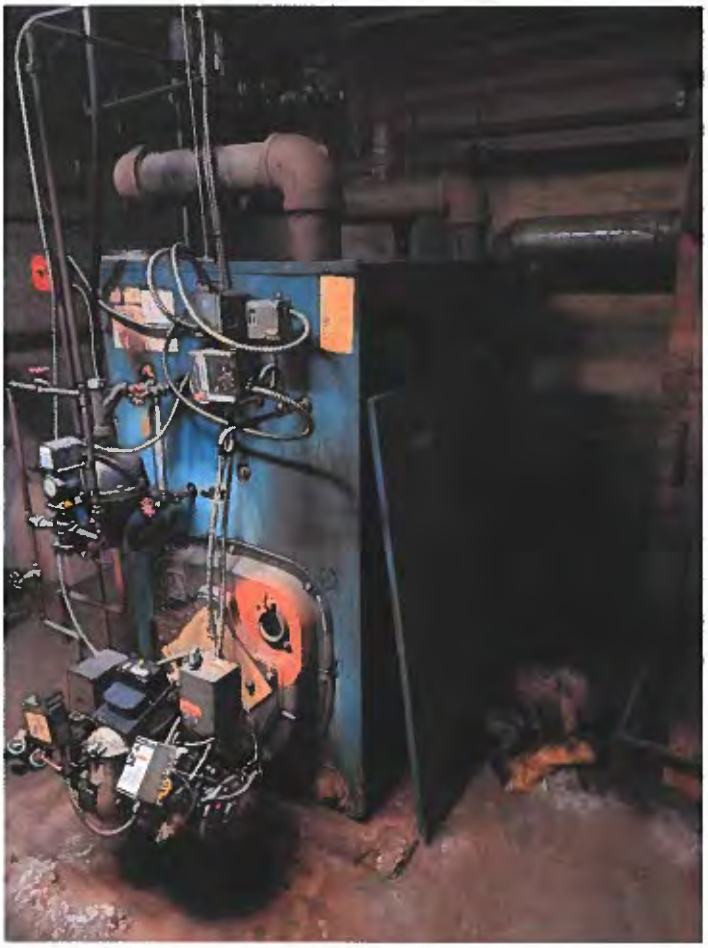
A Note about Vehicle Clearance:

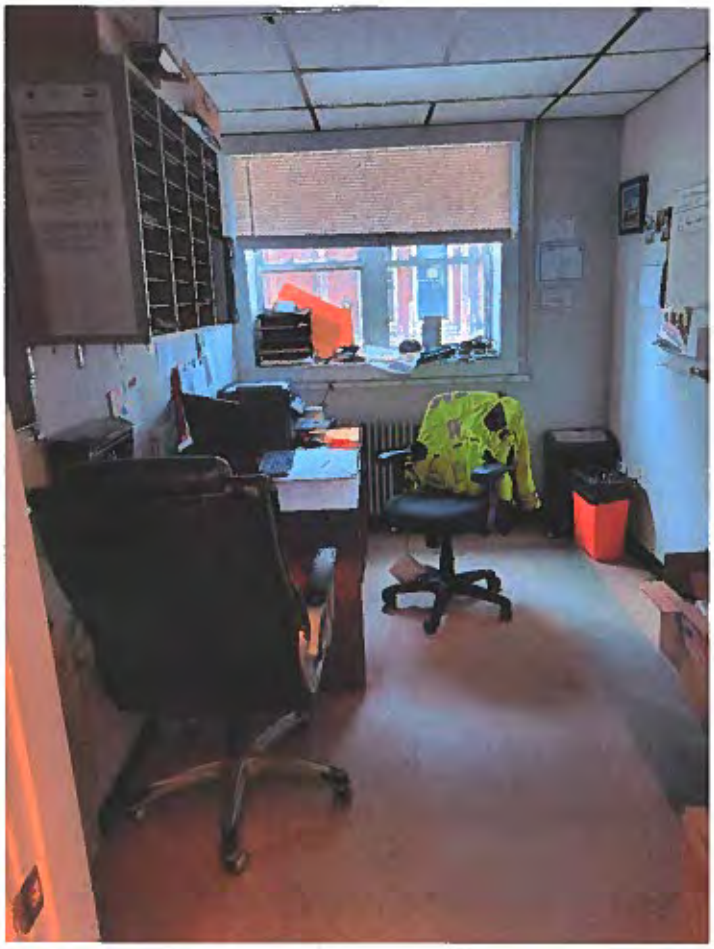
When Engine 4 was brand new, the FD were dispatched to a vehicle fire on Dunbar road during a blizzard. When the FD arrived on scene, a 2 1/2 inch hose was off the rear of the truck. The snow in front of the door lifted the fire truck enough where the Nozzle caught on the door frame and pulled it off the truck. Firefighters dragged 200 feet of the hose all the way up Beechwood St to the fire. Every time there is snow or ice it must be shoveled in front of the doors before trucks leave the station as there is not enough clearance.

Current Station Images
INTERIOR









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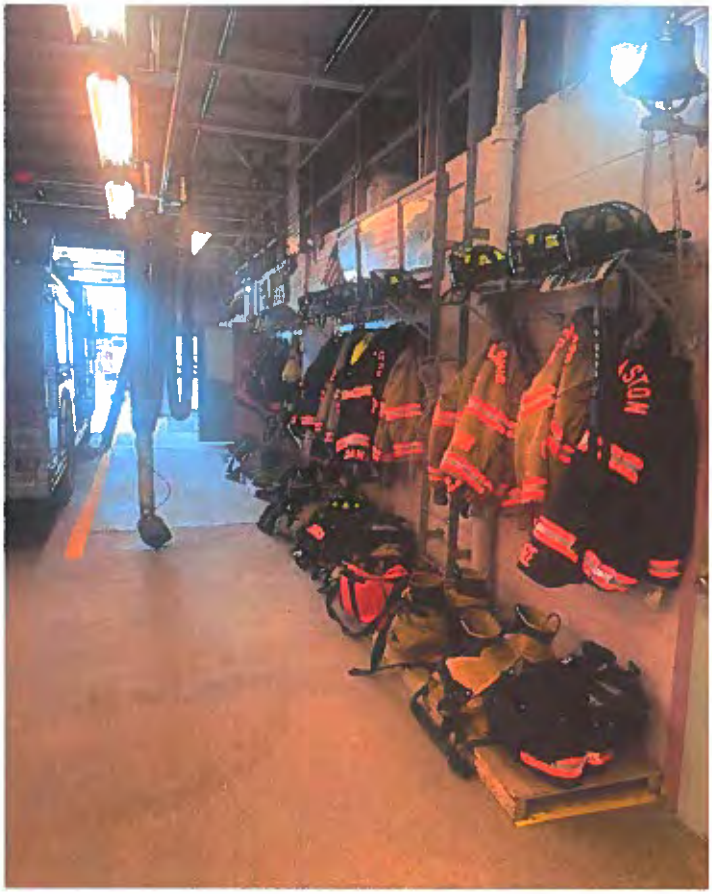
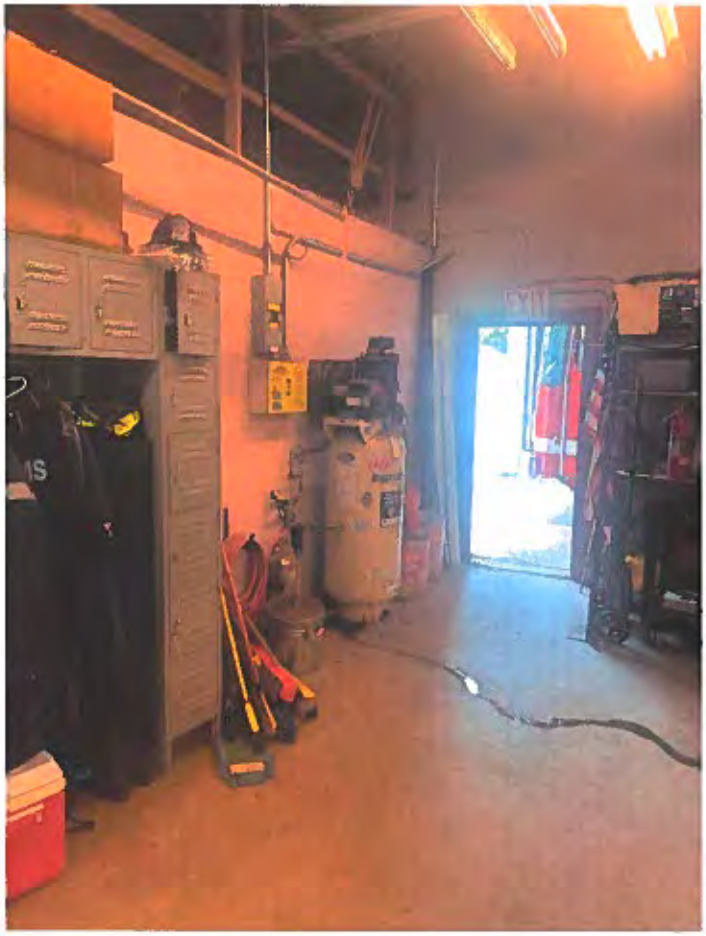


MAINE
423-887
MUNICIPAL



EMS & FIRE Department Assessment
Chief Amy Drinkwater & Chief Mikial Mazzeo

Current Station Conditions:

Lack of sleeping quarters

Lack of parking for members

Lack of office space

Lack of training space

Sinking apparatus floor

Walls cracked from slab to roof

Wall corners cracked and separating

Slabs separating

Water does not drain on apparatus floor

Windows leak in heavy rain

Heating system needs replacing

Air conditioning by window units

Front apron needs to be rebuilt and surfaced

Possible undermining of the apron

Lack of space for equipment storage

Apparatus parking is cramped

Significant dust that has been unable to be controlled

Radio tower needs to be replaced and raised

Kitchen dayroom need updating

Station Generator needs to be replaced

Fire Needs:

Training / meeting room

Updated kitchen / dayroom / add patio

General storage

Wide and tall apparatus bays / doors

Adequate office space

Dormitory rooms

Workout room

Tool room / shop

Adequate parking for members

Separation of office/living/training/apparatus

Sprinkler / fire alarm system

Gear Storage room

SCBA storage and filling room

Locker / shower rooms

Decontamination / laundry room

Vehicle exhaust system

Climate control - heat / air conditioning

Station alerting system

EMS Needs:

Offices

Bunk rooms

Training room with storage

De-con area

Washer/dryer

EMS Supplies storage area

Rest room/ showers

Day room/ Kitchen

Wash Bays- wash rig inside

Examples of New Stations

Members of the Fire and EMS Building Committee visited the following stations:

Augusta

The Augusta station was rebuilt- cost was about $6 million dollars to renovate and to bring it up to modern standards. Renovated 8,800 square feet and added another additional 11,325 square feet.

Farmingdale

The Farmingdale new station cost was about $1.5 million -6,400 square feet

Hallowell

The Hallowell new station cost was about –$2 million (New doors were $60,000 a door) with 5,300 square feet.

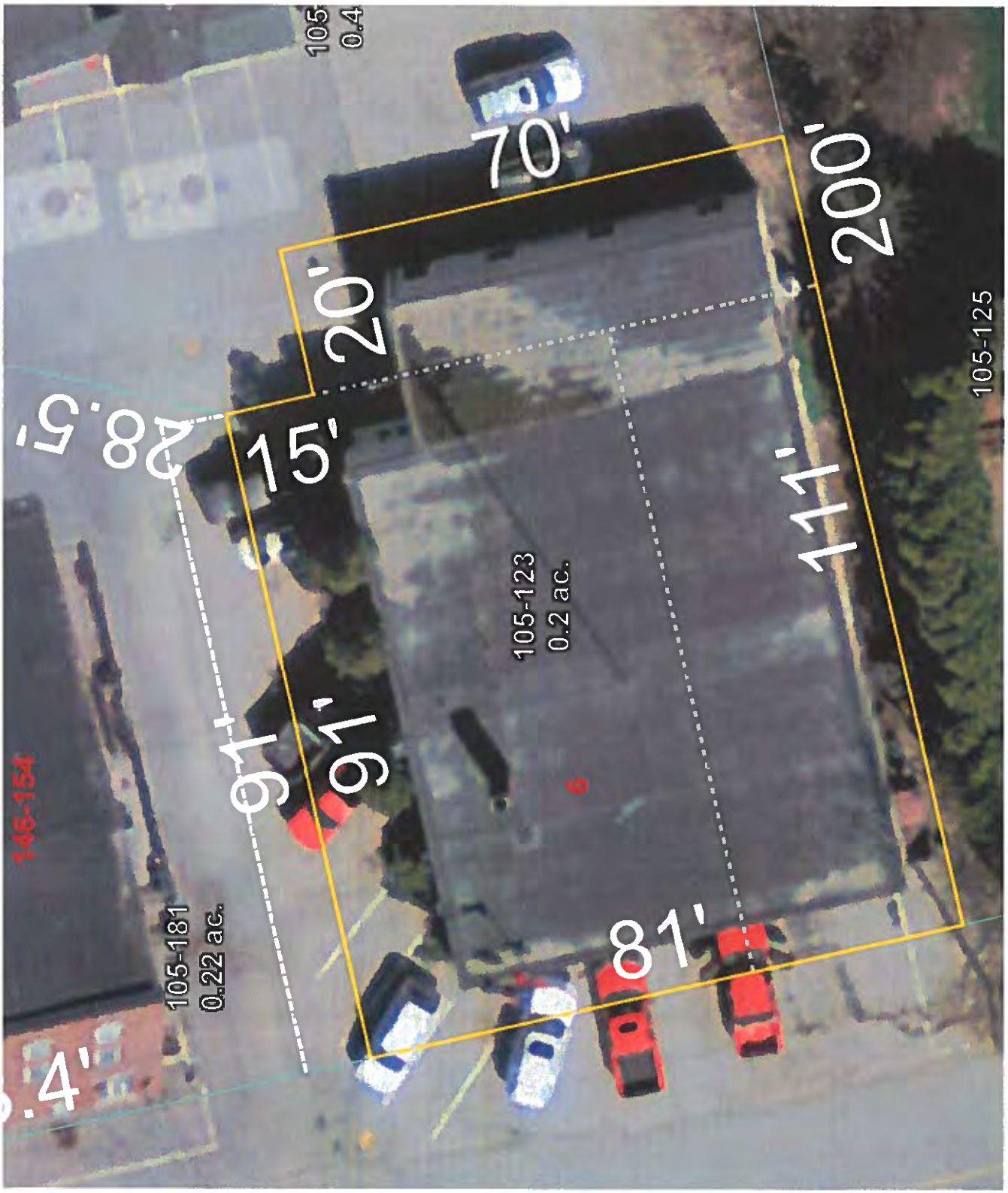
North Conway

The North Conway NH new station was $6.7 million -$16,000 square feet.

Recommendations to Select Board

1) Have the Building Committee develop a formal Request for Qualifications, as recommended by Bill Lane of Gartley and Dorsky and Amanda Austin of 2A Architects.
2) Prepare advertising the RFQ to include a list of firms to send the document to. Select Board to review and approve RFQ for submission.
3) Have the Building Committee review RFQs, including interviews of qualified applicants.
4) Make a recommendation of the top 2 RFQs responses to the Select Board for review and approval.
5) Public Engagement including an open house a the station and a public information session.
6) In conjunction with the Select Board, seek funding for implementation of the formal plans.
7) Follow guidance from the RFQ qualified applicant contracted for the project on next steps.

Boundaries of Current Station on Knox Street



19
20
07-905
6" PVC 2005
17
4" PVC 2005
6" PVC
18
4" PVC
17
6" PVC 2005
14
X
0.07 AC
G-45
G-60
8" PVC 2005
Percy Robinson
78
GEORGES ST.
Kossuth St.
104
8" PVC 2015
6" PVC 2015
31
34
0.53 Ac
Stephen Mills
120
331
88
347
6" PVC2015
351
07-927
6" PVC 2015
359
138
G-41
07-690
8" PVC 1997
07-695
MAIN ST.
8" PVC 1997
07-659
6" PVC
4" PVC 1997
6" PVC 1997
6" PVC 1997
4" PVC 1997
350
338
330
344
358

Town of Thomaston Map 106 Lot 065 M0845R
Land Assessment : Knox Registry Book 1900 Page 96
347 Main Street

Owner(s): Stephen L. Mills
75 Hay Rd Warren ME 04864
(207) 542-5797

Property Details

Property Notes	L. Arthur Mills died 3/3/2012; Margaret W. Mills died 3/28/2020.				
639-RE-03					
Year Built	1824	**Gross Living Area**	1,872	**No. Units**	2
Assessed with	MuniAssessing			**Zone**	R3
Utilities	Public Water and Sewer			**Old ML ID**	27 - 27
Land Group	202-Single Family Urban			**Land Use**	Residential-3 or less Un
MH Description				**MH Serial#**	

Record of Ownership

Transfer	Date of Sale	Book	Page	Sale Price	Assessed Value
Mills > Mills & Mills Life Est	2/27/1995	1900	96		$90,760
Roach Est > Mills (Dist)	7/7/1992	1610	280		$41,000
Wallace > Roach	10/24/1961	394	449		

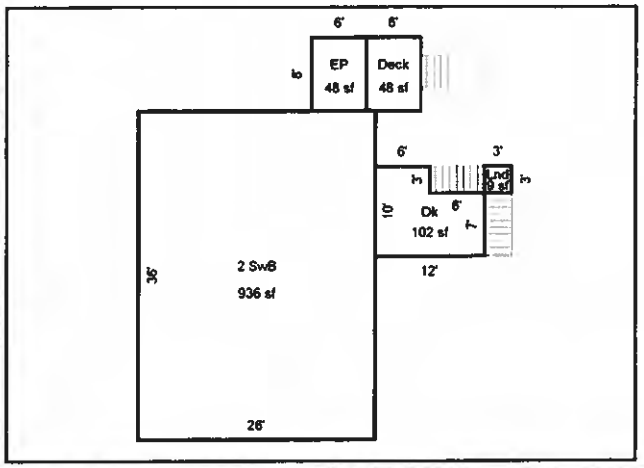
Land Value

Land Type	Acres Units or FF / Depth		STD	FAC	Price	Topo	Eco	Value
MS-Main Street	31	84	200	0.646	1.000	100%	100%	20,026
MS-Main Street	104	124	200	0.792	1.000	100%	90%	74,131

Acres: 0.36 **Total Land Value: $94,157**

Assessment Record

Insp Date	Assessor	Reason	BP#	Yr	$	Int Ext	Note
8/17/2010	David B. Martucci, CMA	Building Permit	2008	2010	$2,000	☐ ☑	10x12 Shed-Gone by 12/31/2010



Assessment Summary: **Land Value: $94,157** **Building Value: $80,047** **Per. Prop. Value:** **Total Value: $174,204**

2021 639-RE-03 639 **Acres: 0.36** **Exemption Type:** **Exemption Value: $0** **Taxable Value: $174,204** **Card 1**