

FIRE STATION QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. Why is the cost of the proposed Fire Station #1 so exorbitant? \$10 million is a lot of money.

That is a not-to-exceed number. We are working hard to keep the millage we are asking for as low as possible and to get construction costs down. Remember, our firefighters are not just putting out fires – we call them for water and ice rescues, trench collapses and confined space rescues, rope rescues and hazardous materials response. New facilities will optimize their ability to save lives no matter what the emergency.

Also, it is important that the department have more work and storage space because regulatory demands on our operation have grown. We need more space for training, care and storage of our breathing apparatus and personal protective equipment, as well as storage for EMS supplies and other firefighting gear.

2. Will the .83 mill levy that's on the November ballot pay for both new fire stations?

The bond covers construction for Fire Station #1. The final cost could wind up being lower, depending on contractor bids we receive, and the current interest rate at the time of bond issuance, which we anticipate will be lower. This would reduce the millage even further. We will look to refinance that debt in seven years and pay the debt off early. We believe the Township will be in a good position to do that and get that tax off the residents as soon as possible. This is the financing approach we have found most workable.

Once Fire Station #1 is complete, we will look for another loan or issue bonds, backed with JEDD dollars, to pay for Fire Station #2. We will also be using some TIF dollars to help pay for the second fire station. *We will NOT be going back to the voters to build Station #2.*

3. But this is still a 28-year levy, correct?

It is a .83-mill bond levy over 28 years. That translates to about \$29 a year in property taxes on a \$100,000 home. But again we will look to refinance that debt in seven years and try to pay the debt off early. The township has a track record of retiring debt early.

We have been prudent and responsible with taxpayer money. We have managed to squeeze more than 50 years of use out of our fire stations, but the Fire Department has outgrown them, plain and simple. And remodeling the old stations is cost prohibitive and unworkable.

4. How much will it cost to build Fire Station #2?

Construction costs for Fire Station #2 are estimated at \$4.5 to \$5 million.

5. How do these costs compare to other cities building new fire stations?

Station #2 is about on par with construction costs we have researched in other cities. Station #1 is a larger expenditure, but you have to keep in mind that it is a larger building, it will consolidate four locations, and we will realize an economy in operating costs as a result along with the ability to conduct valuable in-house training on site.

We want to emphasize that the estimates we have right now are preliminary engineering estimates. In many cases, once a project is put out to bid, the final cost estimate could be lower. We are also applying to be in the state's capital budget later this year. If we do get some funding from the state for this project, that would reduce the bond issue millage rate in November.

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6. Why can't you use JEDD dollars to pay for Station #1 as well?

We have done considerable due diligence on funding these projects, and we believe the most prudent approach is to build Fire Station #1 with bond levy dollars. Some JEDD dollars will be used for engineering costs of Station #1, and for paying down the bond.

Station #2 will be built with JEDD dollars, and some TIF dollars. *We will NOT be going back to the voters to build Station #2.*

7. But why put the debt burden on the homeowners? Property taxes have become a burden for homeowners – especially for senior residents.

The new Fire Station #1 will allow our department to significantly improve response to emergencies. This is an investment in the community's safety. Every person who lives in, works in or visits Concord Township depends on our fire department to keep them safe during life-threatening emergencies.

They take care of us every day, and we need to help them take care of us. For example, the new station will have advanced ventilation systems and a decontamination facility to remove contaminated air, fumes, vapors and carcinogens that our personnel are exposed to when they're battling fires.

The bottom line here is, firefighters need new space that can accommodate our community's growing emergency response needs. Our finance plan to get this done is sound and conservative and we're working very hard to continue to drive costs down.

8. What is the timetable for building Fire Station #1?

If the levy passes, we expect to begin construction next spring and invite everyone in Concord Township to a ribbon-cutting party about 13 months later.

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