



# A NEW FIRE AND POLICE STATION – IS IT WORTH THE COST?

Brought to You By the Concerned Taxpayers of Bow, NH

# The Last Six Years - Rising Tax Rates

From 2008 until 2013, the total tax rate in Bow has increased 34% from \$22.53 to \$30.19.

From 2008 until 2013, the Town's portion of the tax rate has increased 52% from \$4.64 to \$7.05.

The Town of Bow's total tax rate of \$30.19 is the 16th highest in the State of New Hampshire out of 234 municipalities.

# Our Tax Rate Could Rise Even More

During the Town Meeting on March 13, 2013, voters rejected a warrant article to approve a bond in the amount of \$7.7 million for a new 30,000 sq. ft. fire and police station.

- *Concerns were raised about the increasing tax rates and the high price tag of the proposal, especially where other communities are building facilities for a much lower cost.*

# Obtaining A New Safety Complex

Shortly after last year's defeat of the bond for the safety complex, Bow Fire Chief Abbott requested the State Fire Marshal's Office to inspect the fire station for code violations.

- The main concerns found by the State Fire Marshal were the living quarters for the on-duty firefighters and electrical/wiring issues.\*

*\*Source: 7/24/13 letter to Town Manger Stack from State Fire Marshal's Office*

# Obtaining A New Safety Complex

The State Fire Marshal's Office's findings are now being used to argue that our only feasible option is to build a new safety complex with a fire and police station.

We will be voting on this issue at the upcoming Town Meeting on March 12, 2014.

# Town Meeting - March 12, 2014

The problem is that the size of the facility has only been slightly decreased, and there has been no indepth evaluation of the option to make less expensive repairs instead of constructing new facilities.

# Town Meeting - March 12, 2014

We have been told it would be too expensive to renovate the existing fire and police stations because of the new structural requirements set forth in the International Building Code (2009 Edition) for “essential facilities,” which require new buildings to withstand hurricanes and other natural disasters.

However, we need to discuss whether modest renovations to our existing facilities need to meet these requirements.

# Town Meeting Bonds – March 12, 2014

At the upcoming Town Meeting, we will be asked to approve the bonds for the construction of a new fire and police station:

- The safety complex (combined fire/police stations) bond will be in the amount of \$ 6.7 million.
- A bond for the addition of geothermal heating/cooling system to the new safety complex, if approved, will be in the amount of \$200,000.

# Town Meeting Bonds– March 12, 2014

These bonds do not include the cost of the community center, which is part of Phase II which will have a new roadway, parking lot and multi-generational community center for an estimate of an additional \$4.5 million.

These bonds do not include the cost of other construction planned in Phase III which includes a new Town Hall, commercial properties (restaurant, coffee shop) and park, which we will be asked to approve in the future.

# Town Meeting Bonds– March 12, 2014

There are also other costs not included in the bonds. The estimated gross cost of the new fire and police station is \$6.796 million.

## This does NOT include:

- The interest rate of the bond, which could be as high as 5%.
- Annual maintenance costs of the new bigger building, or the cost of heating and maintaining the existing structures.

# Town Meeting Bonds -March 12, 2014

If the safety complex bond fails, we will be asked to consider approving a bond in the amount of \$4.64 million for the design and renovation of the existing fire station/community building.\*

Another bond to be brought forward for approval if the safety complex bond fails is for \$1.724 million to renovate the police station on Robinson Road.

\*Note: By petition of Bow taxpayers, there will be a warrant article in the amount of \$225,000 to make repairs to the existing building to address only the code issues raised by State Fire Marshal's Office.

# A New Safety Complex – Essential Facility

The cost of the bonds for renovating the fire and police stations appear to be inflated because they include modifications to meet all of the current structural requirements for “essential facilities.”

Based on those expensive renovations, we are being told that it does not make economic sense to renovate the existing buildings, and we should instead construct a new safety complex with a fire and police station at a cost of almost \$6.8 million.\*

\*This price does not include the \$200,000 warrant article for a geothermal heating/cooling system.

# A New Safety Complex– Essential Facility

However, there is information that needs to be analyzed. For example:

- Existing fire and police stations do not need to meet the new structural requirements for an “essential facility.”
- In fact, most existing fire and police stations throughout the country do not meet the new structural requirements adopted in 2009.

# A New Safety Complex– Essential Facility

- The Town's Code Enforcement Officer has discretion whether the existing buildings need to be designated "essential facilities."
- Even if the buildings are designated "essential facilities," only certain renovations or repairs to existing buildings will trigger the new structural requirements for an "essential facility."

# A New Safety Complex—Other Options

We need to seriously explore some of our other options.

For example...

# A New Safety Complex—Other Options

Option No. 1 - Fix the code issues in the current fire station and community center.

- The main concerns at the current fire station involve the electrical system (such as circuits and panels) and the living quarters for on-duty firefighters. The cooking range in the community center also needs to be fixed.
- The issues with the living quarters have already been resolved by moving them to the Rescue Building.

# A New Safety Complex—Other Options

Option No. 1 - Fix the issues in the current fire station (cont.)

- The estimated cost for electrical repairs is between \$175,000 to \$225,000. The cost of repairing the cooking range hood is \$25-30,000. By a recent petition of Bow taxpayers, there will be a warrant article to pay for these repairs.
- If we want to keep our current building and fix only the code issues, there should be no need to approve a bond of \$4.64 million to bring the entire building to the “essential facility” standard.

# A New Safety Complex—Other Options

Option No. 2 - Fix the issues in the current police station.

- The main concerns for the police station are the door entrance (unsafe step), lack of sally port and booking area. There is also no elevator. We could choose to address only some of these issues, and fix the remaining in the future.
- We need to seriously question whether it is necessary to spend \$1.724 million to bring the building to the “essential facility” standard, and whether we need an elevator under the ADA to access areas not used by the general public.

# A New Safety Complex—Other Options

Option No. 3 - Scale back the plans for the safety facility.

- The current proposal for fire and police stations involves the construction of a 25,000 sq. ft. facility.
- Even when built to the specifications for an “essential facility,” the total size of the project could be reduced.
- Other communities have recently built or are considering building smaller facilities for a much lower cost (see following slides).

# Example No.1: Town of Hampton

(Pop. 11,931 Hampton and Hampton Beach)\*

In 2013, built TWO fire stations:

11,000 sq. ft. station on beach (\$3.1 million)

9,000 sq. ft. expansion/ renovations on Winnacunnet Road (\$2.6 million)



*\*Populations taken from 2010 census*

# Example No. 2: Town of Brentwood

(Pop. 4,486)

Approved by voters in 2010 to build a 10,000 sq. ft. fire station (under \$2 million).



# Example No.3: Town of Pelham

(Pop. 12,897)

Approved by voters in 2012 to build 18,000 sq. ft. fire station (\$3.9 million).



# Example No.4: Town of New Hampton

(Pop. 2,165)

In 2011, built a 16,000 sq. ft. complex with combined fire and police station (\$2.23 million).



# Example No. 5: Town of Deerfield

(Pop. 3,909)

In 2013, rejected plans to construct a \$2.4 million safety complex with combined fire and police station.



# Example No. 6: Town of North Hampton

(Pop.4,301)

In 2014, will be voting on plans to construct a new municipal complex with a library, police station, fire station and renovations to administrative offices for approximately \$6 million.



# Example No. 7: Town of Milton

(Pop. 4598)

In 2014, will be voting on plans to construct a fire station for \$2.864 million.



# Town of Bow - Proposed Safety Complex

(Pop. 7519)

Proposed 25,000 sq. ft. safety complex costing \$6.8 million for only the fire and police stations.



# We Need To Ask These Questions

- Why are other comparable communities able to build police and/or fire stations that are smaller and cost less?
- What measures have been taken to significantly scale back the project? Do we really need a 25,000 sq. ft. facility?
- Should we keep the police station and/or fire station at their current locations and make less expensive upgrades? What, if any, renovations to the police station need to be taken immediately?

# We Need To Ask These Questions

- What amount will our taxes increase based on the actual costs of the safety complex and the bond interest rates? What is the anticipated tax increase for Phase II and III of the project?
- How will the decreasing assessed values of the Bow Power Plant (over \$40 million last year in decreased value) impact our tax rate?
- Should we put any discussion on this project on hold until the current high school bond is retired in 2017? What is tax impact of 3% increase this year for school budget, and upcoming potential \$5.2 million bond for maintenance to elementary school?

# The Solution – A Matter of Compromise

All of us care about public safety. All of us recognize that we are a small town with limited resources. We should differentiate what we “need” and what we “wish for” or “want.”

We should refocus on our “needs” and reduce our expenses. We might not receive the most extravagant facility – but a large expensive safety complex that many of us may never use and will continue to increase our tax rate is not in our best interests.

# How You Can Help

Please come to the Town Meeting on March 12, 2014, and make your voice heard.

Let's choose another option. Let's choose fiscal responsibility.



# THANKS FOR LISTENING

For more information, visit our website at [bowtaxpayers.org](http://bowtaxpayers.org)