

Town of Fryeburg

Proposed Municipal Complex FAQ - Addendum

This serves to address ongoing questions, comments, and concerns that have been compiled related to the proposal to construct a new Municipal Complex. This will be updated as needed. Please also refer to the Municipal Complex section of the Town's webpage to learn more: <https://www.fryeburgmaine.org/municipal-complex-committee>

- *Comment: The proposed building is extravagant and not fiscally responsible.*

Response: The building accounts for anticipated future growth and is designed to last for the next 50 years. Arguably, cutting corners to build just what we need right now is not fiscally responsible. Cutting out meeting rooms, office space, and locker room space will only have a minor impact on the overall cost now but would be way more expensive to retrofit and add on in the future.

The building, while respectable looking, is not comprised of unnecessary design elements that increase the cost. It is a rather basic, yet functional building. The goal was to make it fit visually into the Town. Note that the color scheme proposed similarly aligns with buildings at the Fryeburg Academy and Fryeburg Fairgrounds.

- *Question: Why is the vote for the Municipal Complex Bond not going to be a ballot question?*

Response: It is! The Select Board decided (on 4/12/2024) to proceed with a referendum vote for the primary question asking voters to approve a bond. The vote will take place on June 11th at the David & Doris Hastings Community Center from 8:00 am to 8:00 pm. Absentee ballots will be available in advance.

There will be numerous other follow-up questions asked of the voters at Town Meeting on June 13th at the Performing Arts Center at 6:00 pm. A sample warrant will be available in the beginning of May for review.

- *Question: Why is there no basement?*

Response: The architects originally estimated that this will add almost \$3,000,000 to the total project costs. After careful consideration, the Building Committee has decided to construct a 2,400-3,000 sq. ft. basement under a portion of the complex. This was largely based on public feedback that a basement should be considered. The plan is to remove the previously proposed shooting range, so the basement construction will not affect the total estimated cost of construction.

Attic trusses are being proposed, meaning there will be approximately 12,000 sq. ft. of attic storage. This space has to be conditioned anyway, so this is essentially “free” storage space. This will have adequate headroom and will be accessed via stairways and there will be flexibility in how this is partitioned to maximize our storage capabilities.

- *Comment: The Town is not growing as much as it appears; the growth is comprised largely of second homeowners.*

Response: Second homeowners still require and expect services from the Town. The Fire Department actually sees an increased call volume as a result of these second homes having alarm systems that get triggered.

- *Comment: It is not really unsafe for firefighters to breathe exhaust fumes, and that is a scare tactic.*

Response: [NFPA 1500: Standard for Fire Department Occupational Safety, Health, and Wellness Program](#), Chapter 9, specifies that fire departments contain all vehicle exhaust emissions to a level of no less than 100% effective capture. This recommendation also complies with NIOSH’s requirement to reduce emissions to the lowest feasible level to limit the impact on firefighters’ health.

It is widely recognized that firefighters are exposed to many potential cancer-causing carcinogens; this is not a scare tactic, and the Town should do everything in its power to take steps to protect our firefighters.

https://firefightercancersupport.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/FFCancer_Exposure.pdf

- *Question: Have the existing town buildings been evaluated to see if there is room for expansion?*

Response: Yes.

Based on property line setbacks, there is no way to expand the Town Office that would result in a meaningful, functional improvement. There is room for a very small addition, but it would not come close to addressing the need for additional storage space, office space, meeting space, and ADA compliance. Adding a second story would necessitate construction of stairways and an elevator and is also really not practical or worthwhile in addressing the issues faced with the current Town Office. Furthermore, there is limited room for expanding parking and the septic system correspondingly with an addition.

The Fire Department would essentially require a completed rebuild to address the garage door height limitation and to expand the footprint to accommodate additional storage space needs and office/meeting room needs.

The Police Department is housed in a leased space that the Town has no control over.

- *Question: Have appraisals been done on the proposed properties that will be sold?*

Response: A commercial real estate broker completed a market study to estimate the current suggested listing cost. A full appraisal has not been completed since the outcome will likely change between now and the time, we are prepared to sell the properties.

- *Question: Why now?*

Response: It is getting increasingly more difficult for town employees to operate out of their current facilities. The facilities do not meet basic regulatory/code standards. The Town voted to purchase a property intended for the Municipal Complex and to complete a design; the voters made these decisions, and the town officials are following through. Building costs are only going to increase as more time goes by without action.

- *Question: Are assessments being raised to pay for this project?*

Response: No. Please see the write-up linked here for more information:

https://www.fryeburgmaine.org/sites/g/files/vyhlf4446/f/uploads/town_managers_report.pdf.

- *Question: How will this impact our taxes? How can we be expected to make a decision if we don't know the exact impact on our taxes?*

Response: The Town is still investigating numerous avenues for funding. The voters will be asked to approve borrowing "up to, and not to exceed" \$16,000,000 for the construction of the municipal complex. This will provide the necessary approval for the Town to finalize a loan or bond. To reiterate, we cannot finalize that without town meeting approval. Rates will vary until the bond or loan is locked in.

Additionally, the Town is actively pursuing numerous grants. These grants, if received, will ultimately reduce the amount the Town needs to borrow. The potential of receiving grants is improved if the Town has approved proceeding with the project. The grants have varying application deadlines and award timelines, so we may not have a full picture of the grant monies that can be applied to the project for many months.

Current estimates are that a 20-year bond for \$16,000,000 would result in a tax rate increase of approximately 10%. \$16,000,000 is believed to be a worst-case scenario as we are working hard to get various grants and other methods of funding that will reduce the amount needed to bond. The Town will also be able to sell the current Fire Department and Town Office and the revenues from that can help offset the bond.

The Town is currently debt-free, has good financial standing, and has experienced a pattern of declining mil rates. The rate for this fiscal year is less than in 2018, 2019, and 2020. Below are the mil rates for the past seven years:

2018: \$16.60 2019: \$17.65 2020: \$16.80 2021: \$16.20 2022: \$15.50
2023: \$15.30 2024: \$16.50

- *Question: Is it going to be unsafe to have emergency vehicles on Recreation Drive?*

Response: Visitor access to the Municipal Complex will be via Recreation Drive. The road, in the vicinity of the Municipal Complex, will be improved to accommodate the increased traffic, and safe pedestrian access will be accounted for via sidewalks. Police and Fire vehicles will exit via the Town Garage driveway, completely separating non-emergency vehicular and pedestrian traffic from emergency vehicles onsite. Fire apparatus may return via Recreation Drive but would not actively respond to calls from that access point.

- *Comment: It is excessive to have a shooting range at the Municipal Complex.*

Response: While this is certainly a feature that helps with training, maintaining levels of performance, and recruitment, it has been decided to remove that from the project scope.

- *Question: Why don't we digitize all of our records to reduce the need for so much storage?*

Response: Documents that need to be stored permanently need to be in their original form or microfiche, but cannot be solely stored electronically. This following is a partial list of documents that need to be permanently maintained by the town: assessing records, annual reports, Appeals Board files, site plans, meeting minutes/agendas, official correspondence, ordinances, policies, warrants, audits, pension/retirement documents, and zoning records.

There are many records that we need to maintain for at least 6 years, including but not limited to: payroll records, ledgers/journals of daily transactions, tax forms, registrations, account payable. We do try to dispose of these records when possible, to reduce storage needs.