

Eastern Fire/EMS Substation Committee

Minutes

March 22, 2023

Attendance: All Members present; K. Noble by Zoom
J. Emmerson, J Green, and M. Swanton excused
Chief Gagne – Ex officio
Chief Gagne – Ex officio

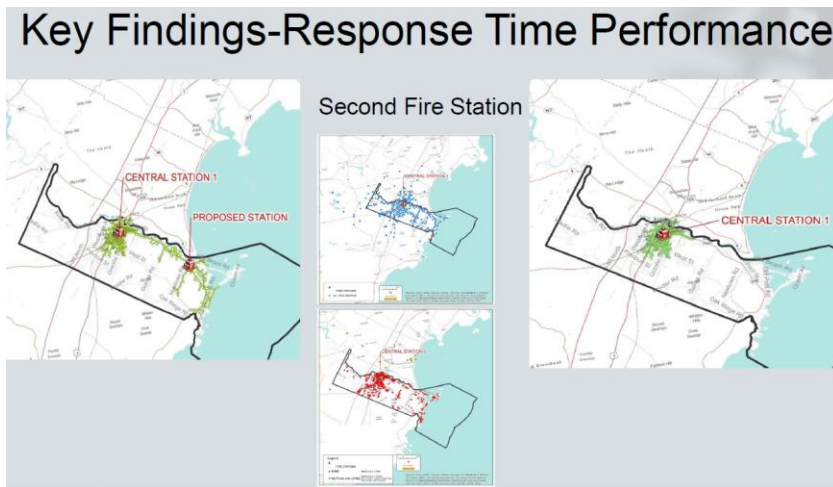
Call to Order: 5:30 PM

- **Review of Minutes**

The long belated Minutes of December 19, 2022 meeting were reviewed and approved by unanimous consent.

- **Review of the “CPSM Report”**

The Committee reviewed and discussed the CPSM Report that was presented to council on February 28. After discussion it was agreed that the report fully supported the previous findings and recommendations of the Committee. The key findings of the report relative to the Committee included the following:



Key Findings-Response Time Performance Recommendations

- CPSM recommends that in the near term, the city continue to plan for a proposed station east of Station 1 to improve response times to the south central, southeast, and coastline built-upon areas of the city.
- CPSM further recommends that staffing this station include one ambulance and one engine, which can be accomplished in the following ways:
 - Alternative 1: **Staff the station with 3 per shift (1 Captain, 2 FF PMs/shift, or 12 total positions)**. Staff would then cross staff both the engine and ambulance on a first call basis. This could be achieved with 12 new positions, or 4 new positions and the movement of 8 positions (2 per shift) from Station 1, or 8 new positions and the movement of 4 positions (1 per shift) from Station 1. Any combination of the aforementioned can be implemented incrementally following the recommendation of 3 per shift to staff an engine and ambulance when the station opens.
 - Alternative 2: **Staff the station with 5 per shift (1 Captain, 4 FF PMs/shift, or 20 total positions)**. Under this alternative, the staffing matrix is 3 assigned to the engine and 2 assigned to the ambulance. This could be achieved with 20 new positions, or 12 new positions and the movement of 8 positions (2 per shift) from Station 1, or 8 new positions and the movement of 12 positions (3 per shift) from Station 1. Any combination of the aforementioned can be incrementally implemented over the longer term following the recommendation of 3 per shift to staff an engine and ambulance when the station opens.

- **Discussion on Recommendations and Alternatives**

The Committee discussed and reviewed its conclusions and recommendations. City Manager Jim Bennett joined these discussions along with Chief Gagne and both were supportive of the conclusions of the Committee. Therefore, using the elements of the charge from Council, the following was agreed to:

1. Is there a need for an Eastern Biddeford Fire/EMS substation?

Early in the committee's work it reviewed within "Eastern Biddeford" the population and demographics, past 5 years of response times, history of incidents and call-outs, overall geography, physical structures, loss of volunteer support, seasonal population, UNE structures and populations, and significant recreation locations (the beaches). With all that data the Committee concluded ***"there is a clear need for a Fire and EMS substation in Eastern Biddeford"***. This was then acknowledged and supported by the CPSM study and report.

2. What would the location be?

A subcommittee looked at a variety of possibilities including several site selections. After reporting back, the Committee then agreed on the following location recommendation: ***"a potential Eastern Biddeford Fire/EMS Substation should be located within a 1-mile radius of the intersection Pool Street and Newtown Road, with the exact location be determined in the future"***. It was further noted that UNE is willing to deed over to the City 3 acres of property at 79 Newtown Road as a potential site. If this is eventually used, it should be evaluated for environmental and conservation issues. Also, several privately owned sites SE of UNE were also reviewed, however they would require purchase of the property.

3. Are there any other critical needs that could be housed in a substation?

The Committee reviewed other needs including discussions with the Police Chief and Director of PWD. Both indicated that it would be nice to have an office location for their staff, however it was not seen as overly 'critical', and that a cost benefit must be weighed on this issue. The Committee therefore ***"did not feel the need to make a full recommendation on other needs"***.

4. What equipment would be housed there?

After significant discussion it was agreed that the "ideal" equipment needs would be an engine and an ambulance, and possibly a water rescue boat, with the ability to add equipment in the future. The CPSM report agreed with this assessment. However balancing costs and budgetary concerns it was agreed the formal recommendation would be ***"to place the '2005 Paramedic Engine' to the potential Substation"***. In future years additional equipment could be added through the normal CIP and Fire Department equipment policy.

5. What would the staffing of a substation be?

After a thorough discussion, it was agreed the ideal staffing would be for a “Company” including one Officer and two Firefighter/Paramedics (a total of 3 staff) to be located at a substation at all four shifts. The CPSM report agreed with this assessment and went further to recommend a future that would include 5 staff housed at a substation on all four shifts. After detailed discussion on alternatives with strong input from the Chief, and considering near term budgetary concerns, the Committee agreed that **“initially, 2 Firefighter/Paramedics should be housed at the potential Substation”**. This could be accomplished by adding two new FF/PM positions in each of the FY 25 and 26 budget years (for a total of 4 new positions). In future years as budgets allow, the staffing could be increased to a full Company of 3 staff at the substation. Additionally in the interim, “per diem” staff can be utilized to augment any staffing budgetary concerns or delays. It was also agreed that a program with UNE should be developed to create student Paramedics that could support City staff.

6. The Committee should review the CPSM Report

As noted, the CPSM Report supports or expands upon the conclusions of the Committee.

7. What is the ‘size and scope’ of a potential substation and its associated Capital Costs?

The Committee had a spirited discussion on the size and scope of a substation. It was generally agreed and supported by the City Manager and Fire Chief that if this is to move forward, the size and scope should support both the near-term as well as the 5 to 10 year needs and of a size that is supportive of the staffing and equipment recommendations above. Committee member Labrecque using his experience and expertise in firehouse architecture created potential designs of different sizes to allow the Committee to visualize the size needs of a substation, including three potential options:

9,500 sq ft – Would include 3 double apparatus bays, 6 dormitories, 3 Bathrooms, Kitchen/common/fitness area, Decon/laundry, and substantial storage, with a total physical footprint including paved areas of about 250 ft x 250 ft

7,500 sq ft – 2 double apparatus bays (built to be easily expanded), 4 dormitories, 2 Bathrooms, Kitchen/common/fitness area, Decon/laundry, and smaller storage and footprint

6,000 sq ft – 2 single apparatus bays (built to be easily expanded), 3 dormitories, 2 Bathrooms, Kitchen/common area, smaller Decon/laundry, and smaller storage creating the smallest footprint

All potential alternatives could easily fit on a 2 to 2.5 acre plot of land. Each of these alternatives have positives and negatives, and it was clearly expressed that the Committee desires to provide concepts that are rational, with any of these fitting the need. **“It was agreed that the Committee would provide these alternatives to Council for further deliberation”**. The potential construction costs at an estimated \$500 per square foot therefore could range between \$3 and \$5 million.

- **Discussion on next steps**

The Committee with guidance from the City Manager discussed next steps. Key to this is to ask Council to move forward with a 'Request For Proposal' (RFP) to engage an appropriate architectural/engineering firm to begin a design that fits the needs and directives of Council and any future 'Building Committee'. Council has already appropriated \$150,000 for this effort. This would then provide preliminary designs and firmer costing allowing Council to determine the need for potential 'Bonding'. Bonding may not take place until sometime in 2024, but ideally is timed with several older bonds that 'role off' minimizing taxpayer impact. Additionally, non-taxpayer forms of funding such as grants will be thoroughly explored.

Chairman Emhiser indicated that he would begin drafting the report to Council (with help from Committee members Boston and McPheters). Drafts of the report will be broadly circulated to the Committee and Chief to allow for input before finalization.

- **The meeting was unanimously adjourned at 7:10pm**