The Swanzey Board of Selectmen is recommending at the 2020 Annual Town Meeting Warrant Article 3, which would approve funding to construct a new fire station at 321 Old Homestead Highway to replace Fire Station #2. Voting is on March 10th from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. at Christian Life Fellowship Church at 211 Whitcomb Road. This pamphlet contains important information about the fire station project. More information, including videos of meetings and discussions, can be found at [www.swanzeynh.gov](http://www.swanzeynh.gov) on the “Town Meeting 2020” tab under Community News.

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### Proposed 12,342 square foot Fire Station at 321 Old Homestead Highway

#### Why is Swanzey trying to build a new fire station?

For the better part of 30 years, the Town of Swanzey has been working to replace Fire Station #2 in Swanzey Center, which is located in the basement of Town Hall (620 Old Homestead Highway). In 2014 the Town had an architectural study conducted that looked at the Town’s overall long term facility needs. That effort resulted in a proposal for a 17,000 square foot fire station on Safford Drive at a cost just under $5 million, which was not supported by the voters at the 2015 Town Meeting. In 2016 the Town proposed facility improvements to the Town Hall, Police Station, Department of Public Works, and a smaller new fire station on Safford Drive; these items were voted on together as one warrant article with a total cost over $5 million and did not receive support from the voters. The Town then decided to focus on the smaller of these projects and in 2017 voters approved an addition and renovations to the police station and the Department of Public Works got a new, larger salt shed.

Due to concerns about the proposed location of the new fire station on Safford Drive, in 2018 after two public hearings the Town purchased 321 Old Homestead Highway. This location is closer to Swanzey Center and the current Station #2 than Safford Drive. At the 2019 Town Meeting voters strongly approved a warrant article approving funding to design a fire station at this location.
What is wrong with Swanzey's current Station #2?

The current Station #2 is undersized, does not meet health and life safety code requirements, and has a number of other challenges. Modern fire trucks barely fit through the doors, under the ceiling, and between the columns in the truck bays. Groundwater leaks in the Fire Station throughout the year through the building’s foundation. There is only one way in or out of the Fire Station, which is through the truck bays. What limited areas there are for gear storage and work areas have very low ceilings. The firefighters’ lockers and gear are in the bays with the diesel exhaust from the trucks. The diesel fumes also go upstairs into the Town Hall where employees and members of the public are doing business. The traffic of call firefighters responding to the station and trucks leaving in between the Town Hall and Mt. Caesar Library can cause dangerous situations and there are no dedicated parking areas for firefighters. If you have not been in Station #2, please take a tour by stopping by Town Hall or contacting the Fire Department!

What process was used to put together the design for a new fire station?

The Town selected Keene-based KCS Architects in July to assist with engaging the public to be involved in the process of designing a fire station from the beginning. Throughout the fall and winter the Town hosted eight meetings with members of the public and the Swanzey Fire Department. These meetings were well-attended and each meeting tried to focus on one aspect of the project. Meeting topics included building & construction materials, infrastructure & utilities, public engagement, reviewing the initial floor plan, reviewing the site plan, considering use of the building on the site that was damaged in a fire, and reviewing the overall project and cost. These eight meetings involved real members of the Swanzey community making real decisions to shape this project.
What is included in the proposed new fire station?

The new fire station is 12,342 square feet and is broken down into three zones: the hot zone, the warm zone, and the cold zone. The station design does not include bedrooms or living quarters because Swanzey does not currently have full time / 24 hour staffing. There is a dedicated area on the site for an addition if more space is needed in the future.

The hot zone shows the Town is serious about the health and safety of Swanzey’s almost fully on-call fire department. Due to the materials found in modern homes and developing science, according to New Hampshire laws if firefighters develop certain cancers and other health issues it is presumed that the medical issues are work-related. The hot zone is focused on providing Swanzey’s firefighters and emergency medical technicians (EMTs) a safe and clean station where their gear can be away from contaminants, space where they can properly clean their gear and their persons so they do not bring contaminants home to their families, and dedicated facilities for both men and women.

Did you know that about 20% of Swanzey’s firefighters are women and they currently have no dedicated private space in any of our stations?

Did you know the Swanzey Fire Department has only two full-time employees and the rest of the department is about 40 dedicated on-call members of the community?

The warm zone is primarily the area where the trucks, apparatus, and equipment will be stored. During this process the design team visited three local recently constructed fire stations and all of them had double-deep drive-through bays with doors on both ends. This is the most efficient use of space as opposed to side by side bays so the proposed station has three double-deep drive-through bays. The warm zone will have a diesel exhaust treatment system to capture the fumes from the trucks so they are not in the air the firefighters and members of the public in the station breathe. There is also a small work area for working on gear and equipment.

The cold zone is dedicated space separated from the contaminants in the hot zone and the warm zone and is broken down into public and administrative areas. The public cold zone includes a training / meeting room that will be used for the training sessions the Swanzey Fire Department hosts multiple times per month. Unlike current spaces in the fire stations, this area will be large enough for the full Swanzey Fire Department. The training room is separate from the rest of the fire station so it may be used by the Town for public meetings and so the Town can host regional trainings to limit the travel time for Swanzey’s employees. The administrative cold zone also replaces the current fire department offices housed in Station #3 on Main Street in West Swanzey. The current offices are not well laid out, do not meet building codes, and are only accessible through a steep staircase. The administrative cold zone will have a conference room for meetings with business developers and residents for fire department business. There is also a report room where staff will be able to work privately on documentation with confidential medical information. In addition, the cold zone will serve as the Town’s emergency operations center, which will add grant opportunities for equipment that will help offset Town expenses.
Swanzey has three fire stations, what will happen to the other fire stations if the new station is approved?

If the new fire station is approved: Station #2 in the basement of Town Hall will be closed; Station #1 on South Road in East Swanzey will continue to be used essentially the same; and the offices will be removed from Station #3 on Main Street in West Swanzey, but it will still house vehicles and apparatus.

Swanzey currently needs these three stations spread throughout the Town to allow response times to stay reasonable based on the Town’s geography and the response challenges created by covered bridges, which most fire trucks cannot use. Having multiple stations also helps keep homeowners insurance rates from increasing. Finally, if Stations 1 or 3 were closed the new station would need to be made larger to have room for the vehicles and apparatus currently in those stations.

Did you know that at over 45 square miles the Town of Swanzey is geographically larger than the City of Keene?

Why can’t we build a new Town Hall and have the Fire Station stay in the full current building?

While building a new Town Hall and giving the Fire Department the full building would give the Fire Department more space for offices upstairs, it would not solve many of Station #2’s issues. The bays would still be too small and there is no cost effective way to add on bays or make them larger. There would still only be one way in or out of the downstairs section unless significant excavation work is done to dig out and construct a new exit. Without an addition and stairs firefighters in the upstairs would need to go outside and around the building to get down to the bays.

Why aren’t we proposing a combined Town Hall and Fire Station?

While there are benefits to having a combined Town Hall and Fire Station (shared parking areas, shared meeting space and other facilities, etc.), adding space for town offices to the fire station design would require a second story or a significantly larger footprint; this would add significant costs to the project. The Town has prioritized closing Station #2 and getting the fire station and firefighters out of the basement of Town Hall. Once that is accomplished, modest improvements to Town Hall can be considered.

How much is this new fire station going to cost?

The total budgeted cost including all construction, equipment, outfitting, engineering, and architectural work is $3.95 million. That total cost is broken down as follows:

- $3.35 million – site and building construction
- $270,000 – Architectural, engineering & related expenses
- $180,000 – Firefighting focused and cancer preventative equipment
- $145,000 – Furniture, equipment, contingency, and other costs

This project will be voted on by the Town on Warrant Article 3 at the 2020 Town Meeting, funded primarily by a $3.5 million bond (loan) to finance the project. The Town plans to aggressively pursue grants to further reduce the overall cost to the taxpayers and several grants have already been identified. Assuming a 20 year bond, the estimated tax rate impact is $0.40 per $1,000 of assessed value and the estimated cost per year by property value is shown on the chart.

Questions or comments? Please contact any of the following: Interim Fire Chief Eric Mattson (358-6455 or emattson@swanzeynh.gov), Town Administrator Michael Branley (352-7411 or mbranley@swanzeynh.gov), or Code Enforcement Officer Mike Jasmin (352-7411 or code@swanzeynh.gov).

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