

2025 FIRE STATION BUILDING PROJECT – FAQ DOCUMENT

Where can I find more specific information about the Fire Station building project?

The building project information is available on the Town's website at <https://rockland-ma.gov/594/Fire-Station-Building-Project---NEW-Apri>. You can also find information on the previously proposed project that was put forward in 2023 for comparison at <https://www.rockland-ma.gov/520/Fire-Station-Building-Project---OLD-Apri>.

What is required for the project to be approved?

The Town of Rockland will be seeking voter approval for a new Fire Station Building Project at the upcoming Annual Town Election (4/12/25) and the Annual Town Meeting (5/5/25).

What is the annual town election date?

April 12, 2025. Polling hours will be from 8 am - 6pm at your regular polling station (Middle School/High School or Esten School). To determine your regular polling station please visit the Secretary of State's website and enter you address at: <https://www.sec.state.ma.us/WhereDoIVoteMA/WhereDoIVote>.

In-person early voting is also available in the Select Board Hearing Room at Town Hall (242 Union Street) during the following dates and times:

Date	Hours
Wednesday, April 2 nd	8:30 am – 4:30 pm
Thursday, April 3 rd	8:30 am – 4:30 pm
Friday, April 4 th	8:30 am – 4:30 pm
Saturday, April 5 th	9 am – 3 pm
Monday, April 7 th	8:30 am – 4:30 pm
Tuesday, April 8 th	8:30 am – 4:30 pm
Wednesday, April 9 th	8:30 am – 4:30 pm

Why does the Fire Department need a new station?

Currently, Rockland's Fire Station does not provide separation of apparatus bays, office space or living quarters. This means that our firefighters are exposed to diesel exhaust, cancer-causing debris brought back from fires, and other chemicals used in the day-to-day operations of the department. Science has shown that firefighters who serve in a station with poor separation of working and living spaces are more susceptible to serious illness.

Since the station's construction in 1939 and renovations in 1978, the Fire Department's mission has drastically changed. Eighty years ago, the Fire Department's mission was to respond to and extinguish fires. Today, that mission includes fire suppression, fire prevention, emergency medical response, hazardous materials response, and technical rescue response.

Why did the Select Board recommend the new station and not the renovation or expansion of the existing station?

The renovation of the current station would not be able to accommodate the existing apparatus, any future apparatus, the decontamination area needs, parking, and it would not be able to accommodate any future growth of the Town. Full presentation from the Architect for all three options is available on WRPS here: <https://youtu.be/8IPO17C2SG0>

What were the options that were under put forward by the Fire Station Building Committee and can you offer a breakdown of the various options presented for consideration by the Select Board?

The Fire Station Building Committee initially reviewed 6 options and narrowed it down to 3 options to present to the Select Board for final consideration. Of the 6 initial options, 4 were for the existing station and included renovation with no addition, renovation with small addition, renovation with medium addition, renovation with large addition. There were 3 options proposed for the new site – the initial 2023 proposal, one with 2 stories (selected project), and one with 3 stories.

BREAKDOWN OF THE THREE OPTIONS UNDER CONSIDERATION

Option 1: Renovation of Existing Station

Construction Costs: \$9,494,530 | Total Project Costs: \$14,039,777

Sq. Footage: 15,000 SF (no change to existing square footage of the station)

The renovation of the current station would not be able to accommodate the existing apparatus, any future apparatus, the decontamination area needs and would not be able to accommodate any future growth of the Town. Additionally, this option **requires temporary operations center cost of \$1.7M to be set up off site for the duration of the project** (approx. 18 months). Temporary operations center for the department includes all apparatus and fire department personnel working out of tented areas and mobile structures off site.

Option 2: Renovation AND Addition at Existing Station

Construction Costs: \$13,379,012 | Total Project Costs: \$19,933,437

Sq. Footage: 22,000 SF

This option **requires approx. \$1 - \$1.5M acquisition of the property to the rear of the station**, including **costs associated with relocation of all tenants** in that building. Additionally, this option **requires temporary operations center cost of \$1.7M to be set up off site for the duration of the project** (approx. 18 months). Temporary operations center for the department includes all apparatus and fire department personnel working out of tented areas and mobile structures off site.

Option 3: New Station at New Location (99 Church Street)

Construction Costs: \$20,844,145 | Total Project Costs: \$26,044,759

Sq. Footage: 25,000 SF

This is the project that was selected for consideration by the Select Board and the project that voters will weigh in on at the April Local Election and the May Town Meeting. This option also does not require additional costs for temporary operations or additional property acquisition costs.

The key features of the project include:

- Dedicated Decontamination Spaces
- 6 Apparatus Bays
- Outdoor Training Area
- Safer work and living environment for employees
- Landscape, Fencing & Retaining Wall for Buffer to Abutting Properties
- Supports existing personnel + allows modest growth of the department

A list of evaluation criteria used by the Fire Station Building Committee is included here: programming footprint, site frontage/ramp area, adequate fit for apparatus and vehicles, parking and public access, open space and outdoor training area, location and response time, residential impact, environmental restrictions, demolition, eminent domain, existing program displacement, ownership/property acquisition, zoning variance, temporary operations cost, demolition cost, health/safety, structure, construction cost, land acquisition cost.

Full presentation from the Architect for all three options is available on WRPS here:

<https://youtu.be/8IPO17C2SG0>

Where is the new station going to be located?

99 Church Street, Rockland, MA 02370. The station will continue to be centrally located, but will be moved to another, larger town-owned parcel to accommodate the size of the proposed station (25,000 Sq. Ft. – a 22% reduction from the project proposed in 2023).

What is the impact on my tax bill if this project passes and the debt exclusion passes?

The total project cost is \$26.1M. The new project reflects a 21% reduction in cost, from \$33.2M to \$26.1M.

The average annual single family home (\$517,000) property tax increase is approximately \$223/year or \$.61/day for the life of the debt (20-30 years). Once the bonds are paid off in 30 years, then that tax increase will disappear. For homes valued greater than \$517,000 the impact will be more; and for homes valued less, the tax increase will be less. Please visit the tax impact calculator on the website to learn the specific impacts for your tax bill:

<https://www.rockland-ma.gov/595/Fire-Station-Project-Calculator-New>

If the fire station is approved and after the project begins, the price increases, does that request for additional funding have to go back to voters? Is the debt exclusion capped at the specific amount that is voted on?

The Town Meeting Warrant Article will have the number \$26.1 million, so the project budget will be limited to that amount. Per State Law, the election ballot question will not reference any specific number. That's because while the total principal amount the Town will be authorized to borrow per Town Meeting will be \$26.1M, the total amount that the Town will raise in taxes will be higher due to interest costs and bond issuance fees. These costs are difficult to predict in exact numbers ahead of time. However, since the Town Meeting vote will limit the amount of principal to \$26.1M, the project will need to stick with that maximum budget at \$26.1M. If costs increase so much that the project cannot be constructed at that cost, the Town would be required to either scale back the project or go back to voters to ask for additional funding.

What will happen with the current station if the new one is approved? Will voters be asked at a future town meeting for permission to sell it?

Voters will not be voting on the future of the current fire station at the upcoming Annual Town Meeting on 5/5/25. However, if the fire station building project passes at the ballot and at Town Meeting in May 2025, then the Select Board will later discuss the future of the current station on Union Street.

The Town Administrator's recommendation will be to seek voter approval at the May 2026 Annual Town Meeting to get authorization to sell and redevelop the property. If the Select Board agrees to do that, and if Town Meeting approves it, then the Town would later issue a formal Request for Proposals (RFP) for the sale & redevelopment of the property, which could include

certain (yet to be determined) preferences for development. The goal would be to sell it to a developer that would redevelop it per our local Zoning Bylaws (e.g., commercial on the first floor, such as a restaurant/pub, and residential above) to get the property 'back on the tax rolls.' If all that were to happen, then per State law the Town could deposit the proceeds of the sale of the property into a "sinking fund," where the funds could then be used to offset the cost of other debt approved by the voters. That would save taxpayers money by reducing the amount of local property taxes that have to pay for approved debt for things like the fire station, roads, schools, etc.

What is the earliest that residents could expect to see an impact on their taxes should the building project and debt exclusion pass? When will the full debt exclusion increase start?

The full debt exclusion increase would likely start in FY27.

How do you determine the average single family home value?

Per State Law, the single-family home value is calculated based on the Town of Rockland Assessed Value, not current market conditions (like Zillow).

What is a Prop 2 ½ Debt Exclusion?

Voters will be asked to vote on a Prop 2 ½ Debt Exclusion at the April Local Election (April 12, 2025) to fund the project. Additional information about Prop 2 1/2 is available here:

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLWDTtSs7wOIIM3_6oschrXyP8ClyFoKv8

Is there a separate approval process for the proposed Fire Department Ladder Truck?

Yes. The Town of Rockland will be seeking separate voter approval for a new Fire Department Ladder Truck at the same Annual Town Election and Annual Town Meeting. The average single family property tax increase for the \$2 million Ladder Truck would be a one-time cost of approximately \$300, or \$0.82/day, for one year only, before the building project tax increase occurs.

Both Fire Station Project and Fire Department Ladder Truck will require separate Election Ballot and Town Meeting approval.