

Architect estimates cost at \$22.3M for new Windsor public safety complex

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WINDSOR — A new public safety complex will cost \$22.3 million, according to the Kaestle Boos architectural firm's conceptual design.

The town has been discussing making significant changes to its Public Safety Complex for several months due to concerns about space and the modernity of the building. The conceptual design by Kaestle Boos includes the construction of a new \$6.8 million fire station and \$6.7 in renovations to the police station.

There are also a number of cost items associated with the entire project, such as land acquisition and building technology.

The 40-year-old complex, at 340 Bloomfield Ave., is home to the headquarters of the town's fire, police, and emergency medical services. One thing is clear — space is tight.

"The word that comes to mind is appalling," Councilman William Herzfeld said. "Appallingly old. It's inadequate for what the police need to do."

The complex lacks adequate accessibility facilities for handicapped visitors and prisoners. It also lacks sufficient storage space, dedicated meeting places, public restrooms, easy access areas for vehicles and equipment, as well as up-to-date holding cells, prisoner processing, locker rooms, and evidence storage.

Police Capt. Thomas LePore said many rooms in the building are multi-purpose, which he said can be problematic.

"There isn't a really good way to interview citizens or victims of crime in a private, secluded manner," he explained. "Many of these areas have a lot going on most of the time."

Separate juvenile detention

LePore said one area of need is a secluded juvenile detention area.

"State law requires that juveniles who are under arrest have to be substantially out of sight and sound of any adult prisoner," he said. "So we cannot use our cellblock because it is an adult cellblock. We do arrest a great deal of kids from 16 to 18."

The cellblock is very small, which can be a problem if there is a rowdy prisoner who needs to be extracted. None of the cells are accessible to the handicapped or equipped for mentally ill prisoners.

"People unfortunately sometimes want to harm themselves," LePore said. Just last week, he said, a prisoner attempted self-harm and ripped a lighting fixture from a wall.

Kaestle Boos' design includes a juvenile detention area substantially removed from the adult cellblock as well as a cell accessible to the handicapped, a larger dispatch center, and multiple, private interview rooms.

The fire station would be rebuilt completely to meet space and storage needs under the conceptual design.

"There is no dedicated work or storage space," Town Manager Peter Souza said.

The apparatus bay, which houses the fire trucks, is also where volunteers store their equipment. When the trucks are in the bay, there is only about 5 feet of space around them. Standard spacing is about 9 feet.

'Bumping into each other'

"When we get a call, the firefighters are bumping into each other trying to get their equipment and get on the trucks," Fire Chief Bill Lewis said.

Brian Solywoda, the Kaestle Boos architect working on the project, said the design concept reflects the space

needed in the apparatus bay for the department to function efficiently.

"There is a free and clean path between the equipment and the people getting on the truck," Solywoda said.

Equipment would be stored on a mezzanine level to ensure the apparatus bay would be clear and easily accessible, Solywoda said.

The Emergency Medical Services building is in good shape, Souza said. But space is still an issue.

EMS frequently runs classes and is looking for more classroom space to accommodate more students.

It also wants a larger vehicle apparatus bay as it has eight vehicles and space for five in the bay.

Under the conceptual design, all the facilities will be expanded, which will require the town to acquire land to accommodate the construction and renovation.

The town looked into buying a privately owned 1.42-acre parcel of land adjacent to the safety complex, but the owners weren't interested in selling.

Although the town can use the power of eminent domain to acquire land, it wants to make the purchase without using that power, according to Souza.

The next discussion on the conceptual design will take place at the Public Building Committee meeting at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, May 26, in the fire station conference room at the Public Safety Complex. The committee will provide more feedback to the architects and look into alternative ideas. After this meeting, Souza said, the concept will be taken to the Town Council, which will decide the timing, financing, and cost of the project.

