

TOWN AND VILLAGE SPECIAL MEETINGS – JANUARY 21, 2008

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

VILLAGE FLOOR VOTE (Monday, January 21, 7 p.m., TBPS Gymnasium): “Shall the Village of Waterbury convey to the Town of Waterbury a parcel of land located on River Road in Waterbury depicted on a site plan dated November 2007, prepared by Charles Grenier, Consulting Engineer, PC?” [If this article is passed, the town can seek federal authorization to replace 3.1 acres of recreational lands at Dac Rowe Field, and 0.5 acres at Hope Davey Park, with 13.2 acres of recreational lands at the Ice Center.]

TOWN FLOOR VOTE (Monday, January 21, 7 p.m., TBPS Gymnasium): “Shall the Town of Waterbury accept, assume, and succeed to the right, title, and interest of all assets and liabilities of the Village of Waterbury dedicated to and used by the Waterbury Village Fire Department?” [The purpose of this article is to decide if the town wants to merge fire departments.]

VILLAGE AUSTRALIAN BALLOT (Wednesday, January 23, from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., at the Municipal Offices): “Shall the Village of Waterbury amend its Charter by deleting the text indicated in brackets . . . [pertaining to the village fire department].” [The purpose of this vote is to decide if the village wants to merge fire departments.]

What is the purpose of the public meetings and votes scheduled for January 21st?

On January 21st, after an information session, the village will vote on whether to transfer land at the Ice Center to the town, and the town will vote on whether to merge the fire departments. The village will have a separate vote, on January 23rd, on the fire department merger.

What will happen if the village votes to transfer land to the town, but the Town rejects merger of the fire departments?

The village trustees recommend that the village vote be contingent upon: (1) the town’s agreeing to merge fire departments and (2) the federal government’s approval of recreational land replacement. These conditions will be included in the motion to pass the village article.

What will happen if the town votes to merge the fire departments, but the village doesn’t?

The town select board members recommend that the town vote be contingent upon the village’s approval of merger. This condition will be included in the motion to pass the town article.

Why do the town and village have separate fire departments?

The Waterbury Village Fire Department was established by village charter in 1882. The Town Fire Department was established in 1958 as a private Fire Department due to the long response times from the village. It became a municipal Fire Department in 1985. Since 2000, both departments train and respond to all calls together.

Why do town and village need new fire stations?

The problems with the town station are numerous: rotting walls, carbon monoxide issues, leaky roof, mold, high energy costs, ice blocks in winter, inadequate public access, inadequate parking, inadequate electrical system, lack of clearance room for trucks, and lack of adequate storage. The village station likewise suffers from numerous problems: crumbling walls, carbon monoxide issues, asbestos, leaky roof, inadequate electrical system, lack of clearance room for trucks, and lack of adequate storage – among others.

What is the Public Safety Building Committee?

The Public Safety Building Committee was formed two years ago by the village trustees and town

select board. The members include the public works director, the town and village fire chiefs, the village police chief, and representatives from the fire departments, the trustees, the select board, and the public. The committee developed design requirements for two new stations, researched potential replacement costs, and educated the public on conditions at the existing fire stations.

What were the Public Safety Building Committee’s recommendations?

On October 10, 2007, the Public Safety Building Committee presented its findings at a public meeting at St. Leo’s Hall. The Committee evaluated 21 sites in the village and 13 sites in the town. The Committee recommended against a single fire-station option because of significantly longer response times and minimal cost savings. In the village, the Committee recommended the following sites as the top options: the existing fire station site, Dac Rowe Field, the corner of South Main Street and Park Row, and the Johnson & Dix lot on South Main Street. In the town, the Committee recommended the existing fire station site, a lot on Maple Street, a lot on Guptil Road, and a lot on Route 100. Not all lots are for sale.

What sites do the Village Trustees and Town Select Board recommend?

In the village, the Village Trustees and Town Select Board jointly recommend locating a new fire station at Dac Rowe Field. This option will allow the town and village, with the input of the public, to develop the existing fire station site into a vibrant commercial and residential center. In the town, the trustees and select board recommend building a new fire station on the existing Hope Davey lot and expanding the parking behind the station.

If a new fire station is built at Dac Rowe Field, what will happen to the ball fields?

If the proposed fire station is built at Dac Rowe Field, the unlit ball field and junior soccer field closest to Main Street will be lost. The fields would be replaced by a new ball field at the Ice Center. If the village approves the land transfer, we anticipate public meetings on the design of the new field(s).

If a new fire station is built at Dac Rowe Field, what will happen to the community gardens?

The community gardens will remain behind the existing library site.

What is the estimated cost of building a new fire station in Waterbury Center?

In 2007, the estimated cost of a 9,472 square foot building at the existing site was \$1,592,000. The cost of a 6,830 square foot building, which would be a satellite station rather than a full station, was \$1,140,800. Both of these options include a new on-site septic system and relocating the basketball court. No decision has been made yet as to what size building will be recommended for the town fire station.

What is the estimated cost of building a new fire station in the village?

In 2007, the estimated cost of constructing a new village fire station at the Dac Rowe Site, plus the cost of building a new ball field next to the Ice Center, and re-locating the road leading to the Ice Center, was \$2,458,660. This cost would be offset by selling the existing fire station. An appraiser has valued the existing fire station lot at \$370,000, resulting in a net cost of **\$2,088,660** for the Dac Rowe proposal. The estimated cost of building a new village fire station at the existing location was **\$1,932,160**. Given inflation, these figures are likely to increase by the time the fire station project goes to a bond vote. They are provided here for comparison purposes only.

ESTIMATED COST IN 2007 OF NEW VILLAGE STATION

New Village Station - Dac Rowe Site	
Fire Station Construction	\$ 1,932,160
Other Costs	
Furnish/Place/Compact Fill	211,000
Storm Water System	50,000
Ball Field at Ice Center	83,500
Relocate Road at Ice Center	150,000
Floodway Permitting	7,000
New Police Dept Garage	<u>25,000</u>
	2,458,660
Less Sale of Existing Lot	<u>[370,000]</u>
Net Cost	\$ 2,088,660
New Village Station - Existing Site	
Fire Station Construction	\$ 1,932,160

Why do the Trustees and Select Board recommend merger of the village and town fire departments?

By merging the two fire departments into a single town department, the village and town would eliminate the "governance" issues surrounding construction of a new village station, such as who would bond for the station and who would own the station. Since 2000, both the village and town fire departments have trained and responded to all calls together, making merger a logical choice from an operational point of view as well.

If the village and town fire departments merge, will my taxes go up?

Assuming merger of the two departments, the tax rate in the town related to fire services would increase only minimally, from 3.9 cents in 2007 to 4.3 cents in 2008. On a home worth \$200,000, this translates into an increase in fire-related taxes from \$78 to \$86. Using budget figures from 2007, the town would acquire \$127,295 in village operating costs as a result of merger; however, this cost would be offset by (1) the elimination of an intermunicipal

transfer from the town to village, to pay for fire services, in the amount of \$44,880; (2) the transfer of revenues from the village to the town totaling \$36,375, made up of payments from the towns of Duxbury and Moretown for fire services; and (3) the retirement of \$31,320 in annual debt payments paid by the town for a ladder truck. (This debt would go away even without merger of the fire departments.)

In the village, the overall tax rate would decrease by about 4 cents if merger of the fire departments is approved.

COMBINED 2007 FIRE DEP'T BUDGET

2007 Fire Department Budgets¹	
Merged Expenses	
Village Fire Department	\$ 127,295
Town Fire Department	77,740
Rescue Truck Debt	<u>5,135</u>
	\$ 210,170
Merged Revenues	
Waterbury Ambulance	\$ 3,515
Town of Duxbury	34,075
Town of Moretown	<u>2,300</u>
Total	[\$ 39,890]
Net Merged Cost of Fire Depts.	\$ 170,280

Does not include debt paid off in 2007.

If the town builds two new full-size stations, what would be the impact on my taxes?

Assuming a \$3.7 million bond over 20 years, and the current town grand list, the tax rate would go up about 8.5 cents in the most expensive year of paying principal and interest. On a home worth \$200,000, taxes would go up in the most expensive year by about \$170. This figure is likely to change with inflation. Please note that the article before the voters is NOT a bond vote.

If the Town already owns the fields at Dac Rowe and Hope Davey, why does the village need to transfer land to the town for new stations?

The Rowe and Davey fields were built with federal money, and consequently the town must replace any recreational lands taken by new construction. The town does not currently own any lands that it could dedicate to recreational use; the village does. The proposed fire stations and potential future library would occupy 3.6 acres of town recreation lands. To compensate, the village would transfer 13.2 acres of recreation lands to the town, and the town would build at least one new ball field on the former village land.

Why is a potential future library included in the Dac Rowe site plan?

The trustees and the select board are NOT asking people to approve the construction, expansion or location of a new library. The town cannot build a fire station on the Dac Rowe site unless the federal government approves the town's application to replace recreational lands. The state has advised the town that the town's application to the federal government should include both short-term and long-term plans. Given the library commissioners' desire to build on the recreational lands behind the current library site, the select board and trustees felt it was prudent to include the library commissioners' proposal in the application package to the federal government.

