

**Nanuet Fire District**  
**Proposed Firehouse Project**

**Presented to the**  
**Bardonia Civic Association**  
**January 21, 2013**

**The Nanuet Fire House Project-** The Nanuet Fire District currently provides fire protection to the residents of Nanuet and Bardonia from 2 stations. The main station is located on Prospect Street in Nanuet and is owned by the Nanuet Fire District. A smaller sub-station is located in Bardonia and is owned by the Nanuet Fire Engine Company. The main station was built in 1944 with 5 additions; three in the 1960's to accommodate fire trucks and two in the 1980's for storage and offices. The main firehouse has become too small and routinely compromises operations, particularly with regards to safety. The building does not meet current building codes nor the American with Disabilities Act. When it was built in the 40's and 60's the fire apparatus were all much smaller. Today's NFPA standards and regulations require dramatically larger apparatus to comply with these standards. Truck bays that were designed to house fire trucks that were 8 feet high and 25 feet long now hold trucks that are almost 10 feet high and 34 feet long, and weigh 4 to 5 times as much.

The current firehouse has reached the point where we are spending money just to keep it operational. The Fire District was faced with a decision: Remodel and refurbish, or rebuild? The Prospect Street building and site are often flooded during major rain storms due to poor drainage and structural settlement has occurred in the westerly additions due to poor soils. Most of the building's systems such as heating, lighting, air conditioning, windows, doors, standby power and plumbing fixtures are either in need of replacement, not energy efficient, or both.

After consulting with engineers, architects, and builders the Fire Commissioners decided that rebuilding would be the most fiscally responsible decision. The Battaglia Lanza Architectural Group of Fishkill, NY was hired 7 years ago to review the current building and to design a new building on our current site that would not only serve the needs of the Nanuet Fire District now but also the needs of the District and the community for at least the next 50 plus years.

Commercial property that would be suitable for the construction of a new firehouse in Nanuet is sparse so our first plan and design was to tear down and rebuild at our current location. During this time we would need to construct a temporary firehouse in the vicinity of Prospect Street. After discussing the project and finding an area to house a temporary firehouse hard to come by we went in search of a piece of property that would be large enough to construct a building that was code compliant, allow for the future, be in the vicinity of our current location and be affordable. We were able to acquire a piece of property on Old Middletown Rd. that in the past had not been available. The fire district took ownership of the property in August of 2012.

Unfortunately we are faced with doing this project in some very uncertain economic times. We know that times are tough, but this is one issue that simply cannot wait longer. With the approval to construct a new Fire Station we can ensure that in the future we will have a building that will safely house our firefighters and their equipment so that they can continue to fight fires, respond to emergencies, and save lives in our community. We propose to fund the cost of this project

through tax free bonds that would be paid back over a 15-25 year period. The Fire District intends to apply for a FEMA Station Construction Grant to help offset the cost of this project. Additionally, we are in pursuit of financial incentives from the New York State Energy Research and Development Agency (NYSERDA) for the energy efficient features that have been designed into the project.

We have looked into postponing this project as have Fire Commissioners before us. However, after assessing historical construction cost increases we have all concluded that construction costs will only increase the longer we wait.

### **Construction History of the Firehouse**

Original 2-story firehouse, constructed in 1943, 3996 square feet

1-story southerly addition, constructed in 1960, 1826 square feet

1-story westerly apparatus bay addition, constructed in 1965, 2405 square feet

1-story westerly apparatus bay addition, constructed in 1968, 907 square feet

1-story post office building (circa 1950), acquired in 1989, 2644 square feet

2-story addition (built between the former post office and the firehouse), constructed in 1989, 1511 square feet

Total area of existing firehouse – 13289 square feet

### **What Are The Current Conditions**

**Poor to Non-Existing Training Areas-** Currently the only area available for classroom type training doubles as a meeting room. Additional mandates that have been placed on the fire service require more room and open space for training. The new design still calls for the meeting room area to be used as a classroom when necessary but is designed to allow for the use of today's electronic teaching media.

**Apparatus Bay Sizes-** A majority of the apparatus bay areas were built in 1943 and 1963 and are now too small to house modern firefighting equipment. When the apparatus bays were built the size of the typical apparatus were much smaller than they are today. The bay doors are currently 10' high and 12' for the ladder truck. These height limitations limit how our fire apparatus are built and require costly customization. Although all of the apparatus met the NFPA standards when they were built they were limited in design.

**Restroom/Locker Rooms and ADA Compliance-** There is a lack of privacy for firefighters (women and men must alternate their use and otherwise share common locker room and rest room facilities). The only designated restroom for women is on the second floor. The age and size of the building also prohibit the installation of needed items such as showers and dressing areas for firefighting gear that are not in the vicinity of moving trucks, as well as male and female locker rooms for the physical fitness area. Also, none of the bathrooms meet ADA requirements. The second floor restrooms are not handicap accessible due to the absence of an

elevator. The first floor bathrooms have steps. None of the restrooms are sized for wheelchairs and / or walkers, nor do they include fixtures that are accessible to the physically disabled. There is no handicap access to the second floor where the meeting rooms and offices are located. Moreover, the lower level of the firehouse is comprised of several different floor elevations that cannot be traversed by those in wheelchairs or those with other physical disabilities.

**Building Utilities-** The building is in need of electrical updates, windows, insulation upgrades, kitchen upgrades, and added restroom/shower facilities. The HVAC systems are old, inefficient, and require constant repair.

**Flooding Issues-** For many years the existing firehouse and surrounding area have been flooded during heavy rainstorms. The most damaging storm was Hurricane Floyd in 1999 that left over 3 feet of water inside of the firehouse. Most heavy storms will produce some type of flooding in the area in front of the firehouse and in the rear parking lot area. These floods have left many parts of the building damaged (doors, walls, floors, offices etc). More importantly, the safety of our firefighters is jeopardized and their response time is hindered when they must wade and drive through water as they respond to emergency scenes.

**Building Settling Issues-** Soil samples and borings on the site have showed that the soil beneath the building has a tremendous amount of peat, which has settled. Structural walls have cracked, shifted, and settled. Parts of the floor in the bays have also dropped causing potential tripping hazards. Doors have racked and shifted, resulting in the need for constant adjustments and repairs.

**Equipment Storage -** Storage space for spare equipment, portable pumps, generators, hose and other equipment is extremely limited. Most firefighter turnout gear racks are located next to apparatus, which poses safety hazards to the firefighters when trucks are entering or exiting the bays.

**Lack of Apron-** The apparatus bays open directly onto Prospect St. With the increased use of the commuter railroad, traffic and pedestrian traffic have significantly increased in the area. This has increased the hazards that apparatus operators must contend with as they exit the firehouse. Additionally, for maintenance of the apparatus (washing, cleaning, raising the cabs, weekly apparatus checks), the apparatus must be pulled out of the building and part of the street is blocked off. There have not been any major accidents, nor firefighters struck, but the firefighters are exposed to this possibility.

**Building and Fire Code Problems-** Building codes are intended to protect the occupants of buildings, the building's contents, neighboring properties, and the environment among other things. The existing building does not comply with numerous requirements of New York State's current Codes. Generally, such conditions consist of the following:

- The various uses and fire hazard areas of the building are not separated by fire and smoke barriers.
- The building is not protected with sprinkler and other fire protection systems.
- Exits are inadequate in quantity and do not provide adequate protection from fire and smoke that could exist in adjacent rooms. Stairs and floor level changes have unsafe geometry and inadequate railings.
- The building is not accessible to the physically disabled.
- The lack of insulation, weather stripping, and sealants results in excessive heat gain / loss as well as infiltration.
- The building does not resist flooding.
- Poor soils and inadequate foundations have been the cause for the structural degradation and settlement of slabs and walls.
- The existing structure was not designed to resist seismic loads, which is paramount in essential facilities such as firehouses.
- The electrical system does not comply with the National Electric Code.
- The mechanical systems do not comply with the Mechanical Code, Fuel Gas Code, or the Energy Conservation Construction Code.
- Plumbing systems do not comply with the Plumbing Code.

**Proposed Design-** The proposed design for the project will not only respond to the current needs and goals of the District, the Fire Company, and the community, but will also accommodate us for the next 50 plus years as best as we can anticipate those needs and goals from current data. Accordingly, the design will satisfy the following:

- The 23,296 square foot, two-story firehouse will meet the spatial and other requirements of our project program, which took us years to develop.
- The Prospect Street location is just over ½ an acre with most of the parking on the street. The new location is 2.1 acres and will allow for all parking to be off of the street.
- The building's form is coordinated with the site's configuration, which will allow us to park fire trucks outside without affecting traffic or necessary lines of sight. The arrangement will also provide physical and visual relief to truck operators as they exit the firehouse and enter the street.
- The size and arrangement of the firematic spaces will accommodate the larger trucks and the additional equipment that we need in order to provide safe, quick, and quality emergency services to the community. The types, sizes, and arrangements of other spaces will facilitate the administrative, operational, and training functions of the District and Fire Company, as well as provide space for community use.
- The building can be used as an emergency shelter during disaster events.

- The traditional style of the building will contribute to the Town's revitalization and development goals for the community.
- Given the type of construction that is proposed the new building should continue to be an asset to the taxpayers for more than 50 years.
- A state of the art communications facility will handle anticipated upgrades required by national emergency management laws.
- It will include a much needed training facility and meeting room for officers and volunteers.
- Increased storage room.
- Improved efficiency in energy conservation and climate control.
- Appropriate number of restroom facilities for volunteers.

**Construction and Design Costs-** The preliminary construction cost estimate for the new firehouse on Prospect Street was approximated at \$11.9 million based upon receiving bids in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of 2011. However, due to the acquisition of the Old Middletown Road property we will have to defer the bidding further into the future, 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of 2014 which will necessitate an updated estimate.

**Financing & Bond Issue Procedure and Vote-** Once a final budget has been determined by the Board of Fire Commissioners, the Fire District's legal counsel will work with bond counsel and a financial advisory service to assist the Board in preparing a resolution and determine debt service costs so that a proposition can be voted upon by the taxpayers at a special election in late summer or early fall of 2014.

On the following pages you will find some information regarding the Nanuet Fire District, the Nanuet Fire Engine Company, and this project. We welcome any questions, comments, and / or suggestions that you may have. If you would like further information you can contact us at:

Nanuet Fire District	845-623-8318 (phone & fax)
PO Box 119	or e-mail
Nanuet, NY 10954	commissioners@nanuetfd.org

Fire District meetings are held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of each month at 7:30pm at the Nanuet Fire House on Prospect St.

## **Who and what are the Nanuet Fire District & the Nanuet Fire Company**

### **What is the difference between the Nanuet Fire Company and the Nanuet Fire District?**

The Nanuet Volunteer Fire Company is a not-for-profit entity and has no governmental status. Members of the company elect the executive and firematic officers. Any resident of the District can apply for membership. The relationship between a fire district and fire company is somewhat analogous to a school system. A school board would be similar to the board of commissioners, the superintendent and principals are comparable to a fire chief and the officers, and the teachers and support staff function like the firefighters. One large difference is that the firefighters, fire chiefs, officers, and commissioners all serve without compensation.

### **What is a fire district?**

A fire district is a political subdivision of the State, formed for the protection of persons and property in a geographic area.

### **Who is responsible for the operations of our Fire District?**

There are five (5) Commissioners elected by the registered voters residing within the geographic boundaries of the Fire District. Each Commissioner is elected to a 5-year staggered term so that one Commissioner is elected each year. The Treasurer and Secretary are appointed by the Board each year and are paid a part-time salary for their services. The Board establishes policies and approves the annual budget.

### **What services are provided by the District?**

The Fire District provides fire and emergency services along with fire prevention programs to the community. The District maintains a full complement of fire and rescue equipment that must be regularly inspected, maintained, and replaced with new equipment as emergency service demands increase.

### **Who pays for the District?**

Under the laws of the State of New York, the Nanuet Fire District receives its operating budget from property tax assessed on all real property within the district that is not tax exempt.

### **How do I pay for the District?**

As a special district, the Fire District's taxes are assessed with other property taxes, such as town, county, sewer, refuse, lighting, and ambulance districts.

### **Who sets the tax rate?**

The Fire District is required each year to adopt a budget. The tax rate is established based upon that budget and the value of the taxable properties in the District. The tax monies provide funds for fire fighting, fire apparatus, equipment, insurance, physical examinations, service award program, construction, and maintenance of the fire station. The tax rate is set each October based upon the budget submitted Board of Fire Commissioners.

**Who is paid for Fire Fighter Services and the administration of the District?**

No one. The five members of the Board of Fire Commissioners, the firematic and executive officers of the Fire Company, and the firefighters do not receive any direct compensation in the form of salary or tax waivers. There is a small retirement program called LOSAP (Length of Service Award Program). The Service Awards Program is a small retirement plan, which allows a firefighter to accumulate credit toward monthly payments upon reaching the age of 55. The individual must meet an annual minimum requirement in terms of training and fire fighting as per NYS legislation in order for that year to be credited for retirement. There is a five-year minimum for vesting.

**What are donations to the Fire Company for?**

There are a number of functions that require some funding that is not covered by tax dollars. The money from your donations pays for special insurance, scholarships and organizational expenses not related to firefighting activities that tax monies cannot be used for. An example would be, in anticipation of the celebration of our 150th anniversary the Company used a portion of last year's fund drive proceeds to purchase the Anniversary Flags that are on the street lights along Main Street.

**Current Fire District Budget and Tax Rate**

Nanuet Fire District 2013 Budget \$1,128,000 (.9% increase from 2012)

Nanuet Fire District Tax Rate (per \$1,000 of assessed value) \$1.44

**Surrounding Fire District Tax Rates(per \$1000 assessed value)**

Rockland Lake: \$1.27

Valley Cottage: \$2.32

Congers: \$2.26

New City: \$1.22

West Nyack: \$1.26

Central Nyack: \$4.90

East Spring Valley: \$2.64

**Other Area Tax Rates and Budgets**

Clarkstown Central School District tax rate (per \$1000 assessed value for 2012 was \$46.78

Clarkstown Library tax rate (per \$1000 assessed value) for 2012 was \$1.93

Nanuet School District tax rate (per \$1000 assessed value) for 2012 was \$89.51

Nanuet Library tax rate (per \$1000 assessed value) for 2012 was \$4.08

**Examples of Taxes in Nanuet/Bardonia for 2011**

Rt. 304 Bardonia Non Homestead Parcel assessed at \$366,000 paid \$527 for fire tax

Rt. 59 Non Homestead Parcel assessed at \$1.1 million paid \$1600 for fire tax

West Palisades Ave Homestead Parcel assessed at \$143,600 paid \$209 for fire tax

Renee Lane Homestead Parcel assessed at \$172,00 paid \$248 for fire tax



### **Some Information about the Nanuet Area**

- Nanuet and Valley Cottage are the sections of the Town that are projected to experience the greatest growth in terms of the number of households, indicating the continued attractiveness of these Town hamlets. \*
- Nanuet experienced tremendous growth over the 1990s, indicating the exceptional quality of life and overall attractiveness of the community.\*
- Nanuet is forecasted to grow by an additional 10.3% through 2012\*
- Median Housing Values: 2009 Nanuet / Bardonia \$428,300\*\*

\*Town of Clarkstown Economic Development Strategy Report November 2008

\*\* Rockland County MLS