

Greenwich NW Fire Station Issue

Greenwich RTM members and committees did extensive study and due diligence regarding proposed NW fire station throughout the budgetary process before voting on the issue. At the May 9, 2016 budget meeting, RTM overwhelmingly voted against funding a NW fire station by a vote of 119 – 69 – 4. The RTM also voted overwhelmingly to reject the purchase of the proposed Fairview CC site by a vote of 121 – 60 – 3. The BET has also voted against funding a NW fire station several times in prior budget years.

District 10 RTM members and NW Greenwich Association, are now trying to overturn the RTM decision with an emotional appeal and campaign without regard to addressing the many facts and considerations that went into making the RTM decision.

A pamphlet distributed by D-10 makes the false claim that Insurance Services Office, (ISO), rates Greenwich as deficient. Greenwich was in fact notified of an improved ISO Public Protection Classification rating of 3/3y in January, 2016. (Ratings run Class 1-10 with Class 10 being lowest) The new rating went into effect on May 1, 2016. The new ISO rating upgrade was reviewed and discussed during RTM consideration of NW fire station. A rating of 3/3y is a very good, even excellent rating of Greenwich Fire Department. ISO has rated 48,754 fire departments with only 2.44% (1,192), of these fire departments having a rating higher than Greenwich. Our ISO rating would be even higher if 40% of the rating were not based on water related issues and flow testing. The water portion of an ISO rating is not improved or addressed by building a new fire station. The upgraded ISO rating in 2016 should help reduce insurance premiums as policies come up for renewal.

The 2016 ISO rating confirms that Greenwich has an excellent, well equipped fire department with a dedicated force of well trained, career and volunteer firefighters.

The problem Greenwich faces is too many of our firehouses are in the wrong places along town borders reducing coverage efficiency and extending response times in many station areas. Fire stations need to be properly situated well within its coverage area at a location with sufficient and multiple roadway access to all sections of its district. Site selection should only take place after careful study and consideration of these factors. The proposed 1241 King St site, at Fairview CC, is located too close along NY border at an isolated location with extremely poor roadway access into all parts of NW Greenwich. The site is completely blocked off to its East by extensive land tracts of Fairview CC, Griff Golf Course and Nature Conservancy land. The site has no direct access to Riversville Rd which runs right up the middle of NW Greenwich. Cliffdale Rd is nearest intersection and has a steep downgrade that is unsuited for a fire response route, even when not subject to winter or freezing weather conditions.

Fairview site has half of its radial coverage area over NY State rather than NW Greenwich. The site location only adds to Greenwich's problem of having our fire stations in wrong places near town borders. The best practice of locating a fire station

near major crossroads, or intersections extending into the coverage area is completely ignored here. Chief Siecienski knows this and has even said so in the past. Selection of a site for NW station has unfortunately become a “Just put it anywhere” proposition, without regard to factors and best practices so important in locating a permanent fire station.

NW station proponents talk about their lacking fire coverage as if Round Hill Volunteer Fire Station on Old Mill Rd doesn't exist, or provide any coverage at all to the area. This does a great disservice in recognizing the time and effort put in by all the volunteers who serve their NW community. Round Hill Station receives an annual town supported payment of \$140,000, and is undergoing a multi year building upgrade that the Town is contributing \$1.1 million towards. Round Hill plans to match the Town amount through fund raising to meet the total cost of the building upgrade.

What Greenwich Fire Chief Siecienski has said about NW fire proposal in past: Chief Siecienski has been very vocal making his pitch to promote a NW station without delving into any inconvenient facts and costs. The Chief has advocated adding up to 26 additional firefighter personnel in different plans, all without regard to any costs, offsets or departmental operating efficiencies. During a BET Budget Committee, Dept Budget Review FY 2013 meeting, Chief Siecienski is cited in meeting minutes of 2/24/12, as saying, “that the King St location is very close to the NY State border and half the radial coverage is in NY”. Siecienski also said, “that a better and preferred location would be a site at John St and Riversville Rd near the Audubon.” Siecienski added that his “long term goal is to have 5 fire stations responding to fire related emergencies.” (This does not count our 2 volunteer stations)

Adding a NW fire station would be our 7th Town responding station in addition to the 2 volunteer stations at Round Hill and Banksville. Staffing a NW station with 3 firefighters would require adding 12 more firefighters to the department with its annual cost. Four firefighters are required for each station's staff position to maintain 24/7 shift coverage. Staffing for a 4 firefighter station would require adding 16 more firefighters. If Chief Siecienski were to instead, attain his stated goal of 5 responding stations, the 4 firefighter engines he wants could be added town wide, without adding any more firefighters or increased operating costs.

What Allen Williams has said about NW fire proposal in past: Allen Williams is President of Northwest Greenwich Association and a former volunteer firefighter. In a Greenwich Post article of 4/12/12 on page 3A, Williams “admitted that he has had some reservations about the King St proposal as well. (original 1327 King St site by Griff Golf Course) Williams also said “he personally feels a station on Riversville Rd might allow for a better response for the entire area.”

Proposed NW station site at Fairview CC is located near NY border and 1 mile further south from NW Greenwich at 1241 King St. Response times to much of NW Greenwich area would not see much improvement due to the lack of any intersecting roadway access at this site location.

Greenwich has not had an outside independent fire services study done since a 1989 Buracker & Associates study that is very outdated. The Buracker report did not study station response times, station call volumes or workload differences. The report noted that station response time records were not even kept in 1989. A response baseline of 5 minutes is outlined in the Buracker report for Greenwich use. The report noted Greenwich's narrow, winding back country roads have poor East and West access, and are not well suited to emergency response times. These conditions are made worse under adverse weather conditions. The Town should complete a new, outside and independent study of Greenwich Fire Department to properly assess all our needs and issues before making further costly fire services mistakes.

Response Time Issue

Chief Siecienski advocates establishing a 4 minute response time standard for the entire town. What the Chief doesn't mention is even our downtown stations are not all capable of achieving a 4 minute standard. It makes no sense to adopt unrealistic response time standards that are unachievable. The addition of a North St station in our back country has average response times around 7 minutes from this area station. The following data represents the average station response times to structure fires from 1/1/2009 through 4/19/2016.

Station	Name	Avg Response Time
1	Central	4:27:00
2	Cos Cob	5:24:00
3	Byram	4:32:00
4	Glenville	5:27:44
5	Sound Beach	5:18:00
6	Round Hill	7:25:46
8	North St	6:52:16

The 4 minute standard Chief Siecienski cites is NFPA 1710 from National Fire Protection Association NFPA 1710, first published in 2001. The Chief fails to mention that this 4 minute standard is not law mandated by any CT or Federal statutes or regulation. NFPA is a private non-profit trade membership organization with 75,000 individual members around the world, and more than 80 national trade and professional organizations. NFPA 1710 was passed on May 16, 2001, with International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) member support to include a 4 minute response standard and 4 firefighter engine staffing requirements. This has led to ongoing discussion and debate about meeting these two provisions since it would require municipalities to hire more firefighters, and build additional fire stations not otherwise necessary.

Westport, CT recently completed a comprehensive "Fire Department Assessment and Strategic Study" of their fire department by outside consultants in Sept 2017. The report fully addresses response time issues based on the varying characteristics of population density, call volume, roadways, etc., in the separate downtown, suburban and rural areas of a particular town. The study group recognizes that a one size fits all response time is not practical for an entire town for a number of reasons. The consultants recommend 5 minute response times for downtown areas, and 6 minutes or higher for suburban and

rural areas as the most practical, and attainable response baselines. These recommended response times are in line with average response times currently being reported and achieved in Greenwich. The Westport study further cites the Commission on Fire Accreditation International (CFAI) in its “Objectives of Coverage” manual, which places responsibility for determining “appropriate” response objectives on the locality.

Proposed Fairview CC Site

The proposed 1241 King St, (4.27 acre site), has an appraised 2015 market value of \$1.625 million, according to Town assessor. Assessor also reported prices for properties in this area were down -8% at the time. Fairview CC had an original asking price of \$2.4 million and the Town and Fairview tentatively agreed to a \$2 million purchase price. Many RTM members believe the town was going to overpay for this site in addition to previously mentioned location drawbacks for a NW fire station.

RTM members, especially new members not familiar with all the NW fire station facts and information, should make the effort to learn about this issue before giving their support to any attempt to reconsider the RTM decision on this issue.

September 2, 2018