

FAQs for the Proposed Rutland Town Public Safety Building at McKinley Avenue

1. Didn't the voters already approve this project? Why are we voting again?

Yes, Rutland Town voters approved the McKinley Avenue Fire and Police building at town meeting in March of 2022, for a total cost not to exceed \$4,146,563, with borrowing approval for up to \$2,154,550. When the bids came in February of this year—almost a year later-- the lowest bid was more than \$1.3 million over our cap. Because the project costs more, we are asking voters to approve the increased not-to-exceed number, and also to authorize us to borrow more money due to the increase costs.

2. So what are the new numbers for this fire and police facility?

We are asking voters' approval to spend not more than \$5,502,000. We took the lowest bid of \$5,462,000 from VMS, subtracted \$222,000 we saved by changing the vendor for the steel frame building, added a contingency of 5% of \$262,000, and came up with \$5,502,000.

3. Don't we have money to pay for this building without borrowing? What about those ARPA funds?

We have just under \$3 million on hand to pay toward the building, but will need to borrow the rest. We will use \$1,162,320 of our ARPA funds, \$1,314, 830 from our capital reserve account, \$350,000 from our 1% tax excess, and a grant from FEMA of \$157,000. That adds up to \$2,984,150 on hand.

We will need to borrow not more than \$2,517,850, the difference between \$5,502,000 and \$2,984,150. This new figure of \$2,517,850 is just \$363,300 over the borrowing limit of \$2,154,550 approved by voters in March of 2022.

4. Will we bond or borrow the money needed?

We are asking the voters to allow the Select Board to decide whether bonding or borrowing is a better deal for the town. If we bond, we are not able to repay the loan early—a lesson we learned with the Center Rutland Fire Station.

5. Why not wait to build this new public safety building? Prices may go down.

Construction costs are much more likely to go up than down. That's what has already happened in the year since voters first approved this project. While material costs have eased some, labor is more expensive and interest rates on borrowed money are constantly rising

6. Why do we need a new fire station at McKinley Avenue? We have a new one at Center Rutland.

We need two good firehouses. The fire department has nine vehicles we must house--five fire engines, a tanker and 3 support vehicles. The existing McKinley Avenue station has no sprinkler system, has only 3 bays—the new one will have 4—and is cramped. Modern firetrucks are larger than they were when McKinley station was built in the 1960s. The clearance is so low that the trucks must be filled up with water to compress the tires before backing into the station under the low beams. Firefighters' gear is on shelves at the back of the bays and hard to get to; there is little space to gear up.

7. Why are we putting the Rutland Town Police Department in this building?

We urgently need more space for our Police department, which is now crammed into one room at Town Hall. We have a police chief, a deputy chief, two full time officers—one is our school resource officer—a full time administrator, two part-time constables who are also sworn special officers, and our police dog Rooster. The police chief must work out of his home because there is not enough room at

Town Hall. Rooster stays in the patrol car in the parking lot. There is no place to hold suspects or interview witnesses. Our gun safe and evidence locker is in a supply closet.

The new facility at McKinley Avenue will provide offices for the patrol squad, for the chief and for our department administrator, as well as interview rooms, a secure evidence and weapons room, a holding cell and a sally port to safely transport prisoners. There is also an emergency management center which doubles as a meeting room for both departments.

8. Shouldn't the Police Department be closer to where crime is—at the south end of town?

By moving the Police Department to new quarters at McKinley Avenue, we are putting our officers closer to our larger residential areas and to our town school. As the homeless housing situation eases on the south end of town, we anticipate fewer police calls to that area.

9. Isn't the McKinley Avenue lot too small for this new public safety building?

No. Our architect has designed a building which fits on the lot. The old McKinley building will be demolished, our fire trucks temporarily housed elsewhere and the new station built on the site. A retaining wall on the east side of the lot will increase usable area. The site will have 21 parking spaces and will also contain an underground cistern to hold water for the sprinkler system.

10. Why don't we build a public safety building somewhere else—on a larger lot with water and sewer services?

The Town doesn't own any other suitable land. We are using what we have to reduce costs. If we build elsewhere, we would have to add the cost of land acquisition to our project, and we would delay the project while construction costs and interest rates are constantly rising.

11. Why don't we build a smaller facility, cut out some of the frills, and maybe get some grant funding?

There aren't any frills. We have already pared the project down from earlier design ideas—we've eliminated a fitness room and indoor parking for police cruisers, and we have changed the vendor for the steel frame building—this last change saved the town \$222,000. We are looking at other ways of trimming costs. We have obtained a \$157,000 grant for the emergency management center which doubles as a meeting room for police and fire departments. Our architect is proposing that we construct the sprinkler system reservoirs under the building to save costs. We have requested a Congressional earmark toward construction costs; if we are successful, this will greatly reduce what we must borrow. We will also try our best not to use the 5% contingency of \$262,000. This amount will cover unexpected and unforeseen changes and won't be used unless absolutely necessary.