



## **FIRE STATION 10 TOWN HALL MEETING**

**18 March 2019, 11:00 AM**

Charlotte County Chamber of Commerce, Englewood, FL

### **Representing Charlotte County:**

**Bill Truex**, Charlotte County Commissioner, **Diane Whidden**, Administrative Assistant. **Chief Bill Van Helden**, Director, Public Safety. **Deputy Chief Jason Fair**. **Todd Dunn**, Public Relations Manager. **Hal Daniels**, Senior Financial Analyst. **Gary Burdahl**, Project Manager (works with Architect & Construction Manager)

Presentation by **Travis S. Mortimer**, PE. Assistant Administrator responsible for capital projects.

Approx. 30+/- attending

### **TRAVIS MORTIMER: Presentation of PROJECT BACKGROUND\_OPERATIONS\_SITE SELECTION PROCESS**

Requirements of Station 10 project: Old firehouse was built in 1991 and is aging, and at this point it makes no economic sense to repair the existing wooden building. The county ran a facility condition index and found Station 10 to be in the poorest condition of all of the County firehouses. They will be replacing the existing building with a new firehouse that conforms with fire station requirements.

To comply with County policy, they cannot continue to invest in the building and must rebuild. Travis mentioned structural issues with the existing building (pilings issues, soffit damage) and why it cannot be repaired. Since the building cannot be remodeled to comply with code and regulations, it must be rebuilt.

The firehouse will be going from a footprint of 3200 sf to approx. 5500 sf. It will have berthing spaces that conform to modern standards and be a "safe" place, meaning the building must have a lobby for the public to enter (however, they can't come into the back of the Station). It will have an elevator, be ADA accessible, have parking and stormwater drainage. It must meet Miami-Dade code of 170 mph winds.

The budget has been established at \$3.6 million. The project will be paid for with county-wide Ad Valorem funding. After engineering & architecture, permitting costs (\$400K) leaves \$3.2M for construction. (budget details are available in the Site Evaluation Report)

**PROJECT TIMELINE:** 9 months for the design. At this point they are running a little behind, but are continuing to design and should be able to catch up to planned schedule once the site is selected. They anticipate 12-15 months of active construction. By October 2020 we can expect them to be moving into the new structure.

For the initial analysis for site evaluation, Charlotte County real estate services did market research to find out what's available on market. They identified 10 potential parcels for sale. Out of these 10 sites, they whittled it down to 3 sites to consider:

**SITE A.** Existing site is a small ¼ acre + parcel. They can make it work. The challenge would be operating the fire station while constructing the new one. They need to find temporary site during construction. Existing site is estimated to run \$300K over original budget including \$200K budgeted for temporary facilities.

**SITE B.** 61 Gasparilla, a vacant lot two parcels north of the existing site. Upside: No NIMBY issues – they consider it a benefit that the location is familiar to neighbors. Downside: Would require a zoning change to build the firehouse & is privately owned. Site B would run \$100k over original budget plus purchase price of the property.

**SITE C.** 1 North Gulf Blvd. Upside: It's a presence, could be a landmark for the island. Downsides: land is much bigger than required. The County only needs a portion of the parcel. Also it is currently privately owned and requires buffers for wetlands. With the known issues Site C is estimated to run \$300K over budget, plus the cost of property, in addition to the possibility of unknown issues that could cause more cost overruns. Travis said that they are trying to protect the county from taking on liabilities, such as excess land. They do not want to own and maintain so much property and mangrove.

The evaluation matrix had a 1-5 scoring system, which was a SUBJECTIVE measure in terms of how convenient or attractive or how many burdens were assumed with each location.

**Conclusion:** The County is looking for savings on the bottom line. Travis believes that he can shape the design to meet the budget **including the land purchase** for sites A & B (101 and 61 Gasparilla Way) by getting creative with some of the engineering and finding a possible rental for temporary housing/service if re-built on existing site. He is confident he can deliver on time and on budget for these two site selections. He said that Site C can be done if the County can purchase only the land that they need (1 acre). If the permitting is agreeable they could probably make Site C work with a very GOOD price on the land parcels, or even a "patriotic" donation (which does occur periodically with right-of-ways) but they are still concerned about the unknowns (potential issues during the project execution that could cause big cost overruns).



Bottom line: He thinks he can make any of them work but cannot control some of the risks involved with SITE C.

**DEPUTY CHIEF JASON FAIR** answered some questions from MSBU Advisory Committee meetings:

**Growth potential:** The building is designed for a 2-person crew with a 3<sup>rd</sup> bunk available if needed. This increases the staffing capacity for storms. Truex added "If we're designing a structure today to accommodate a crew of 4 it should be able to be done on any of the parcels."

**Equipment type & stowage:** They are preparing for replacing apparatus as needed not replacing the TYPE of apparatus used and stored, so the same space will be appropriate when equipment is updated in 2021.

**Water assets:** Marine unit/piers (access) are used for evacuations and bringing marine crew in. Water access would be nice but not required. The County can get the job done through other means, so it is not a priority. Deputy Chief Fair said that the county has regional service: if we had a marine crew based on the island they would spend most of their time away from the Island, by necessity, to be useful to the County.

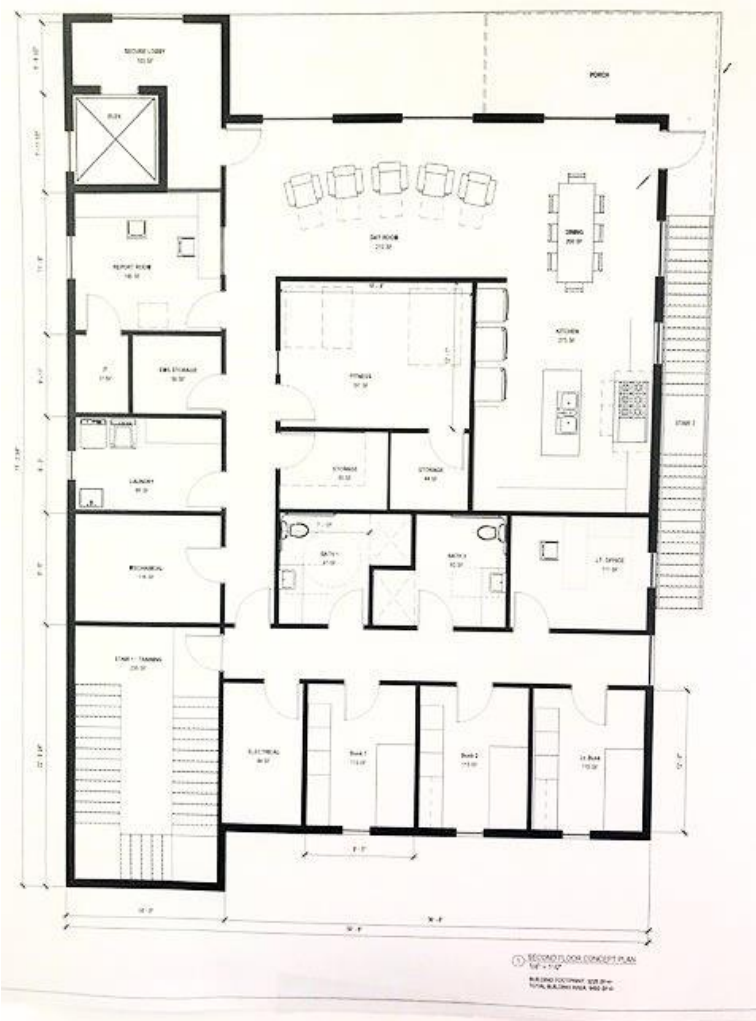
**NEXT STEPS (TRAVIS):** 1. It is on the County Commission agenda on April 9<sup>th</sup> for a vote on accepting the recommendation of 61 Gasparilla as the site location for the new fire house. If you wish to give input to the BCC, there will be an opportunity at the BEGINNING of the meeting for input on any topic on the agenda. 2. The Board will give direction to the staff on how to proceed 3. Site specific design and permitting to follow. 4. Construction begins in (best case) October 2019, in the worst case it's uncertain. Project estimated to have a 12-month duration.

**BILL TRUEX:**

1 North Gulf parcel was brought to his attention a while back and was “way more than we need”. He pushed to get the lot analyzed, but he can’t justify to the county taxpayers additional \$800-900K to pay for a firehouse. “I support the original location to replace the firehouse”, he said. “I can’t say to people in other parts of the county to pay a lot of extra money for a larger parcel that isn’t necessary.” Island Station 10 can’t be utilized for backup for other stations, like any other fire station in the county. CCFD assets/employees have to be moved around on the mainland, but they can’t take assets off the Island.

Mitigation credits: “It is an idea” Truex said. “I don’t know enough about what our land bank looks like around here.” Travis said that the site evaluation report is not exhaustive, primarily dealing with the budget. The Little Pine Island land bank was mentioned, which could make a big difference to the underlying cost of Site C. Travis said he would look into it.

**PRELIMINARY FLOOR PLAN**



**CHIEF VAN HELDEN:** “We take response times VERY seriously,” he said. “We want to stay committed to make sure we get that early CPR, early defib to be able to take people off the Island.” He thinks this design will cover needs for the next 20 years. “This facility will be appropriate for future build-out even adding a 3<sup>rd</sup> crew.” In times when there’s a storm threat but no evacuation, they put a rescue unit on the Island “when we are concerned that we can’t transfer people off the Island.” New facility must have a collection area in the event of storm/emergency, so that they will be able to put people inside the building for care.

**Marine Coverage:** Fire boats are currently located at Gasparilla Marina & Lashley (Punta Gorda). Asked if a marine unit based out of our new firehouse could benefit the entire county, Deputy Chief Fair said that if marine ops were based here, they would spend most of their time away to serve the area since marine coverage is done regionally. We would be losing a crew every time the boats leave the Island. The debate becomes how much we would be depending on marine services. The vast majority of Island coverage is provided through engines, emergency vehicles – except for service to Thornton Key (noted by a resident). Chief Van

Helden: “Our recommendation is to do whatever is needed to keep you alive or to get water on a fire.”

**BILL TRUEX:** He’s not saying “NO” to Site C, but he has to be cognizant of ALL taxpayer dollars. Asked for current build-out levels: 418 buildable lots/660 built. If extra costs are charged back to Island MSBU “easy numbers” on \$1M overbudget: 1000 properties each taxpayer pays extra \$100/year for 10 years.



When asked about concern about future commercial development (such as a hotel or motel) on that N. Gulf Blvd. parcel, “that won’t happen” Truex said. “It would take MAJOR sewer” indicating that the sewer line expected in the future wouldn’t support a motel/hotel there. He said he will check to see if future land use is different from RMFT zoning.

Chief Van Helden said to keep in mind that we have to replace fire trucks in the future, which will be charged back to the Island taxing unit. He’s looking to stretch the life of the current equipment 2-3 years.

**PUBLIC COMMENTARY:** Chief Van Helden addressed a question about 3 landing helicopter landing sites: one site north of the Resort, one site on vacant land within the resort, one site at the ferry landing. Three Islanders got up to speak in support of alternative Site C. Billy Caldwell, the owner of Site C, used the site map to elaborate on the potential of the site. He also said that the cost of the purchase could be paid over 7 years. Bill Truex said he would speak with him further. There was some discussion of exposure for flood insurance, which Chief Van Helden indicated may be changing in the next 3 years or so.