

NORTH HAVEN FIRE STATIONS' RENOVATION PLANS ADVANCE

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By Ann DeMatteo, Assistant Metro Editor

NORTH HAVEN — The Board of Finance Wednesday night took the next step toward renovating the fire stations here.

After listening to an architect and a construction estimator, the board unanimously approved the need for a bond package to cover fire station repairs, some road paving and a new public works garage at a cost of \$14 million.

The fire station project is estimated at just over \$9 million.

The public will have another chance to visit the fire stations to see their condition Sunday, when an open house will be held at all four stations from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

“I want the public to be thoroughly informed,” said First Selectman Michael J. Freda, referring to the opportunity learn more about the project.

The decision by the finance panel enables the Board of Selectmen on Dec. 1 to call for a special town meeting, probably in mid-December, at which time the fire station project and the two others will be aired, as they were in October.

“I don’t anticipate a referendum until January or the first week in February,” Freda told the board in response to a question.

Board Chairman Richard Monico emphasized that the drawings that are before the town are conceptual in nature and won’t become specific until after bids are received.

Kenneth Boroson Architects of New Haven and **Lewis Finkel** from Professional Construction Services Inc. of Stamford presented facts to the board Wednesday night.

Board members asked questions, and also considered the town’s future needs in determining whether to proceed.

Member Michael Hallahan suggested the board look to “expert advice” to make its decision, while Monico said the bid process would determine final numbers.

The town will first seek bids for an architect and a construction manager if the project passes at referendum.

Fire Chief Vincent Landisio said that the town would continue to look for grants to reduce the project cost.

The project would have to be “shovel-ready” before it would be considered for certain federal grants, he said.

He assured the board and those in attendance that the renovations would be suitable for the town’s needs, and that it would provide opportunity for growth.

A committee chaired by Fire Commission member Peter Criscuolo studied Fire Department needs and determined that the stations are in dire need of upgrades due to a lack of operational space and for safety reasons.

The three volunteer fire stations — Montowese, West Ridge and Northeast — do not have ventilation systems for the diesel fumes from apparatus.

Montowese, built in 1938 and updated twice, most recently in the early 1990s, is most in need of repairs. The committee suggested it be replaced.

The committee has been disbanded, something to which Criscuolo objects. Finance board member James Lianos, who served on the committee, thinks there should be another appointed.

Freda after the meeting said he let the Fire Commission decide whether there should be a building committee, as long as the referendum passes and a construction manager is selected.