

**STATEMENT OF NEED FOR
AVON VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT FACILITY
EXPANSION, RENOVATION & NEW CONSTRUCTION
Approved by Avon Town Council
May 4, 2023**

THE BACKGROUND

Since its incorporation in 1943, the Avon Volunteer Fire Department (AVFD) has provided fire suppression and prevention, life safety and rescue support, and other emergency community support, to the citizens of the Town of Avon. The department is entirely volunteer and there are currently 170 members including 58 active firefighters, and nine fire police.

The Town and the AVFD are independent legal organizations. Though not formally affiliated, each entity provides the other with benefits that are critical to operations and fulfillment of mission. The Town provides the AVFD with the majority of its annual operating funds, totaling just over \$1 million for Fiscal Year 2022-2023. Along with other Town departments and agencies, the AVFD submits capital funding requests for facilities improvements and equipment purchases to the Town each year. Funding is ultimately appropriated in consideration of the Town's infrastructure and equipment priorities as a whole.

The AVFD has operational control of the three Town-owned fire stations: Company #1 located at 25 Darling Drive, Company #3 located at 490 West Avon Road, and Company #4 located at 365 Huckleberry Hill Road. A fourth station, Company #2 located at 106 Secret Lake Road, is owned by the AVFD. The stations were built between 1966 and 1979 and all have extensive capital needs. AVFD also maintains operational control of Town-owned apparatus including a ladder truck, rescue vehicle, tanker and pumpers. The department's twenty-piece fleet also includes a number of vehicles and equipment owned by the AVFD including an amphibious utility vehicle, boats and duty vehicles.

THE ISSUES

Chapter 8 of the Town's 2016 Plan of Conservation and Development provides a brief overview of recommendations for capital improvements for each of the four fire stations.

Using these recommendations as a baseline, the Town and AVFD leadership conducted a number of preliminary efforts to develop a prioritized capital improvement program for the fire department's facilities to serve the current department and also address anticipated future needs. Efforts included a 2017 in-house study of the need for a new fire station on the northwest side of Town to replace the existing Company #2, as well as informal planning efforts such as preliminary design efforts for individual facilities for capital budgeting purposes, and interviews and focus groups with AVFD members regarding the needs of the department.

In fall 2021, the Town contracted with the Center for Governmental Research (CGR) of Rochester, NY to develop a facilities and equipment master plan for the AVFD to serve as a road map for the future development and operation of AVFD facilities and the purchase of replacement apparatus

and equipment. The final report, “Avon Fire Department Plan for the Future” (‘The Plan’), was accepted by the Town Council at its December 1, 2022, meeting. The report found that the AVFD has a robust and active volunteer workforce and that the Town and the AVFD have made necessary investments to serve the community. However, there are potential challenges on the horizon, including an aging fire station infrastructure that has not been seriously renovated for over 30 years.

The Town works with the AVFD to provide consistent maintenance for the buildings, but the changing needs of the department and the recent formal and informal planning efforts have led to the deferral of certain maintenance and improvement projects. Additionally, the changes in the typical size and function of apparatus, combined with the industry adoption of new safety practices over the last decade, have resulted in facilities that cannot meet the needs and requirements of a modern fire department.

In addition to these functional issues, Avon’s population has grown approximately 5% in the last decade and an additional 5-10% is anticipated in the decade to come due to residential and commercial development that is in progress or on the horizon. This growth will only result in an increased demand for fire services in the future.

Ultimately, the goal of the Town and the AVFD is to continue to cultivate and maintain a fire service that is 100% volunteer. In order to adequately serve Avon’s growing population with a volunteer force, the AVFD will require updated facilities in order to recruit and sustain its numbers, and to provide its volunteers with the facilities needed to serve the community efficiently, effectively, and safely.

THE SOLUTIONS

The Plan recommends that the Town and the AVFD develop a capital-building program for the department in order to create the physical space necessary to address its needs for the next twenty years and beyond. While the Plan identifies needs related to Company #4, and Company #2, it recommends that the Town prioritize improvements to Company #1 and Company #3 first. Given the current function of the AVFD and the demand for services in the community, these projects are more crucial to the near term needs and current operations of the AVFD and should be prioritized. The other capital needs should be considered a lower priority and only considered once these needs have been addressed.

Company #1 is located at 25 Darling Drive in the commercial center of Town (Route 44/Route 10/Avon Village Center). Company #1 currently operates as the primary headquarters of the department and is near the center of the call volume.

The station was built in 1973 and is owned by the Town. The structure is built into the side of a hill and the apparatus bays open directly onto Darling Drive. There are three bays that are two apparatus deep. There is a parking lot located up the hill at grade level with the second floor. The second floor includes administrative offices, living space (day room and kitchen), restrooms, and meeting spaces.

The following apparatus are typically kept at Company #1: Engine 7, Marine 1, Rescue 8, Truck 15, Truck 19, Light Tower, Truck 17, HazMat Trailer and the ARGO Vehicle. The existing bays dimensions are functional, however there is equipment stored in the bays that limits their functionality. In order to make full use of the bays as designed, storage space for gear, SCBA, and gear wash will need to be added elsewhere.

In general, Company #1 is in need of maintenance, reorganization and renovations that respond to the wear of the facility, the changing demands of the department, and address modern fire department operations. The building is also in need of additional storage space. The following is a list of deficiencies that have been identified, some of which can be addressed by repair or renovation. Others should be addressed by building new spaces:

- **Repair or Renovation**

- Metal framed windows and doors in need of paint. Window glazing is failing and requires replacement along with the glass.
- Exterior metal railings are rusted and in need of replacement.
- Exterior concrete stairs are deteriorated and do not appear to be used frequently. Should be repaired or removed.
- Concrete retaining wall finish is spalling and needs to be removed and reapplied. Stone cap needs to be repointed.
- Exterior concrete needs to be repainted.
- Building fenestration needs to be caulked.
- Additional lighting needed in the parking lot.
- Asphalt is in need of milling/paving/stripping.
- Exiting parking lot is unsafe due to blind curve in Darling Drive.
- Carpet is generally worn and in need of replacement.

- **New Spaces**

- Aisles between the apparatus bays are narrow.
- General lack of garage, storage, office, meeting and living space that cannot be accommodated within the existing footprint
- Gear wash is currently in one of the bays rather than a separate room which cannot be accommodated within the existing footprint.
- SCBA room should have a separate room, which cannot be accommodated within the existing footprint.
- Decontamination shower and eyewash station are needed and cannot be accommodated within the existing footprint.

In order to address all the deficiencies outlined above, the renovation and expansion project should include additional apparatus bays, appropriately sized to fit modern fire apparatus, dedicated space for gear wash and SCBA storage, additional restrooms, additional meeting space, living space (day room), office/flex spaces, additional storage space, updated mechanicals, and site work to update the exterior of the building, as well as the parking area.

Once the above maintenance, renovation and expansion projects are addressed, Company #1 will be well situated to serve the people of Avon now and into the future.

Company #3 is the station located closest to the geographic center of Town. It was built in 1963 to replace the former West Avon Volunteer Fire Department facility, a one-bay station located across from the Avon High School. Today, Company #3 is one of the most active companies in the AVFD due to its location and complement of apparatus. It houses Ladder 12, Tanker 20, Engine 14, and Truck 16.

Company #3 has been expanded and renovated in recent years to accommodate a growing department. However, the station has outlived its usefulness and, despite additions and repairs the following issues limit the functionality of Company #3 compared to a new, more appropriately sized facility: location on the site; proximity to the road, Avon High School and property owned by the CT Water Company; and bay dimensions.

The following is a list of deficiencies that have been identified. In order to address them all in a cost-effective manner and improve the operations of the AVFD, a new facility should be constructed:

- Traffic congestion due to proximity of the High School entrance/exit.
- Bay widths are too narrow resulting in clogged, narrow aisles.
- Bay doors are too narrow requiring apparatus to be modified to fit the building
- Bay ceilings are too low.
- Bays are not deep enough.
- Unable to walk around apparatus.
- Gear washroom is inadequate.
- Gear storage room is needed and cannot be accommodated within the current floor plan.
- Decontamination shower and eyewash is needed and cannot be accommodated within the current floor plan.

Based on the structural deficiencies and inadequacies of Company #3 and the restrictions imposed by the current parcel, the needs of the AVFD cannot be addressed with a renovation and expansion to the existing facility. Therefore, a new station is needed. A new Company #3 facility could be constructed on existing parcels owned by the Town and the AVFD located across the street from the current structure at (503, 511, 519 West Avon Road) or in another location in the same general area of Town. The new station should be larger than the existing Company #3 and include drive through apparatus bays that are sized to fit modern fire apparatus without modification, office space, conference space, restroom facilities, equipment storage space, gear storage, a gear wash space, decontamination space, a day room, and a radio room. The facility should be situated on the lot to enable future expansion for additional apparatus bays or living space, if needed. The project should also address a storage solution for the antique engine owned by the AVFD that is currently stored in a garage located on the 511 West Avon Road parcel.

Company #4 serves the south and west ends of Town. The facility was built in 1968. The facility operates primarily as an engine/rescue company with specialty equipment for brush fires and water rescues and houses Engine 11, Engine 9 and Marine 2. The bays are minimum width but functional.

The Town has recently completed renovations to the facility that have approved its appearance and function. With the completion of the following maintenance/improvement items, Station #4 can continue to effectively serve the community:

- Replace exterior mechanical room doors.
- Replace/repair/repoint damaged brick.
- Decontamination shower and eyewash needed.

Additionally, the AVFD has identified that the following features/additions may be considered in order to optimize the use of the Company #4 facility:

- New office and training room space
- A designated front entry on the main level
- A ½ bath/powder room on the main floor
- An additional bay and storage space on the lower level
- A new stairway to access the lower level from the main level.