

To: The Town Board

From: Nick Cianciola, 29 Autumn Ridge Road

Date: Feb. 25th, 2025

Subj: Public Comment: Firehouse Project Cost Increase: A Concerned Resident's Perspective and why it has not been included on this evenings agenda

FIREHOUSE PROJECT: QUESTIONS OF TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

December 2022: Residents approve \$6.5 million for firehouse upgrades

- We voted YES because we understood the crucial need

December 2023: Planning board finally signs off on the work

- **ONE FULL YEAR** of delay for a critical public safety project

February 2025: District announces it needs an additional \$3.5 million

- **Total cost now: \$11 million (a 53% increase)**
- Vote scheduled for April 8, 2025 (just 6 weeks' notice)

THE TROUBLING QUESTIONS

1. WHY THE EXCESSIVE DELAYS?

As stated in The Recorder:

"In December 2022, fire district voters approved \$6.5 million for the upgrades."

Dec 2023: Yet it took an entire year just for the planning board to sign off on plans for this supposedly urgent safety need.

Dec 2024: Another year passed before bids were finalized.

Two years of delays for a crucial public safety project is inexcusable.

2. WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE MASSIVE COST INCREASE?

The Recorder reports: **"Following a nationwide period of high inflation, every bid received for the project came in significantly higher than projected."**

FACT CHECK: Total inflation from December 2022 to December 2024 was approximately 6.1%, with construction costs increasing 10-15% in most regions.

This doesn't explain a 53% increase from \$6.5 million to \$11 million!

Even accounting for construction-specific inflation, this represents a massive forecasting error or significant scope changes that were never communicated to residents.

3. WHY THE LACK OF TRANSPARENCY?

As residents, we learned about this massive cost increase from The Recorder, not from our town officials.

- No mention in the Supervisor's weekly letter
- No town hall meetings to discuss escalating costs over the last two years
- No updates during the two years of delays

The Recorder reports: **"Now the district has announced it will ask voters for an additional \$3.5 million because, it said, bids for the work came in higher than expected."**

Higher than expected is an understatement. This is a catastrophic forecasting failure.

4. WHY THE RUSHED VOTE?

The Recorder states: **"The vote is to take place April 8."**

This gives residents just 6 weeks to evaluate a 53% cost increase on a project that's already been delayed for over two years.

Is this another attempt to push through approval without proper scrutiny?

QUESTIONS THAT DEMAND ANSWERS

1. Who specifically was responsible for the initial cost estimates, and why were they so dramatically wrong?
2. What specific changes in scope or materials account for this 53% increase?
3. What guarantees do we have that there won't be additional cost overruns beyond the \$11 million as in most projects of this nature?
4. Why was there no contingency planning for inflation, despite starting this project during a known inflationary period?
5. What project management controls will be in place to prevent further delays and cost increases?
6. Why weren't residents kept informed during this two-year process?

DEMAND FOR ACCOUNTABILITY

Before voting on an additional \$3.5 million in taxpayer funds, we deserve:

1. A detailed accounting of the original estimate errors
2. Complete transparency about the new budget
3. Identification of those responsible for the mismanagement
4. A robust plan to prevent further overruns
5. A commitment to regular community updates

Our community deserves better management and greater transparency on this essential project.