TOWN OF EAST HADDAM
MOODUS FIREHOUSE BUILDING COMMITTEE PUBLIC HEARING
MUNICIPAL OFFICE COMPLEX MEETING ROOMS 1 &2
7:00 PM
WEDNESDAY, MAY 27, 2026
Minutes
Live and via YouTube Live

Present:
Moodus Firehouse Building Committee (MFBC): Craig Mansfield (Chairman), Edward Blaschik, Kevin Rutty, Brad Park, Walter Parkus.
Don Angersola, Operations Manager
Silver Petrucelli & Associates: Eric Cantar, Nancy Levesque, David Stein
Downes Construction: Nicole DeMaio, Scott Scholl
Todd Gelston, First Selectman
Linda Zemienieski, Executive Manager
Valerie Belles, Finance Director
Martha Hansen, Recording Secretary
8 members of the public including Jeff Miller, Nick Griffin, Rochelle Davis, and Bob Casner.

Call to Order: Craig Mansfield, MFBC Chairman, called the Public Hearing to order at 7:00 pm. and asked the participants at the head table to introduce themselves. He then read the public hearing notice:

The Board of Selectmen and Moodus Firehouse Building Committee will hold a public Hearing to present and discuss the current issues and proposed plans for rebuilding the Moodus Firehouse, located at 44 William F. Palmer Road. Silver Petrucelli, Downes Construction and the committee will be providing a presentation and answering questions from the public.

- Mr. Mansfield explained that the Moodus Firehouse Building Committee was formed after the Moodus Firehouse Renovation Committee found that it would not be feasible to renovate the firehouse building to meet the building and safety codes for an Emergency Services facility.
- The renovation committee reported their findings to the Board of Selectmen.
- The Moodus Firehouse Building Committee was established in early 2025 with the charge to demolish the current Moodus Firehouse, consult with the Fire Department, Fire Marshal, Emergency Management and administrative personnel to design and construct a new firehouse to meet the needs of the community now and in the future, look for grants and other funding sources, and select architects, engineers, and contractors.
- The charge was approved at a Town Meeting on May 13, 2025.

Kevin Rutty, MFBC, described the operational needs of the Fire Department and explained the changes in fire services:

- Volunteer to paid staff, addition of EMS services
- Increased usage and the changing needs of today's firehouse and its technology.
- The building must meet new mandated OSHA and firefighter health and safety standards.
- It must house new, larger fire trucks and equipment.
- Firefighter and EMS training requirements have increased.
- Zone separation – red zones, which are likely to be contaminated with carcinogens, must be separated from green zones which contain office and living quarters.
- This is done by separating the areas and using ventilation and decontamination processes.

- Exposure to carcinogens is an increasing concern for firefighters
- OSHA mandates separate gear washing areas and safe, ventilated storage for 2 sets of gear per firefighter to remove contaminants.

David Stein, Silver Petrucelli, presented views of the site, current photos of the building, and plans for the new building.

- The current, pre-engineered building is over 30 years old and does not meet modern code requirements for a building that must house fire and emergency services equipment.
- Fire trucks and emergency vehicles must be removed from the building when it is unsafe due to snow load, and wind speed.
- Mr. Stein displayed the site plan, showing parking, the new building with apparatus bays and separate office and living quarters including a kitchen, laundry, bedrooms, bathrooms with showers, and training rooms.
- He showed the deterioration of the building, rusted beams and cladding, and poor drainage.
- The new, 14,475 square foot building is compartmentalized for better and safer organization, has more storage and larger bays to house bigger equipment.
- It will be built on a 12-inch concrete slab, with a masonry base under fiber cement siding.
- The benefits of the project are a safe and functional firehouse, improved community resilience, positive economic benefits, compliance with health and safety regulations, facilities for training and education, and environmental sustainability.

Scott Scholl, Downes Construction, provided a budget overview.

- The estimated cost is $15,030,764, which is about $1,066 per square foot.
- It compares favorably with fire houses recently build in Oswegatchie, Norfolk, Bristol, Long Hill, and North Haven.
- The lack of public utilities (water and sewer) in Moodus increased the cost.
- A referendum will be held on September 15, 2026.
- The project will be on an 11-month construction schedule, with the goal to be finished in late October 2027.

Nicole DeMaio, Downes Construction, will provide communication and referendum support which will include

- Community meetings,
- Meetings with boards and commissions,
- Pre-referendum support consisting of a website, factual data, information flyers, social media, and a decorative fence scrim.
- A QR code to link to project updates.

Craig Mansfield said the committee has applied for state bonding and is looking for grants and other funding opportunities including a USDA loan. We estimate it will add about $224 per year to the average house assessment of $250,000.
The presentation is available online at the Town of East Haddam's website.
Mr. Mansfield thanked the committee members, Silver Petrucelli & Associates, and Downes Construction for their work on the project.

The hearing was opened up to questions from the audience.

Jeff Miller:

- Is the 15-million-dollar cost for construction only or does it include maintenance costs?
- What about the cost of fire trucks in the future, full-time firefighters, the cost of EMS?

- What about the increasing cost of energy and materials?
- How will the building be constructed?

Answer:

- Maintenance costs will be included in the regular budget for the building. We already have an underground tank for contaminated water, and it gets pumped.
- New fire trucks have been approved and will be delivered in the next few years.
- We have 4 full-time firefighters and a few working part-time, plus volunteers.
- The Ambulance Association pays for EMS.
- We have a contingency fund built into the project to cover unexpected costs.
- When the project is completed, it will be up to the town to support it and decide how much to spend.
- This firehouse will contain existing equipment, we wont need to buy more equipment to fill it.
- The building will be built on a 12-inch concrete slab on grade, with steel beam construction, the exterior is fiber cement siding, with brick on part of the building, asphalt shingles on the roof. The windows are thermal, aluminum, and the doors are insulated. The building will be well insulated and have a full generator to power the whole building when needed. There will be zoned radiant heating in the apparatus bays floor to help dry the trucks after they are washed and to keep the bays at a minimum temperature.

Nick Griffin:

- I am concerned that only a few taxpayers are at the meeting. We all want the best things for our town. I hope that in future meetings you will talk about the process, and if it comes at the cost of the library and schools, etc. I know your focus is on this project.
- A lot of this has happened already and I would like the conversation to be more open.
- It is a lot to expect the taxpayers to come to a meeting or watch a YouTube video.

Answer:

- Information has been on the town website for a while; we would like to have 100 people here tonight. It is on YouTube so people can watch it any time.

Jeff Miller:

- A lot of people in town are retired and on a fixed income and probably don't understand what you are talking about, especially when they see 15 million dollars.
- As for cost per household assessment, we are supposed to have a revaluation this year, and who knows how much that will go up, people are concerned about that too.

Bob Casner:

- He thanked the committee for all they are doing and said it is a very impressive presentation. It is important that as many people see it as possible.
- Lots of great information and good to know about the codes, etc. Many of us did not realize how many codes you have to deal with.
- He is concerned about demolishing the existing building and thinks it is worth something, is there an appraisal? Driving by it looks fine.
- A simple checklist would help to show exactly why the current building would not work. If it were owned by a private company they would pay taxes on it.
- He suggested finding a different site.

Answer:

- Regarding moving to a different location - the ISO rating is what drives home insurance rates. If a firehouse moves too far away, insurance rates will skyrocket. We did a lot of work on that part of the project.

- We agree that we need to get more of that information out to the public.
- The charge to demolish and build a new firehouse was based on the work done by the renovation committee.
- The renovation committee checked different sites around town and in Moodus and determined that the current site was the best one. It has been working very well for a long time.
- Chestelm and the senior housing in Moodus generate about 135 calls per year, so it is good to be close by.

David Stein talked about the other new firehouses and how they compare. Costs on a raw site are comparable due to the work that needs to be done. Moodus and East Haddam do not have public utilities. As much as we wanted to reduce costs, it was the site work that drove up the costs.

Rochelle Davis:

- Regarding Fire Department 1 on Town Street – will we be having the same conversation in the future?
- What about using solar panels on the building?

Answer:

- we need to have more than 1 firehouse in town, due to ISO ratings. That is one reason we have kept the Haywardville Firehouse.
- Yes, the firehouse on Town Street will need some updates and maintenance. It was studied in 2012, and it has some limitations.
- Firehouse 2, in Moodus, will be the headquarters.
- The new firehouse is being constructed to support solar panels in the future, which would be up to the town.

Todd Gelston:

- I believe that reasonable people who are equally informed seldom disagree.
- A fire house is not just a garage, as most people might think, what is needed today is very different than what was needed in the past.
- People need to clearly understand the functions and purpose of the firehouse. We need more information on that.
- Firehouses are not going to be cheap.
- If folks won't come to the meetings we need to go to them and explain it to them.
- Kevin, when you talked about residential areas what did you mean? Inside the firehouse or outside near the building?
- What about ventilation, is the building pressurized?
- What about parking space in case of multiple fires/emergencies? This happened recently. Will 44 spaces be enough even for monthly meetings?
- Is there a minimum temperature for the bays?
- Will ambulances be housed there too?

Answer:

- Residential areas refer to inside the firehouse - living and office space, not the apparatus bays.
- The building is ventilated using outside air and negative pressure. It is not pressurized.
- A firehouse is complex, so we designed the building for 3 different uses – for apparatus use in the bays, and then the living areas, and storage areas. Air is exchanged all the time.
- Regarding the parking, we are working with zoning regulations and open space requirements.
- There is additional parking space behind the bays, since the trucks leave from the front.
- The bays will be kept at about 55 degrees in cold weather.
- The storage rooms are temperature controlled.

- There are usually two ambulances kept in the firehouse.

Todd Gelston:
- What about the number of beds for humans – four rooms with 4 beds right now. Could they be bunk beds?
- What about roof insulation?
- The current firehouse rusted because of New England weather, how will that be prevented in the new building?
- Can the new building be expanded on the site?

Answer:
- Bunk beds could be used in an emergency, but we want fire personnel to have privacy.
- There will be rigid insulation above the steel structure.
- We are preventing rust and moisture infiltration by using insulation from the new footings all the way up to the top. There is a vapor barrier, and we allow the air to migrate through the building.
- The radiant heated floor combined with proper insulation will create a much better environment.
- We learned our lesson from the old building where water migrated in from outside, and from inside out when we washed the trucks.
- No, the building footprint can't be expanded. Some inside rooms could expand into other rooms though.

Todd Gelston:
- What size is a firehouse and how is it measured as to capacity to put out fires in different sized buildings? I am not advocating for multiple story apartment houses.
- You have done a great job, thank you.

Answer:
- We have a ladder truck that allows us to service 3 story buildings, and we have a fire marshal who is responsible for the building plan review.
- Our trucks have some capacity for holding water. Rural fire fighting is different, no water hydrants.

Craig Mansfield: We worked with the fire department and have done our best. We appreciate that you came tonight and we will be having more regularly scheduled meetings. We are not in a vacuum and we want public comment.

Jeff Miller:
- Can you make a model of the firehouse so people can see what it looks like? The town's website is hard to navigate and find things.

Answer:
- Models are expensive, but we can put a 3d model on the website.

Public hearing ended 9:01 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Martha Hansen
Recording Secretary