

December 14, 2022

Long Beach Volunteer Fire Department and Long Beach Police Department

All Long Beach Residents:

Thank you for your financial support during the Fire Department's recent annual fundraising campaign. Your generosity enables us to effectively manage our operations, enhance our training, and supplement our equipment inventory to provide you with 24/7 fire & medical assistance. We are writing this letter to make you aware of another way you can support not only the Long Beach Volunteer Fire Department but the Long Beach Police Department and the entire Town by providing future generations of Long Beach residents and guests with the emergency services and infrastructure needed to protect the community.

We have been feverishly working over the past year to formulate a plan to replace our aging and woefully inadequate Fire Station and Police Garage.

PROBLEM DEFINITION

The Police Garage is outdated, in poor repair, and too small to accommodate the equipment storage needs of the Police Department. It is currently used as a mobile equipment & squad car storage area and wash bay but is not large enough for those needs.

The Fire Station building and layout are inadequate and outdated for the current needs of the Fire Department. The Fire Station has a leaky and rotted roof structure that needs immediate attention, with water seeping into the office where records and computer equipment reside, as well as into the apparatus bays. The garage bays are too small for modern fire trucks and equipment to be stored and accessed, and there is not enough room to conduct routine maintenance or training activities. A new air compressor needed to fill life-saving breathing equipment is housed within inches of a parked fire truck and is in danger of being damaged. A dilapidated single bathroom does not meet the needs of the Fire Department, as we now have male and female firefighter members.

Volunteer firefighters and first responders are unable to store personal fire gear (coats, pants, boots and helmets), as required by OSHA and the National Fire Protection Association, inside the Fire Station. This is a particularly acute situation given the proven link between fire combustion byproducts and firefighter cancer rates. A few years ago, we purchased a small washing machine to wash fire gear, but have no facility for drying gear. Most departments provide two sets of gear, so the second set can be used while washed gear dries. We don't have room to accommodate this preferred methodology, forcing many of our members to keep their gear in their homes or personal vehicles exposing themselves and their families to those byproducts.

THE SOLUTION

A Project Working Group, in collaboration with the Long Beach Fire Commission, has completed phases one and two of a three-phase Design/Build process to develop an exciting new Public Safety Building to meet the current and future needs of both the Long Beach Police and Fire Departments. This new facility will also provide additional meeting space that can be utilized by the Town.

Through a contracting process approved by the State of Indiana, we have selected a respected and competent Design/Build Team, **Holladay Construction** to design and build our new facility. Cognizant of costs, this new design is the most efficient and effective way to meet our needs and incorporates a unique and simple layout and building. If we obtain the Town Council's final approval by year end, the project can be completed by the end of 2023, with minimal disruption to current Fire and Police services. Given current inflationary and supply chain issues, any delay beyond then would be costly and ill-advised.

AFFORDABILITY

The Town utilizes a competent financial advisor, Cender/Dalton for our accounting and financial issues. Karl Cender, a principal with the firm, has advised the Town for decades with sound and sage advice. He has assisted the Working Group, Fire Commission, and Town Council with detailed analysis of the methods of financing for the Project.

He suggests two alternate methods to pay for the Project:

1. Issue a 15 – 20 year GO Bond through the State Finance Authority
2. Form a Building Capital Corporation to own the facility through the bond payment period (15-20 years) to which the Town would pay a lease payment and then take ownership at the end of the bond payment period. This method leaves the Town's borrowing/bonding capacity intact for the period of repayment and was used to finance the Town Hall Project in years past.

The Town is blessed to have cash reserves available which will be augmented by income generated by the LaPorte County Local Option Tax to fund the Project. Mr. Cender's analysis concludes that the Project is affordable and can be paid for with little to no tax increase to our citizens.

DECISION PROCESS

Since 2009, the Fire Department has made successive Town Administrations aware of our equipment and facility needs, yet little action has occurred by the Town until now. In fact, the contract under which the Town and Fire Department operates has a clause stating that the Town has an obligation to provide and maintain necessary and adequate equipment and facilities, subject to affordability. At this juncture we are ready to make the new Public Safety Building an affordable reality. We only need the members of the Town Council to vote Yes to complete the Design/Build process and start construction.

WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT

The Town Council will hold a Special Council Meeting on Tuesday, December 27, 2022 at 6.30 p.m. at the Community Center Gym to present the Public Safety Building Project to the public. At that session, we will have information available for public review and comment. You will be able to attend remotely by Zoom with credentials available on the Town website. You can also review the plans and affordability information prior to the Meeting by accessing the links on the Town and Fire Department websites: Town: **longbeachin.org** Fire Department: **lbfd.org**

Please attend the Special Town Council Meeting, if at all possible, to support the cause. If you are unable to attend, please send a letter or email of support to:

Long Beach Volunteer Fire Department

Email: **President@lbfdin.org**

PO Box 605

Michigan City, IN 46361-0605

Thank you in advance for your support.

Sincerely,

Kurt Earnst, Fire Chief Tom Yemc, Assistant Fire Chief Dan Sells, Assistant Fire Chief John Wall, Deputy Fire Chief

Mark Swistek, Police Chief & Town Administrator

All of the Members of the Long Beach Volunteer Fire Department and the Long Beach Police Department