

From: Lynne Lambert [mailto:nycsbways@gmail.com]
Sent: Friday, December 18, 2020 5:01 PM
To: PublicComment <PublicComment@mynewcastle.org>
Subject: NCFD#1 impact by FBC needs to be addressed in the DGEIS

NCFD#1 Emergency Services: The DGEIS does not have any numbers or mitigation suggested on the following issues which would arise under the FBC.

At their December 10, 2020 Board of Fire Commissioners meeting, New Castle Fire District #1 – the one which covers all of Downtown and much more of New Castle – was asked if they would be able to let both the Town Board and its district residents know the added cost in fire taxes were the town to adopt the FBC. Their answer was to say that Chief Maitland had already made his comments and as to responding any further, they would need to know concretely what options within the Form Based Code the Town Board had selected in order to give their response. They also said that that “there are no needed resources *at this time.*” (emphasis mine)

But in order to see the full financial impact on our fire district’s residents, it is necessary to project into the future, including the protection of any new structures and units built under the FBC. These answers need to be obtained before Public Comments are closed on the DGEIS.

The CCSD has had to have their consultants explore many if not all FBC options in order to quantify the impacts of each potential option to the schools. The BOFC thus far expresses that they are unwilling to do that. So we are at an impasse! And the TB has said public comments will be closing, so what do we do?

Though Fire Chief Maitland offered valuable perspective in his public comments, there are some important things missing which need to be filled in before the Town Board’s final decision is made. There are no costs attached to much of his analysis. **We need the numbers.**

<https://www.mynewcastle.org/DocumentCenter/View/2236/10302020---Chappaqua-Fire-Department-Response-to-Form-Based-Code-PDF?bidId=>

To his points:

- 1. Will there be enough volunteers to cover the added buildings and units allowed in the FBC? As the BOFC had expressed in a prior meeting, the alternative would be having one of two scenarios: Fully-paid firefighters or part-paid / part-volunteer firefighters. Either of those two options would add greatly to the FD budget.**

Here is what Chairman of the Board of Fire Commissioners, Erik Nikolaysen said in December 2019. He estimated the cost would be \$1.5M per year expense for only two paid firefighters.

<https://www.theexaminernews.com/new-castle-fire-district-plans-firehouse-expansion-referendum/>

As Chief Maitland points out, we have a big bargain now with all volunteers. But could the FD cover us with only volunteers? As per Chief Maitland, that is getting more and more difficult already to recruit new volunteers due to the time needed for increased training requirements. Also the other new construction at Chappaqua Crossing has caused far more fire call activity than had been anticipated. (And this is before the Conifer complex, the townhomes at Chappaqua Crossing and the soon to be filled 91 Bedford Rd. structures are occupied)

2. Multi-height structures may well present the need for more equipment. So there is the equipment cost - \$750K - \$1.2M per apparatus called out in Maitland's comments. What exactly would be needed?

3. Would the kind of triangulation needed to get to top floors be achievable (see his diagram) on our narrow streets downtown? See Chief Maitland's rendering. I am unclear.

4. New apparatus would need to be housed somewhere and the current bays cannot fit any larger apparatus. So the firehouse expansion would be needed.

The last time the expansion was proposed it was voted down, due to the expense, the immense size of the building visually and the fact that it would increase taxes. The building cost at that time was \$12.6 M. This time around the commissioners had considered reducing the cost by not building out the second floor over the new fire truck bays. This buildout was meant for "bunking space" and other needs for the possibility of paid firefighters. That would clearly need to be added in again if the need for paid firefighters became evident.

So what would this \$12.6M in 2016 construction cost now in 2021? Any construction will add to our fire taxes.

The prior expansion referendum was overwhelmingly defeated by our district in 2016. That vote was 105 pro and 632 against. What if it was shot down again?

New fire apparatus, New firehouse expansion, Paid firefighters would add major fire tax increases to our district, and our district only. So we alone would bear the cost of protecting any buildings which would be allowed under the FBC!

What are all of these expenses projected to be and what would Fire Tax increases be to our residents?

Especially with the increased school and property tax increases we would expect under the FBC, the three together might just be a tipping point for many homeowners who are trying to afford to stay in their homes. If staying becomes impossible, even selling their homes would become more difficult due to the higher taxes a new owner would have to pay.

And what would happen if the FBC is passed but the fire district residents rejected a referendum for the expansion upgrades again as those increases would be even more than they would have been in 2016 and in a far more on-going capacity?

But THIS vote would actually be in the hands of the residents, not just the Town Board.

In order to know the tax impact on residents of the Town Board's decisions, the Town Board needs to require an accounting on these vital questions.

Can the consultants add exploring these critical emergency services into the DGEIS now? No such research appears in the current document at all!

After that, the residents deserve to see the full impact on their taxes before being given an opportunity to offer their public comments to the Town Board.

Sincerely,
Lynne Lambert
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