

October 3, 2025

Mr. Paul Goldstein
Moderator, Representative Town Meeting
15 Rope Ferry Road
Waterford, CT 06385

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ATTEST: 
TOWN CLERK

Moderator Goldstein and Members of the RTM,

Two and a half years ago in a unanimous vote, the RTM established a building committee to replace the deteriorated Oswegatchie Fire Station. On May 2, 2023, the building committee composed of 9 members representing townspeople, volunteer and paid fire fighters, and Waterford governing bodies- BOS, RTM, and BOF held their first meeting. The meetings continued at about 2-week intervals until the design was completed.

Along the way the committee selected an architect, Silver Petrucelli Associates, and the RTM on February 5, 2024 unanimously approved their hiring. At that same meeting, the RTM voted to acquire the Oswegatchie Fire Station for a dollar.

At the February 3, 2025 meeting, the RTM approved funding for the architect to proceed with creating Construction Design drawings, based upon successful completion of the Schematic Design.

Following that, the committee selected a project manager to oversee the building construction. On April 8, 2025 the RTM in a *near* unanimous vote approved the hiring of Downes Construction, Inc. to serve that function.

On September 9, 2025, the Board of Selectmen unanimously approved the bonding resolution to building the new fire station.

Following suit, on September 10, 2025, the Board of Finance unanimously approved the same bonding resolution.

It is noteworthy and coincidental that the attendance at meetings and the voting history of the building committee has been near unanimous as well. Support for the new Oswegatchie Fire Station, as evidenced of the affirmative actions noted above, has been strong and consistent.

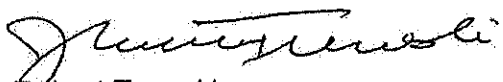
The Committee has been dedicated and aligned in responsibly overseeing the creation of a modest, architecturally satisfying station that is a nod to Waterford's agrarian history and culture. The RTM received a highly functional and appealing design for their investment. The attached presentation is a summary of the new station highlights and construction cost estimate.

In addition to the 9 reasons to build a new Oswegatchie Fire Stations identified in the Fire Services Report accepted by the RTM on September 22 (attached), here are 7 more reasons to consider including:

- Maintains / Improves first-response coverage and response times
- Existing municipal momentum and approvals already in place
- Cost efficiencies vs. buying / new site search
- Community continuity and local identity
- The site is already zoned / recognized for emergency services and has documented infrastructure
- Compared to the public safety benefit for Waterford, the cost impact of this new fire station on the taxpayer is relatively small and likely off-set by potential insurance savings afforded by a decrease in the Town's ISO rating resulting from building the new station
- The new station is also the keystone of the vision of the new Director of Fire Services for efficient provision of emergency services, as Waterford Fire Services continues to evolve to meet changes in demographic and economic conditions in the Town and the increasing shift to a fire service with a predominately paid fire-fighting staff.

The ultimate decision to rebuild the Oswegatchie Fire Station lies with the RTM. Please consider all of the information provided to you over the past couple of years, and the significance that a new fire station plays in the delivery of property and life protection by Waterford Fire Services. On October 6, please vote in favor of the bonding resolution to secure funding to build the new Town-owned Oswegatchie Fire Station.

Very respectfully,



Robert Tuneski

Chairman, Oswegatchie Building Committee



Town of
Waterford, CT

Summary Info Oswegatchie Fire Station

October 6th, 2025



Building Committee Background

- *“Fire Services Ad Hoc Committee Interim Report, January 2023”* delivered to the RTM
- The Oswegatchie Fire Station Building Committee was chartered at the April 2, 2023 RTM meeting, in accordance with Waterford Code of Ordinances, Chapter 2.88-Building Committees. The charge reads “due to the extensively deteriorated condition of the Oswegatchie Fire Station, that it be repaired and or replaced with a new building”- Unanimous vote
- Building Committee Kick-off Meeting held May 2, 2023
- Consists of a nine-member bipartisan Committee including volunteer fire fighters, paid fire fighters; RTM, BOS, and BOF members; and community representatives per the RTM composition requirements
- Conducted meetings every two weeks at Oswegatchie Fire Station Training Room
- Funding for architectural firm, Silver Petrucci Associates approved February 5, 2024- Unanimous vote
- Funding for project manager, Downes Construction, approved by RTM April 8, 2025 - 19-1-0 Vote

Building Committee Accomplishments

- The committee has met 53 times
- Every meeting had a quorum, none rescheduled due to lack of attendance
- The committee has been diligent, thoughtful, deliberate, and has maintained a sense of urgency to complete the charge
- The Committee voting history has demonstrated remarkable consensus, notwithstanding robust discussions, with nearly every vote being unanimous
- Silver Petrucelli Associates completed Construction Design and Design Manuals / Specifications
- Downes Construction completed Construction Estimates and a proposed Schedule
- Received Conservation Commission Approval
- Received Planning and Zoning Approval
- Conducted Phase 1 and Phase 2 Environmental Studies
- *Transferred Oswegatchie Property to Town of Waterford for \$1*

The Next Steps are Funding, Bidding, and Construction

New Building General Features

- First Floor
 - Bunk rooms, a day room, a kitchen, training room, offices, exercise rooms, bathrooms, decontamination room, gear locker room, and apparatus bays on the first floor.
- Small Mezzanine
 - Mechanical room and storage
- Basis of Construction
 - Steel framing on concrete foundation
 - Fiber cement siding, with brick veneer and a cast stone accent band
 - Architectural asphalt shingles, solar ready
 - Floors-epoxy coated concrete, tile, and carpet covered
 - Electric System-lighting, power, P/A system, fire alarm, security system, site lighting, and a back-up generator
 - HVAC is primarily VRF (variable refrigerant flow) with radiant floors in the bays

Energy Efficient Features

- The VRF HVAC system-high efficiency, 10-50% less energy
- Hot water return system uses temperature maintenance cable in lieu of hot water return
- Low flow plumbing fixtures
- Radiant floor in the bays
- Energy efficient windows- thermally broken
- Insulation in the walls is “continuous”, no breaks. Limits heat transfer. Moves dew point outside, moisture less likely to have an effect on the overall building
- Solar capable roof in the event that the Town wants to explore in the future
- Occupancy sensors and dimmer light controls
- LED lighting

Size and Costs

- Total Size of the Fire Station-9,988 sq.ft.
- Estimated Cost (Downes Construction) Based upon construction drawings-\$10,323,413
- Estimated Soft Costs (and contingencies)- \$2,228,980 (including \$500K, traffic light)
- Total Estimated Costs to Build and Outfit- \$12,552,393
- Estimated Cost to Renovate as New-\$11,092,735 (including soft costs and contingencies)
- Undetermined Cost- Traffic Light
 - Under need may not be required pending trimming trees adjacent to the property and follow-on discussion between the Director of Fire Services and Director of Traffic

Takeaways

- Modest size reflecting current needs and allowing for minor expansion
 - Smaller than the existing structure (and previous building committee's design)
- Is a nice balance of form, fit, and function, while being architecturally attractive
 - Inspired by a New England farmhouse
 - Is simple and elegant- not a Taj Mahal
- Is energy efficient
- Is necessary to meet the fire services emergency service delivery model
- Can be built with little cost impact to the taxpayer (favorable debt servicing window and positive impact on ISO rating)
- Is a solid investment to protect Taxpayer property and lives, and positions Waterford for future business

6.0 Five Fire Stations - History and Structure of Waterford's Fire Stations

As referenced earlier, Waterford has a long-standing tradition of volunteer fire service, dating back to the early 20th century. The Town's five volunteer fire stations emerged as a direct response to growing local needs, with each station strategically located in areas experiencing population development. Notably, all five stations were constructed by volunteers, using funds they independently raised.

To formalize and distribute responsibilities, a series of fire districts were created, providing an organized framework for managing the growing fire services system.

Since 1942, Waterford has maintained five fire stations, all incorporated within a span of 19 years. These five stations remain operational today.

Waterford's population continues to grow steadily, and the current infrastructure of fire stations remains largely supportive of existing development patterns. According to the most recent census, Waterford's population stands at 19,554.

While census projections suggest the population may stabilize or even decline slightly in the future, recent development activity—as illustrated in Table 2—indicates the potential for continued population growth, which could influence future demand for fire services.

Waterford's proud tradition of volunteer fire service has evolved over decades to meet the needs of a growing and changing community. Originally founded around local volunteer efforts, the Town's five fire stations—established through historic, mutually beneficial agreements (Appendix E)—provided critical coverage and protection. This agreement, whereby volunteers deliver fire protection services in exchange for the Town maintaining stations and funding equipment and training, remains foundational today, granting Waterford access to a network of five strategically located stations.

As Waterford grows, the Town has a unique opportunity to honor its rich legacy while thoughtfully planning the next generation of emergency services—services designed not only *for today's challenges but for tomorrow's vision*.

While census projections suggest that Waterford's overall population (currently 19,554) may remain stable or decline slightly, other trends paint a more dynamic picture:

- **Growth in the Senior Population:**
An increasing proportion of older residents will drive greater demand for emergency medical services.

- **Recent Development Activity (Table 2):**
Despite more modest population forecasts, recent residential and commercial building activity suggests a slowly growing population.
- **Town Size and Diversity:**
Spanning 37 square miles, Waterford features a challenging mix of rural, suburban, and commercial properties, each requiring thoughtful, responsive fire and emergency service coverage.

Several factors are shaping the evolving mission of Waterford's Fire Services:

- **Significant Commercial Entities:**
 - Dominion Energy's Nuclear Power facility
 - The proposed Data Center
 - The Crystal Mall complex
These assets represent critical infrastructure requiring specialized response capabilities.
- **Changing Building Patterns:**
Newer construction often features:
 - Higher population densities
 - Multi-story structures
 - Fire-resistant materials
These improvements enhance safety but also introduce new challenges, such as greater exposure to hazardous synthetic materials in fires.
- **Expanded Scope of Emergency Responses:**
In recent years, structure fires have represented a small fraction of calls. Firefighters are now routinely responding to:
 - Hazardous material incidents
 - Severe weather events
 - Service calls
 - Medical emergencies
 - False alarms

- **Distribution of Service:**
Analysis of call data indicates that emergency call volume is distributed across the Town, reinforcing the importance of maintaining all five fire stations.

6.1 Why Having Five Stations Matters

Maintaining a five-station model continues to provide tangible, town-wide benefits:

1. **Good Response Times**
The current station locations enable fast, reliable service delivery in alignment with National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards.
2. **Volunteer Retention**
Reducing or closing stations could diminish volunteer participation and necessitate more career staff, increasing costs.
3. **Strategic Coverage**
Stations are located near high-density neighborhoods and key assets such as the Crystal Mall, Dominion Nuclear Power Station, Interstate 95, Interstate 395, Route 85 and Waterford's schools, Town Hall, Community Center, Beaches, Niantic River, and the Thames River all spread over 37 square miles.
4. **Cost effective Insurance Rates and ISO Ratings**
Maintaining five stations helps preserve Waterford's favorable Insurance Services Office (ISO) rating, protecting residents from higher insurance premiums.
5. **Resiliency and Emergency Sheltering**
Each station provides a free accessible, safe location for residents sheltering during townwide emergencies and supports Waterford's integrated Task Force emergency management approach.
6. **Infrastructure Readiness**
Except for Oswegatchie (which the RTM has determined requires replacement), the other stations are maintainable through repair or renovation.
7. **Emergency Operations**
As Waterford's Fire Services evolve into a broader Emergency Services Organization, each station will play a key role in housing resources, personnel, and shelter facilities across the community.

8. A Proven, Successful Model

The five-station approach has effectively served Waterford for over 100 years, providing life-saving protection, community reassurance, and continuity.

Looking Forward: Waterford's Vision for Emergency Services

As Waterford embraces the future, its fire service must continue to evolve and potentially grow into a modern Emergency Services and First Responder Organization, ready to address a *broader range of public safety needs*. As noted earlier, such a change may warrant ordinance revisions and a charter update. A suitable name could be Waterford Fire and Rescue.

Key elements of this future vision should include:

- Investing smartly in facility upgrades, apparatus modernization, and training.
- Expanding partnerships with local and regional agencies.
- Applying for grants (such as SAFER grants) to enhance staffing and resilience.
- Adapting tactics to meet the challenges of changing construction patterns, population shifts, and evolving threats.

By recognizing the value of its current infrastructure and proactively planning for the future, Waterford is charting an exciting and responsible course—one that builds on its proud past while preparing for a bright, resilient and nimble future.

The future of Waterford's fire services is not about standing still. It's about growing, adapting, and leading—and the Town with careful planning can be ready to meet the responsibilities it will face in the future.

6.2 The Case for a New Oswegatchie Fire Station

In January 2023, the Fire Services Review Special Committee released an interim report recommending the replacement of the Oswegatchie Fire Station due to extensive structural and mechanical deficiencies. At the same time, the Committee strongly reaffirmed the Town's five-station fire service delivery model as the most effective and strategic approach for meeting Waterford's emergency response needs.

In addition to the broader reasons supporting the five-station model, the following specific points highlight why replacing the Oswegatchie Fire Station is critical to Waterford's future:

1. Strengthens Public Safety

- A new OFS ensures continued fire and emergency support for the Oswegatchie Elementary School and surrounding neighborhoods.
- It provides a modern, safe, and secure facility for housing part of the Town's paid firefighter workforce.
- It creates an ideal location for a future operational/educational hub for Waterford's growing team of career firefighters.

2. Supports the Town's Vision for a Combination Fire Department

- A new station advances Waterford's transition toward a combination fire services model, blending career firefighters and volunteer support—consistent with national best practices and Waterford's evolving needs.
- It positions the Town for a stronger, more flexible fire service well into the 21st century.

3. Enhances Recruitment and Retention

- A new, state-of-the-art station will boost the recruitment and retention of both career and volunteer firefighters.
- A modern facility focused on firefighter safety, training, and well-being demonstrates the Town's serious commitment to public safety services.

4. Protects Waterford's Long-Term Financial Interests

- Repairing and renovating the existing station is not cost-effective according to the Town's architect and construction project manager. The construction program manager provided an estimate of \$11.1 million to renovate the building as new, while a new building could cost approximately \$12.6 million, with contingencies and soft costs included in each.
- Delaying construction would significantly escalate costs—potentially requiring \$15–20 million within 7–10 years for new construction and interim repairs.
- Building the new station now is the fiscally responsible choice for taxpayers.

5. Continues a Century-Long Success Story

- Oswegatchie Fire Company has served Waterford from its current location for over 94 years.
- Maintaining a station at this location honors a proven, historic fire station model that has effectively protected all 37 square miles of the Town.
- Every major study and both recent Directors of Fire Services have strongly supported the five-station model for Waterford.

6. Enhances Townwide Emergency Preparedness

- Provides a local shelter for residents during emergencies.

- Maintains a strategic outpost for the staging of apparatus and personnel for rapid, effective responses to any emergency.

7. Aligns with Town Plans and Community Values

- Building a new station at Oswegatchie is consistent with both the existing and proposed draft Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD).
- Reflects the Town's values of community investment, public safety, and smart growth.

8. Reinforces Waterford's Commitment to Public Safety

- Waterford protects a community of 19,554 residents and a \$4.4 billion grand list of residential, commercial, industrial and personal property.
- A new, centrally located fire station will significantly strengthen life and property protection across the Town.

9. Demonstrates Strong Community Leadership

- In February 2023, the Representative Town Meeting (RTM) took decisive action:
 - Established a Building Committee charged with constructing a new Oswegatchie Fire Station.
 - Committed to maintaining the old station only as necessary until a replacement is built.
 - Approved funding for architect and Project Manager fees and accepted the conveyance of OFD property to pave the way for the first Town-owned fire station.

The preservation and modernization of Waterford's five-station fire services model is critical to meeting current and future community needs.

Building a new Oswegatchie Fire Station is more than a construction project, it is a clear investment in:

- Public safety
- Community resilience
- Long-term financial responsibility
- Waterford's future growth and success

Waterford's vision is bold, responsible, and clear: continuing to invest in the systems that protect its people, its property, and its proud tradition of excellence.