

Checklist



On February 11, 2020, the Township of Stanstead held an information meeting on the fire station construction project. Approximately fifty citizens were in attendance.

Here are the main questions asked at the meeting and the answers of the panel members: Pierre Martineau, member of the Township Council, Brian Wharry, Fire Chief of the Township and Martin Primeau, President of the Memphremagog East Fire Department.

A FIRE STATION IN 2020

What does a fire station look like in 2020?

A. That's a very good question. Knowledge has changed a lot in the last 5 years, especially on the issues of firefighter safety and exposure to toxic materials. We are not comparing fire stations with those of the last century, but based on new knowledge.

How can we be sure, if knowledge has evolved so much over the last 5 years, that the fire station will be up to standard in 10 years?

A. The biggest step, in terms of knowledge related to decontamination, has already been taken. According to the President of the Régie, the current plans for the fire station project meet all current standards and protect firefighters from the risk of contamination.

How long are we building a fire station for?

A. We're building a fire station for the next 40 to 50 years.

Introduce us to the firefighters of the Township

A. There are 19 male and female firefighters in the fire department, 14 of whom are first responders. Some of them have 20 to 35 years of experience. The majority, 17 to be exact, live in the Fitch Bay area. However, we have serious recruitment problems.

THE PROJECT

Why a fire station with 4 doors?

A. The number of doors was determined according to the fire department's equipment. We have to stop thinking in terms of doors and start thinking in terms of the surface area needed to accommodate the trucks. Furthermore, the most dangerous manoeuvre is when backing up trucks in the fire station. Some fire stations have eight doors, including entrance and exit doors. The cost of the doors is minimal and should not be considered a central issue in the total cost of construction.

What will happen to the Georgeville fire station?

A. Due to the distance between the Fitch Bay and Georgeville areas, a fire truck will remain permanently in the Georgeville Fire Hall.

How did the municipality evaluate the requirements and standards for the current project?

A. All elements of the fire hall, number of doors, living spaces, storage of bunkers, training room, etc. meet real needs and current standards as defined by experts in the field, architects and firefighters.

THE MULTIFUNCTIONAL ROOM

Is it possible to remove the multifunctional room?

A. In order to meet the needs of firefighters in 2020 and beyond, a fire hall should have a multi-purpose room; for training, meetings or to house firefighters who would be on call in the event of a disaster. It should also be considered that this space becomes a meeting point and temporary lodging for the citizens of the Township during emergencies.

Could the training take place in a room other than the one planned in the project?

A. It should be understood that the training of firefighters is done in the evening, that each time we must go to pick up the equipment (defibrillator, stretchers, etc.) and bring the equipment back to the fire station. Having to carry the equipment to each training session would not be optimal.

We agree with the fire station, but are hesitant about the need for the multifunctional room. What would be the cost of the fire station without the room?

A. The room, including bathrooms, storage and lobby is 2,200 sq. ft.

The construction price per square foot is estimated at \$148. The price for the room, including the bathrooms, storage and lobby is \$325,000.

Can the multifunctional room be used in conjunction with the other functions of the fire hall?

A. The biggest challenge is to isolate parking spaces for firefighters. In North Hatley, the fire hall has many uses and there has never been a problem.

If the multifunctional room did not serve a community vocation, would the dimensions remain the same?

A. The size of the multifunctional room has been planned as a whole. We tend to say that the dimensions would be the same for exclusive uses dedicated to the needs of firefighters.

Is there a danger of contamination between the fire station and the multifunctional room?

A. The fire hall is designed to avoid any risk of contamination. For example, the firefighters' bunkers would never enter the living areas of the fire hall or the multifunctional room.

COSTS

Is it fair to believe that the tax rate is higher in the Township of Stanstead than elsewhere?

A. In 2019, the tax rate in the Township of Stanstead was the lowest in the MRC.

If we compare with Ayer's Cliff, their debt rate is close to \$1/100\$ of the RFU (standardized property wealth), whereas in the Township, the debt rate is \$0.05/100\$ of RFU.

The level of service offered by a municipality is directly related to the taxes collected.

Did you obtain several budget estimates for the construction of the fire hall?

A. We have not gone to the tender process. At this stage, it is necessary to adopt a borrowing by-law. It must be based on budget estimates provided by the architects. It is only after the approval of the borrowing by-law that the municipality can go to a call for tenders.

How much would cost the fire station?

A. Budget estimate	2 409 000 \$
Tax refund	- 209 000 \$
Allocation of the surplus	- 500 000 \$
Total to be financed	<u>1 700 000 \$</u>

In concrete terms, on our tax account, how much would the amount dedicated to the loan cost?

A. For a property of \$100,000, (i.e. per \$100,000 of property assessment) the cost of the project is \$16.32 per year. This amount would be fixed for 5 years. In addition, the amount is dedicated to the repayment of the loan and would be shown on a separate line on the tax account.

RÉGIE DES INCENDIES

What areas are served by the Régie des incendies?

A. The Régie des incendies has 4 fire stations serving 10 municipalities. The Stanstead Township fire station can be called by Ogden, Stanstead, the Township of Hatley and even part of Magog. But the reality is that the Township's firefighters are very rarely called upon to intervene in other municipalities. Since the implementation of the Régie, the Township's firefighters have been to another municipality twice. It is also important to know that if the Township's firefighters are already on call and a fire is declared in the Township, it is the firefighters from the neighbouring fire stations who answer the call.

How can we justify the fact that the Régie currently pays \$30,000 in rent for the fire station in the Township? Is the amount fixed over time?

A. When the Régie was created, all the fire stations were considered obsolete. The amount was established based on the operating costs of these buildings. We are aware that \$30,000 in rent is clearly insufficient to cover the operating costs of a new fire station. Naturally, if the buildings change, the rent will be reassessed.

Would the Régie eventually want to become the owner of the fire station?

A. If we do it for the Township, we will have to do it for the other fire stations as well, which means that the contributions from the municipalities would increase. We will take the example of what is done elsewhere in Quebec and we will come back with scenarios.

Could the "bunkers" (*combat clothing*) be sent to a cleaner to avoid installing a laundry room in the fire station

A. A washer for this type of equipment represents an investment of \$4,000 to \$6,000. It is anticipated that each firefighter will have access to 2 bunkers in the future. We could do the washing in another fire station, but this would not be the best choice.

WHAT'S NEXT

Could the public be consulted on what happens next?

A. Through groups that are interested in the issue, anything is possible.

What are you going to do if the construction costs are higher than the budget estimates?

A. There will necessarily be a decision to be made by the council.

Will there be a follow-up with the citizens regarding the evolution of the costs?

A. The winning bid must be approved by council resolution. The bids received are public documents that can be consulted.

What about the signing of the register for the fire station / town hall project?

A. The draft borrowing by-law for the Fire Station / Town Hall project, as tabled, has been withdrawn by Council. It will therefore not be submitted to a referendum.

What will happen to the Town Hall renovation project?

A. At this time, the project has been put on ice. On the other hand, the working conditions of municipal employees are inadequate, so another solution will have to be considered.

February 20, 2020