



MINUTES of the Public Hearing of the Board of Estimate and Taxation on the Fire Response Study held on Thursday, January 28, 2021 in a virtual Zoom webinar, Greenwich, CT.

Chairman Michael S. Mason called the meeting to order at 7:00 P.M.

Board members in attendance:

Michael S. Mason, Chairman
Karen Fassuliotis, Vice Chairman
William Drake, Clerk
Andreas Duus III
Laura Erickson
Miriam Kreuzer
Elizabeth K. Krumeich
Leslie Moriarty
Jeffrey S. Ramer
Leslie L. Tarkington
David Weisbrod

Staff: Benjamin Branyan, Town Administrator, Office of the First Selectman; Brian Koczak, Assistant Fire Chief; Joseph McHugh, Chief, Fire Department, Peter Mynarski, Comptroller

Selectmen: Fred Camillo, First Selectman

RTM: Michael Basham, (D-5), Chair, Finance Committee; Jude Collins, (D-2) Appointments Committee (Cmte); Irene Dietrich, (D-8), Health & Human Services; Philip Dodson (D-8) Public Works; Mareta Hamre, (D-10) Alternate, LCC; Lucia Jansen, (D-7), Chair Budget Overview Committee (BOC); Lucy Krasnor, (D-5); Shawn McDonnell, (D-5); Henry Orphys, (D-7); Danyal Ozizmir, (D-5) Vice Chair BOC, Chair LCC; Finance; Diana Singer, (D-10); Louisa Stone, (D-10), Joanna Swomley (D-11) Education Michael Dawson;

PUBLIC: Ken Borsuk, Reporter, *Greenwich Time*; David Chass, VP, Round Hill Volunteer Fire Department; Robert Finn, Senior Manager, Matrix Consulting Group; Sandy Litvak, former Selectman; Dan Quigley, Chairman, Republican Town Committee, and RTM D-1; Horst Tebbe, GCTV; Peter Tesei, former First Selectman

Chairman Mason welcomed the audience and thanked them for participating in the Town's process of public comments. A webpage to gather public comments on the Fire Response Study

opened on 1/19/2021. Members of the public submitted their comments, which will be added to the public record, by utilizing the form posted on the Town website. Public comments closed at the end of the public hearing on January 28, 2021. All members of the BET will have access to submitted comments. After a status update on the process to date, members of the public were invited to speak.

Public Hearing Fire Department Response Time Study

At the peak of the Public Hearing, 66 people were in attendance.

- United States Senator Richard Blumenthal, - CT Senior Senator: (as a private citizen and Greenwich resident); spoke in support of the addition of a professionally staffed fire station in the northwest corner of Greenwich.
- Dan Ozizmir – RTM D-5: spoke in support of fire service reform based on the recommendations of the Fire Study by Matrix Consulting. After years of RTM debate, RTM volunteers produced a Time Response Study prior to the Matrix Study that validated the rationale for the professional study.
- Jim Alexander – resident of District 9: spoke in support of the total integration of Town fire coverage and a report on the ongoing financial impact on the Town budget.
- Mary Ellen Markowitz – RTM D-2: spoke in opposition to the Matrix Study characterizing the northwest area of Greenwich as “rural” and in favor of the same level of service as other areas of the Town,
- David Chass – Vice President Round Hill Volunteer Fire Station: spoke in support of the 2018 Fire Study that recommended the expansion of the Round Hill Fire Station to accommodate career fire staffing. In anticipation of a structural expansion, the volunteer firefighters are working on their goal of raising \$1.5 million.
- Rachel Khanna – RTM D-10: spoke in support of a northwest Greenwich fire station because basic safety is a responsibility of government.
- Gerald Anderson – Chair, RTM D-10: spoke in support of professional firefighters being added to the Round Hill Fire Station to improve safety in the area.
- Ryan Oca – RTM D-1 Vice Chair: spoke in support of northwest fire station as all residents need access to emergency services. He suggested increasing Mill Rate or use of long-term financing.
- Svetlana Wasserman – RTM D-10: spoke in support of northwest fire station as an emergency necessity and suggested increasing taxes.
- Nancy Grey – RTM D-10, Board member Round Hill Association: spoke in support of fire station in northwest Greenwich because the land area is one-third of total area of Greenwich and deserves adequate coverage.

- Marina Levine – Co-founder Indivisible Greenwich – spoke in support of a northwest corner fire house as fair and equitable for residents.
- Mary Flynn – RTM D-12: spoke in support of implementing the recommendations of the Matrix Fire Study for northwestern corner of Greenwich so as not to diminish property value and safety of residents.
- Diane Singer – RTM D-10: spoke in support of northwest Greenwich fire station because all Greenwich residents are entitled to safety and the Town is obligated to provide it.
- Wynn McDaniel – RTM D-7 Chair: spoke in support of new Fire Chief and Assistant Fire Chief having adequate time to determine the right strategy for the Town.
- Joanna Swomley – RTM D-10; spoke in support of northwest fire station based on response time and need of professional staffing; benchmark of Matrix Study flawed as rural, former Assistant Fire Chief validated need,
- Eli Schaefer – Director, Audubon Center: spoke in support of northwest corner fire station to protect the Center as a heavily visited cultural and environmental asset.
- Sandy Litvak – former Town Board of Selectman member: spoke in support of northwest corner fire station because of documented need without which a legal and economic liability is created.
- Dan Quigley – Republican Town Chairman, RTM D-1: spoke in opposition to the northwest fire station based on capital cost, operating cost and public's limited interest.
- Susan Khanna – RTM D-11: supports expanding coverage for equitability and protecting Town from liability.
- Janet McKenzie – Greenwich resident: spoke in support of northwest professionally staffed fire station for guaranteed 24/7 protection.
- Peter Tesei – former First Selectman & former Fire Commissioner: spoke in support of additional fire station and found Matrix Study to be deficient.
- Fred Camillo – First Selectman & current Fire Commissioner; spoke in support of new Fire Chief and Assistant Fire Chief having adequate time to analyze data and reorganize the Fire Department.
- Brian Koczak – Assistant Fire Chief: spoke in support of time to listen to all residents' concerns, history and details, and study the strategic plan.
- Joseph McHugh – Fire Chief: offered gratitude to the public for their input, expression of concerns and ideas.
- Shawn McDonnell – RTM D-5: spoke in support of an alternative interpretation of the Matrix Study characterizing it as not definitive for or against a professionally staffed

northwest fire station. He added that the professional staff would be a 20% increase to firefighting staffing and the ongoing cost of compensation was not bondable.

- Phil Dodson – RTM D-5: spoke in opposition to the argument that the Matrix Study validated the need in the northwest corner of Greenwich since response times throughout Greenwich did not meet the national professional standard. He quoted the Study's findings that a King Street fire station would not shorten response time away from that fire station and there was a low frequency of fire events in that area.
- Louisa Stone – RTM D-10: spoke in support of an appropriation of long-term bonding to build a northwest fire station in FY2022-2023.
- Ranjan Tandon – resident District 9: spoke in support of northwest fire station after listening to the Public Hearing speakers and will join them in working for its establishment.
- Lucia Jansen – RTM D-7: spoke in support of the Matrix Study validation of the RTM Study and in opposition to the inaccuracies of the 2018 Fire Study. Anticipates additional information on fire protection after new Fire Chief's analysis and reorganization.
- J.D. Khanna – resident of District 10: express concern about adequate resident safety.
- Mary Flynn – speaking a second time: expressed disappointment that the impact of COVID delayed capital spending.
- Joanna Swomley – speaking a second time: expressed disappointment that the RTM SOMR does not have a bigger impact on the recommendations of a northwest corner fire station.
- David Chass – speaking a second time: grateful for Public Interest shown by Hearing attendance and repeated appeal for Round Hill Fire Station renovation and for additional volunteer firefighters.

BET Chairman Mason thanked the BET Steering Committee for shepherding the Matrix Study and remarked that it is now the responsibility and role of the Fire Commissioner and Fire Chief to accept the recommendations of the Matrix Response Time Fire Study, and to create an action plan.

Adjournment

Upon a motion by Ms. Erickson, seconded by Mr. Weisbrod, the Board voted 11-0-0 to adjourn the meeting at 9:30 P.M. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,



Catherine Sidor, Recording Secretary

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William Drake, Clerk of the Board

Handwritten signature of Michael Mason in black ink.

Michael Mason, Chairman