



Legislation Text

File #: 190564., **Version:** 5

Discussion of Disposition of Old Fire Station 1 (B)

In April 2015, the City moved forward with building a “new” Fire Station #1 located in the 500 block of South Main Street. With the opening of the ‘new’ on August 11, 2018, the City has yet to make a final decision on the future of ‘old’ Fire Station #1.

A timeline for all is outlined:

- 8/22/19--Commission discussed its desire to retain the building and partner with a third-party organization for a long-term lease for adaptive reuse and for staff to draft an appropriate solicitation document #180555).
- 11/21/19--Commission provided direction and feedback to the ITN to solicit a partnership (#190564).
- 2/12/2020--An ITN was posted
- 5/6/2021--Commission accepted staff’s recommendation to begin negotiations with the University of Florida as the top-ranked third party to provide services. The Commission also instructed the City Manager to evaluate the structure for code and life safety code compliance, and provide a cost analysis including potential funding options to bring the structure up to code (#190564)

The City contracted with Brame Heck Architects, Inc. to perform a comprehensive analysis of the structure. Updates need are:

- Upgrades to the building structure to support increased loading from the proposed new occupancy;
- Replacement of all mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems which are approaching the end of their useful life;
- Addition of a fire sprinkler system throughout the building;
- Upgrades to the building to make it accessible as required by the Florida Building Code. Most costly is the installation of an elevator for the 2nd floor;
- Demolition and replacement of all interior partitions, finishes, doors, and equipment;
- Replacement of exterior windows and doors;

The report concluded that the proposed new use is feasible with the listed improvements and code compliance. It would also be less expensive to complete the upgrades versus razing the structure and constructing a new one on the site. Brame Heck estimated that approximately \$4.4 million would be the cost to bring the building up to code and be usable. Making the building code compatible accounts for between \$2.5 million and \$3.0 million of that amount.

There are no dedicated funds for the renovation or replacement of the building. Proposed options for moving forward are:

1. Leave the building vacant as is;
2. Issue a general obligation bond to fund the renovation or replacement. This is limited to the current bonding capacity available to the City. It would also impact future years operating budgets to pay for the debt service as well as ongoing routine maintenance of the facility;

3. Add this project to future Wild Spaces / Public Places Funding (contingent on a voter-approved future ballot initiative);
4. Add this project to the Infrastructure Surtax project list (contingent on a voter-approved future ballot initiative);
5. Sell the property and use the proceeds for a similar project and/or facility upgrade for the program.
6. Sell the property and focus on critical infrastructure needs in current city-staffed facilities.

Strategic Connection

Goals 1: Equitable Community, 2: Sustainable Community, 3: A Great Place to Live and Experience, 4: Resilient Local Economy, and 5: “Best in Class” Neighbor Services.

The estimated project cost is \$ 4.4 Million.

Staff recommendations are:

1. The City sells Old Fire Station #1; *or*,
2. Defer action until the results of the ballot initiatives are received.

Regarding the open ITN, the City needs to resolve this matter. Options include:

1. Cancel the ITN;
2. Defer the decision on the ITN until the outcome of funding Old Fire Station #1 improvements are known;
3. Negotiate with the University of Florida at a different location, such as the Duval Early Learning Center, where the City, County, School Board of Alachua County, and the University of Florida are already working on a similar joint project.

In addition to the recommended, the General Policy Committee will hear a report from staff on the condition of Old Fire Station 1 and on the ITN, and provide feedback.