

**FINAL REPORT OF THE BALLARDVALE FIRE STATION BUILDING COMMITTEE**  
**December 12, 2013**

**The Committee's Formation, Mission and Approach**

The Ballardvale Fire Station Building Committee (“BFSBC”) is a committee of 7 citizens<sup>1</sup> appointed by the Town Manager on November 17, 2008 and confirmed by the Board of Selectmen. The Committee’s first meeting was held on January 21, 2009 and more than sixty (60) public meetings have been held since. The BFSBC is an advisory committee that was charged [Exhibit 1] to make recommendations regarding the necessity to replace and relocate the Ballardvale Fire Substation (“BFS”) that is located on approximately one-third acre at the intersection of Clark Road and Andover Street.<sup>2</sup> The BFSBC was also asked to develop a basic schematic design and cost estimate for a replacement substation.

The BFS was built approximately 120 years ago at a time when fire apparatus was drawn by horse. The existing wooden facility is in very poor condition and does not meet current building and safety codes.

The Andover Building Inspector’s office surveyed the building on June 17, 2009 [Exhibit 2] and reported the following deficiencies and code violations:

1. Floor joists are undersized and over-spanned
2. Screw jacks supporting the first floor are designed to be temporary
3. Missing and broken bridging
4. Damaged walls and ceilings in the truck bay
5. Gaps in windows
6. Rodent droppings
7. No sprinklers
8. Not handicapped accessible
9. No fall-prevention barriers in upstairs storage area
10. Windows only 18” off the floor in upstairs exercise room
11. Peeling paint and wallpaper in staff living quarters
12. Missing floor tiles throughout
13. Stairways lack handrails
14. No soffit vents
15. Generator too close to the building (lot size provides no alternate site)
16. Rotting clapboards
17. Driveway apron in disrepair
18. Crumbling retaining wall without fall protection
19. Back porch in disrepair.

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<sup>1</sup> The current members of the BFSBC are Rebecca Backman, Daniel S. Casper, James Curtis, Michael Igo, Gary Rowe and George Thomson. There is one vacancy. Chief Michael Mansfield of Andover Fire Rescue sits in an *ex officio* capacity.

<sup>2</sup> The Town traditionally calls upon citizen task forces to advise and provide guidance for major building construction projects, such as new schools and the Town Yard. Like other such building committees, the BFSBC has worked with the Selectman, Town staff, and outside experts to collect data, evaluate alternatives, and make its recommendations.

If this were not a public facility, it would have been condemned long ago. There are no separate gender living facilities available for staff in the BFS. The basement becomes wet during periods of high rainfall. There is no space to store additional emergency equipment and vehicular traffic must be halted so that the single fire engine assigned to the BFS can back up an inclined driveway into its bay.

The BFS, at approximately 2500 square feet of usable space, is so small that only an undersized custom model fire engine with a very tight turning radius will work in the BFS. According to the Fire Chief, the current custom truck will require replacement soon. It will be more expensive to replace the custom fire engine than to purchase a standard engine that will provide more advanced firefighting capacity.

The BFS is too small to garage both a fire engine and an ambulance. The capacity to eventually add an ambulance is important because 25% to 27% of ambulance calls in Andover are from the area currently serviced by the BFS. Response times for ambulance calls for locations served by the BFS are slower (in some cases significantly slower) than the standards set by the National Fire Protection Association, the Insurance Services Office, and the American Heart Association, because responses to these locations must be served from the Central Station located in downtown Andover.

The current location is also not optimal for fire response times. The BFS provides fire and rescue services to residences as well as major commercial and industrial facilities in Lowell Junction<sup>3</sup> and off Dascomb Road<sup>4</sup>, and the lack of space for a full-size engine and/or ladder truck and ambulance may hamper or significantly affect service in the event of an emergency.

The need to replace the BFS was recognized by the Town as far back as the early 1980s,<sup>5</sup> but the project has never moved forward. In 2013, Town Meeting rejected a proposal to renovate the existing BFS.

Professional studies strongly suggest that Andover cannot provide adequate fire and safety coverage to its citizens and their property with only the fire stations on Main Street and on Greenwood Road in West Andover, near the Lawrence line. Andover contains approximately 32 square miles of land and is bisected by two major highways, Routes I-93 and I-495. If the condition of the BFS deteriorates to the point that it has to be taken out of service, there is a very real possibility that Andover Fire Rescue's rating will be downgraded, resulting in higher insurance rates.<sup>6</sup>

In 2009, Town Meeting<sup>7</sup> appropriated one hundred thousand (\$100,000.00) dollars to conduct a feasibility study for potential sites on either private or Town-owned land. Of that amount, to date \$29,929.04 has been spent for traffic studies, a topographical survey, a "21E" Environmental Site Assessment (ESA), and geotechnical studies including core samples and borings.

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<sup>3</sup> Including, for example, Gillette, Pfizer, Taylor Cove townhouses, Olympic Village II, and Market Basket Cold Storage Warehouse

<sup>4</sup> Including, for example, Agfa, California Paints, Hewlett Packard, Restaurant Depot, Brockway Smith, Vicor, Raytheon, and Cambridge Isotope Labs

<sup>5</sup> Eagle Tribune, March 7, 1985

<sup>6</sup> Insurance Services Office, Public Protection Classification (PPC tm) Program

<sup>7</sup> Warrant Article 34, Andover Town Meeting, Spring, 2009

In the firm belief that the Town urgently needs to replace the BFS to maintain acceptable levels of public safety services, the BFSBC turned its attention to locating a suitable site for a replacement substation. The Committee investigated dozens of public and privately owned parcels in and around Ballardvale. After receiving feedback, including some vocal opposition from neighbors in the South School area, the BFSBC also reviewed potential sites along South Main Street south of Wildwood and Ballardvale Roads. The results of that survey are addressed herein.

The Committee has always been aware that any new public safety facility will impact its immediate vicinity. Accordingly, the BFSBC held forums and informational meetings with citizens and the following stakeholders:

1. Board of Selectmen
2. School Committee
3. South School faculty and staff representatives
4. South School PTO
5. Finance Committee
6. Andover Little League
7. Andover Soccer Association
8. Ballardvale Historic District Commission
9. Andover Green Advisory Board
10. Town Manager
11. Planning Board
12. Individual selectmen and School Committee members
13. Andover Conservation Commission

The Finance Committee, Board of Selectmen and Ballardvale Historic District Commission all provided the BFSBC with liaisons whose insights were invaluable to the Committee in its dealings with various governmental bodies.

The Committee also benefitted from expertise provided by the following individuals and firms, some of whom contributed their services *pro bono* or on a reduced fee basis:

1. Chris Huntress, Huntress Associates
2. The Maguire Group
3. DJK, Inc.
4. Criterion Associates
5. Dr. Charles Jennings of Manitou, Incorporated
6. TRC Environmental
7. Geotechnical Consultants, Inc.

The following resource material was utilized by the BFSBC:

1. "Manitou Study" of October, 2007 [Exhibit 3]
2. Strategic Plan for Andover Fire Rescue dated August, 2008 by Chief Mansfield [Exhibit 4]
3. Space Needs Program by Maguire Group [Exhibit 5]
4. Fire Services Organizational Analysis dated October, 2006 by Municipal Resources, Inc. [Exhibit 6]
5. 2008 Andover Citizens Survey: Preliminary Report by Russell K. Mayer, PhD [Exhibit 7]

6. DJK, Inc. Traffic Study for four (4) sites along Woburn Street, dated August 6, 2010, as updated [Exhibit 8]
7. Phase I Site Assessment dated November 12, 2010 by TRC Environmental, as updated by report of December 3, 2010 [Exhibit 9]
8. Ballardvale Station Incident Statistics [Exhibit 10 –
9. “Analysis of Fire Station Location Alternatives, Town of Andover, Massachusetts” by Criterion Associates, dated December, 2013 [Exhibit 11]
10. South Elementary School Site Plan, by Pare Corporation, dated April 27, 2012 [Exhibit 12]
11. Power Point Presentation by the BFSBC [Exhibit 13]

The Committee posted notices and power point presentations developed for use during public meetings on the Town website. It developed mailing lists for notices sent to Ballardvale residents and it solicited feedback in the form of questionnaires. The project also received a substantial amount of coverage in the local press. Members took phone calls and emails and responded to individuals. Chief Mike Mansfield and Committee member George Thomson, a retired Andover firefighter, provided their expertise and experience as personnel who have operated fire and rescue equipment for many years and who are intimately familiar with the geography of Andover.

The BFSBC endeavored to make the entire process as transparent as possible, fully cognizant that a new substation will affect some people WHEREVER it is eventually located. Transparency was very important to the Committee, especially because opposition to one of the potential sites was based on assertions that the substation itself would pose a public safety hazard and/or would reduce property values in its immediate vicinity. Beyond anecdotal testimony, the Committee did not receive, nor could it develop, any credible data or evidence in support of these assertions.

This report describes the criteria for a replacement BFS location, the Committee’s site selection methodology and its site evaluation process.<sup>8</sup> It also specifically addresses the suitability of some of the more noteworthy sites. Finally, the BFSBC recommends a location for the replacement BFS. That recommendation is subject to evaluation by elected officials and Town Meeting, who are ultimately responsible for all capital improvement projects within the Town of Andover.

### **Site Selection**

It is fundamental that fire stations and substations be located within or as near as possible to population centers - residential, commercial and industrial - they are intended to serve. These factors should be carefully considered when determining the location of the replacement substation:

#### **General factors:**

- Areas that are susceptible to fire spreading from one building to another
- Life safety factor of buildings being close to one another
- Location near schools for rapid response (many municipalities in Massachusetts have fire stations located adjacent to or in the immediate vicinity of schools, including elementary schools)
- Visibility to passersby (fire stations are considered a safe haven and should be easily accessible to the public)

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<sup>8</sup> It should be noted that the BFSBC commissioned a second study to consider alternate sites based on opposition from neighbors to the South School site. [Exhibit 11]

- Optimize coverage areas and minimize response times to 4 minutes for medical emergencies and 8 minutes for fires

Vehicular safety for fire rescue vehicles and the public:

- View should not be obstructed by buildings or trees
- Line of sight should be a safe distance to exit
- Oncoming vehicles should also have a clear view
- Terrain (should not be on a hill or curve)

Apparatus Ramp (driveway):

- Should be longer than the length of largest vehicle to be housed in station
- Should be as wide as apparatus doors
- Should have adequate frontage on road
- Should be wide enough for apparatus to pull off roadway

Traffic considerations:

- Fire apparatus are subject to all traffic laws
- Only have right of way as provided by state law
- Traffic lights should be installed near station where needed
- Speed laws apply to public safety vehicles

Keeping these factors in mind the Committee initiated the site selection process by starting with the findings of the Manitou study, which recommended a location for the replacement substation within one-quarter mile of the intersection of Andover and Woburn Streets. The Committee determined that this approach was a logical starting point because a significant amount of work had been completed by the consultant who had analyzed voluminous data in recommending this general location.

To expand the search area, the Committee doubled the radius around the identified intersection from ¼ mile to ½ mile, so that the target area was four times larger than the Manitou study had proposed. The Committee set as a requirement that the potential site be at least one acre to provide enough land upon which to construct a building and operations large enough to meet the needs of Andover Fire Rescue. Finally, the BFSBC decided to focus initially on Town-owned property to save money. Town-owned land would not require a budget for procurement, as would the purchase of private property.

Using data provided by the Town's Planning Department on lot size, dimensions, and ownership, and using the Town's GIS mapping database, the initial candidate list resulted in a total of 27 sites that were within ½ mile of the Andover and Woburn Street intersection and were at least one acre in size. Of these sites, five were Town-owned and included:

- 55 Woburn Street (South School baseball field)
- 24 Woburn Street (conservation land across from Winterberry Lane)
- 17 Woburn Street (recessed from the road)
- 165 Abbott Street (former sewer project staging area, near entrance to Rec. Park)
- 268 Andover Street (access to the gravel pit, across the Street from the baseball field)

The BFSBC then applied a quantitative evaluation methodology to rank each of these five sites. The evaluation criteria used, which were determined by the Committee to be important to the ultimate success of the site to be recommended, included:

- Central Location
- Immediate Access to Primary Roads
- Sight Lines
- Adequate Size (1 Acre+) and Lot Dimensions
- Site Preparation Requirements & Costs
- Other Engineering Factors (hazmat, wetlands, geotechnical, etc.)

The first five criteria listed formed the basis of the evaluation process, while other engineering factors were applied against the sites following the initial screening. The Committee jointly scored each of the five sites on each of the five factors, assigning a numerical score from 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent) for each criterion. Following the first ranking, the sites at 55 Woburn Street and 24 Woburn Street received an identical score of 25. (See chart 1)

**Chart 1**

Site #	Site Address	Meets Lot Size Threshold (min. 1 acre)	Site Dimensions / Proportions	Proximity to Target Location	Access to Major Road & Lines of Sight	Level Topography / Site Prep Needs	
1	South School Field (corner of Andover St. & Woburn St.)	5	5	5	5	5	25
2	268 Andover St	5	2	5	2	1	15
3	17 Woburn St	5	4	4	3	5	21
4	183 Abbott St	5	3	4	2	2	16
5	24 Woburn St	5	5	5	5	5	25

As a second step, the top two sites (which received identical scores during the initial screening) were ranked in a head to head comparison, which resulted in the site at 55 Woburn Street being the clearly superior location. (See chart 2)

**Chart 2**

Site #	Site Address	Meets Lot Size Threshold (min. 1 acre)	Site Dimensions / Proportions	Proximity to Target Location	Access to Major Road & Lines of Sight	Level Topography / Site Prep Needs
1	South School Field (corner of Andover St. & Woburn St.)	X	X	X	X	X
5	24 Woburn Street		X			

The BFSBC then retained outside experts to evaluate other engineering factors for the South School/ baseball field site. A traffic study was performed, a wetlands evaluation was conducted, and a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) or “21E” study was completed to assess potential

recognized environmental conditions. The findings of these studies were uniformly positive: the location would not be negatively impacted by additional traffic as a result of locating a fire station at this site; no wetlands issues were identified; and no actual or potential environmental contamination was detected.

Following several public meetings to discuss the Committee's work and to present the initial findings and recommendation, it was suggested that the Committee should expand the search to also focus on privately-owned alternatives, despite potential land acquisition costs. Therefore, in 2011, BFSBC issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) for privately owned property. The RFP elicited only one response: a privately-owned single family home with land at 270 Andover Street, which is situated directly across the street from the South School baseball field site. This property appeared to offer an acceptable alternative; however, it was not preferred over the recommended site. The private site would be expensive to acquire, while offering no operational advantages to the Town.

In response to concerns raised by several citizens, the Committee also evaluated other sites. During this phase of the Committee's work, the following sites were suggested and considered:

- Lowell Junction area
- 1 – 3 Reynolds Street (private way between 231 and 233 Andover Street)
- 233 Andover Street (adjacent to Reynolds Street)
- Rec. Park/Sand Pits
- Dale Street
- Town-owned land behind South School
- Various Ballardvale sites including
  - The existing playground,
  - Ballardvale Green,
  - Land and buildings adjacent to the MBTA commuter lot
  - The Ballardvale Village Improvement Society's proposal to expand existing station
- 360 South Main Street (Faith Lutheran Church)
- 429 South Main Street (corner of Rattlesnake, formerly Lundstrum Gas Station)
- Dascomb Road, near the Tewksbury line

Some of these sites merit discussion in this report:

It was suggested that the replacement for the BFS be the proposed regional fire station to be constructed in **Lowell Junction**. Of significance, there are no definite plans to construct an I-93/Lowell Junction interchange. In addition, Massachusetts has had very little successful experience with regionalization of fire and rescue services. Given the remote location of Lowell Junction at the town's periphery, the Committee does not believe that the regional approach is a viable solution to Andover's public safety needs. Waiting another 5-10 years in the hope that a regional facility might materialize is not good planning. In the meantime, a quarter of the population of Andover is at risk due to inadequate emergency response times based on a fire substation that clearly needs to be replaced.

Another site was proposed off Andover Street at **1-3 Reynolds Street**. This "porkchop"-shaped lot consists of 1.8 Acres and it is set back a distance of 200 feet from Andover Street. The site size was considered adequate by the BFSBC. However, the 200 foot setback from Andover Street meant that fire rescue vehicles would access Andover Street via a narrow right of way and barely be visible from the road. This alone made the site problematic. In addition, the right of way is located very

close to the steep hill leading out of Ballardvale and poses line of site problems that were considered to be a serious safety issue. Finally, the Committee was cognizant of potential disputed legal issues related to the ability to use the right of way.

The **Ballardvale Village Improvement Society (BVIS)** submitted a proposal to renovate the existing BFS. As previously noted, Town Meeting voted against a warrant article of \$500,000 to be allocated for restoration. The article's proponent provided no building cost estimates, and it is not clear what could be accomplished for that amount of money. BVIS proposed turning the garage bays to face Andover Street, which would be better for trucks exiting. Also, a reconfigured station could have only two garage bays. The Committee did not support this proposal because a renovated structure would still be too small, and because the BFSBC firmly believes that the replacement substation should be located on the east side of the railroad tracks for maximum response and service efficiencies.

The commuter parking lot adjacent to the **Faith Lutheran Church** site was considered. There were several meetings held with church officials and a conceptual plan was developed for the site. It proposed locating the replacement substation in the commuter parking lot on the corner of South Main Street and Wildwood Road, and adding new commuter parking behind the present lot. After thorough review, it was determined that the site is too small. There are significant issues, including the adjacent wetlands, church parking, and commuter bus pick up and drop off. These issues do not take into consideration the cost of acquiring the land. Furthermore, and of significance to the Committee, is the fact that the site is located one mile from the target site, outside the ½ mile radius for optimal siting of the substation. Accordingly, this location was determined not to be a viable option.

Even though it is outside the ½ mile target radius for the substation, the Committee also investigated the possibility of purchasing one or more residential properties along **South Main Street**, near the Wildwood Road intersection. A formal RFP was issued and owners of homes in this area received letters of inquiry from the BFSBC. There were no responses from any property owners in that area.

The Committee received a proposal from an owner to purchase the property at **429 South Main Street**, site of the former Lundstrum Gas Station. It was permitted for construction and operation of a country store several years ago, but construction has not been completed. The property consists of a level 0.98 acre lot. It is paved and has a foundation on it. The site was subjected to the BFSBC's evaluation process and scored favorably. Unfortunately, this property is located much too far south to provide necessary fire and rescue response times and therefore was deemed by the BFSBC to be unacceptable.

The Committee did not at any time recommend taking property by eminent domain and leaves it to the Board of Selectmen to determine whether or not condemnation is a viable solution.

### **Recommendations**

The *Andover Tomorrow* forum, presented on November 20, 2013 by the Andover Economic Council and Board of Selectman, amply demonstrated that Andover's economic future and quality of life require thoughtful planning, taking account of both population increases and demographic changes – including an increase in the percentage of seniors. For businesses and residents alike, the quality and responsiveness of fire and rescue services is, quite literally, a matter of life and death. The BFSBC has reviewed dozens of potential sites in the southerly portion of Andover, both

publicly and privately owned, to relocate the antiquated BFS. The immutable factors that emerged from the analysis of experts and the Committee are:

- ❖ The existing BFS must be replaced;
- ❖ Response times are critical – ideally 4 minutes for medical emergencies and 8 minutes for fires;
- ❖ The current BFS location is too small to accommodate the size facility required to meet current and future needs;
- ❖ The fire substation should be built on the east side of the railroad tracks from Ballardvale. This takes into account the location and density of commercial and residential properties that have been built since the initial siting of the BFS more than 120 years ago;
- ❖ The volume of rail traffic through Andover is increasing. If the substation remains essentially where it is now, delays caused at the Ballardvale track crossing may result in unacceptably long response times for many properties serviced by the substation ;
- ❖ Failure to meet acceptable response times could make acquiring fire insurance difficult for commercial and residential properties in sections of South Andover; and
- ❖ The fire substation should be built within a radius no greater than ½ mile from the junction of Andover and Woburn Streets.

#### 1. The South School Site

Based on the Manitou and Criterion Associates Studies, and its five years of review, the Committee has concluded that the land at the southwest corner of Andover and Woburn Streets, currently the location of the baseball field beside South School, is the best choice for construction of a fire substation to replace the BFS.

##### A. The reasons for selecting this site are:

- The location abuts two primary roadways (Andover and Woburn Streets), permitting relatively easy access to all parts of South Andover. This conclusion is supported by the Manitou and Criterion Associates Studies. It is imperative that fire and rescue facilities be located where they can provide the shortest possible response times for the service area.
- Sight lines along Andover and Woburn Streets are excellent.
- The site is level and would require minimal site preparation.
- The DJK Site Traffic Impact Study confirms that relocating a fire substation to this location will result in no measureable increase in traffic<sup>9</sup>.
- The TRC 21E Environmental Site Assessment determined that the site is unlikely to be affected by contamination;
- A geotechnical study determined that the soils are ideal for construction of a structure like a fire substation.

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<sup>9</sup>The total average daily vehicle trips in and out of the BFS are 20. This includes, on average, 16 employee trips and 4 emergency responses. The vehicle trips from the new sub-station will not change immediately or appreciably. Even if a new ambulance eventually is based there, the number of daily trips will not change appreciably, as the Ballardvale engine is now used for emergency responses to which an ambulance would respond.

- The Town owns the land, so acquisition costs are not a factor.
- As confirmed by Little League and Soccer Association representatives, moving the current baseball field to a location behind South School<sup>10</sup> will be an improvement over its current location. Closer and additional parking, plus distancing the field from a roadway intersection, will enhance the safety of those involved with the sports teams.
- As confirmed by an independent study conducted by the Town<sup>11</sup>, traffic problems at South School will be greatly improved by constructing a driveway on the north side of South School and exiting onto Andover Street. This traffic improvement is consistent with minimizing traffic impacts of parent pick-up and drop-off routines at South School and permitting proper use of the fire substation.
- The Committee is confident that the site and replacement substation can be designed so as not to disrupt school operations.

B. The baseball field location presents certain considerations unrelated to providing the best response times for the protection of life and property:

- The property is under the control of the Andover School Committee and would require the Committee's approval for construction of a non-school structure. A transfer of jurisdiction from the Andover School Committee is required. The BFSBC recommends that the Andover School Committee approve this transfer because a fire substation at the South School (1) will have no effect on school operations and will not adversely affect students' concentration or classroom activities; (2) will enhance, rather than degrade, school safety by placing emergency responders in closer proximity to the school; (3) will occupy land rarely (at most, once or twice a year) used by the school for athletics or other school activities; and (4) will contribute to the safety of students and parents through new off-street traffic patterns for pick-up and drop-off.
- Some Ballardvale residents treasure the existing fire substation and would like to retain it in its current location notwithstanding the Town's changes in population over the last 120 years. While the BFSBC is sympathetic to those who favor the present site, that site simply does not allow fire and rescue apparatus to respond in a timely manner to emergency calls in sections of Town, which have grown enormously since the original BFS was built.<sup>12</sup>
- A group of local residents oppose building a fire substation at South School. Concerns they have presented are considered in more detail below.

C. Those opposed to the baseball field location have expressed a number of specific concerns. These concerns, and the Committee's responses, include the following:

- *Placing a fire substation at the corner of Andover and Woburn Streets will irrevocably alter the residential character of the neighborhood.*
  - The location currently has one Town use, an elementary school with a public ball field. A fire substation will increase the number of Town uses in the neighborhood to two.

<sup>10</sup> See plan of Huntress Associates, Inc., dated April 1, 2011. [Exhibit 13]

<sup>11</sup> See South Elementary School Site Plan, prepared by Pare Corporation, dated April 27, 2012

<sup>12</sup> When the original station was constructed, the population of Andover was 6,142. Today, it is 33,201.

Much of the new development is in subdivisions to the east of the tracks. Additionally, industrial development on River Street creates a level of need that did not exist 120 years ago. Response times are critical. A fire doubles in size every 30 seconds.

- The baseball field will be moved to a location behind the school, with additional parking and safer use by all concerned.
  - The BFSBC believes the substation and landscaping around the structure can be designed to be consistent with neighborhood structures.<sup>13</sup>
  - The amount of traffic generated from the fire substation will be minimal. In relation to the traffic generated by South School and current baseball field, fire substation traffic will be negligible.<sup>14</sup>
  - The existing BFS is nestled in a residential neighborhood, and there is no evidence that it detracts from the residential character of that neighborhood.
- *Fire substations are noisy and will be disruptive to the residents and students at South School.*
    - The use of horns and sirens on emergency response vehicles in Andover is minimal. Horns and sirens are not routinely used in low-traffic residential areas of Town.
    - Andover Fire Rescue policy is that horns and sirens be used only when necessary (for example, when approaching a busy downtown intersection).
    - Andover has a professional fire rescue department, so an alert siren is not sounded whenever emergency response equipment is needed, as occurs in communities which must employ a siren to summon volunteer firefighters.
    - Traffic signals will be installed on Andover and Woburn Streets to stop traffic for an emerging engine or ambulance. These signals will not include alarms, and will only be triggered in connection with an emergency response.
    - The traffic volume generated by a replacement substation (currently an average of 4 emergency responses per day) will be, as with the present BFS, negligible in relation to the existing traffic on Woburn and Andover streets.
  - *Siting a fire substation beside an elementary school is inherently unsafe.*
    - The BFSBC has searched for evidence to support this assertion, and has found none.
    - The Committee has repeatedly asked for supporting evidence from those making this claim, but nothing of merit has been provided.
    - Fire stations of all sizes are located near or beside elementary schools all over the country, including in Massachusetts communities.
    - No credible evidence has been provided or identified that siting a fire substation beside an elementary school has had or will have negative impacts on students.
  - *The fire substation will lead to increased fire truck traffic in front of South School.*
    - There will be zero change in the number of engines, ladder trucks, or ambulances that currently travel in front of South School.
    - The traffic pattern for emergency response vehicles will not differ from those generated by the current BFS.
    - In fact, were the replacement fire substation to be located on South Main Street, south of South School or anywhere along Ballardvale Road, there would be a net *increase* in engine, ladder truck and ambulance trips in front of South School.
  - *Property values will decrease in the vicinity of the proposed fire substation.*

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<sup>13</sup> See conceptual designs by Huntress Associates, Inc. [Exhibit 13].

<sup>14</sup> See footnote 9.

- Though this assertion has been made numerous times, the BFSBC has found no evidence nor been given any evidence to support it.
- Despite repeated requests for supporting data regarding decreased property values, none has been provided.
- The BFSBC has concluded that some people prefer and others prefer not to live near fire stations.

The cost to construct a 10,000 – 12,000 square foot two story facility (including three bays) is estimated to be \$6 million if constructed on Town-owned land, and an additional \$1.5 million if the purchase of private property is required.<sup>15</sup> The cost to relocate the baseball field and construct required parking and additional driveway enhancements is estimated to be \$500,000. As previously mentioned, the additional parking and driveway enhancements have been recommended by Pare Corporation in its April 27, 2012 site plan prepared for the Town and School Committee.

## 2. 24 Woburn Street (conservation land across from Winterberry Lane)

This site would be an adequate location to construct a replacement for the BFS:

- The site is owned by the Town and is large enough to accommodate the proposed substation.
- Traffic considerations are the same as outlined for the recommended site.
- The site is level.
- Sight lines along Woburn Street are generally good.
- Replacement of an existing facility (the baseball field) would not be required.

This location suffers from several factors not present at the corner of Andover and Woburn Streets:

- The land is conservation land. Removing this land from conservation use would entail endorsement by the Andover Conservation Commission, approval of Town Meeting, and an act of the Massachusetts legislature.
- The site is fully covered by trees and vegetation, requiring considerable site preparation.
- The Committee assumes that the site is “clean,” but no 21E Site Assessment has been conducted.
- The configuration of the lot (it is not square) will make siting of the substation potentially cumbersome.

The Committee has not obtained an estimate for the costs of site preparation required at this site. The cost of construction of the building would likely be approximately the same as for the recommended site.

## 3. Private land within ½ mile of the intersection of Andover and Woburn Streets

- The Committee has sent out several RFPs, seeking interest from private property owners.
- Only one property was offered (270 Andover Street), and that property has since been sold by the offeror.
- Because the Town owns approximately 20 acres behind South School and set back from Andover Street, acquiring land that fronts onto Andover Street might open the possibility of locating the substation on Andover Street.

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<sup>15</sup> See Space Needs Program by Maguire Group, Inc. [Exhibit 5]

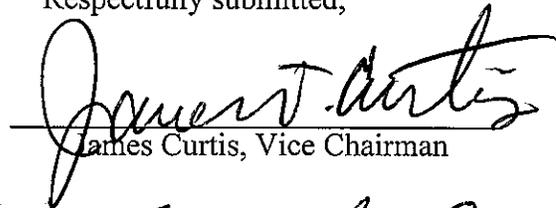
- To date, inquiries to owners of appropriate properties have been unproductive.
- The Town could acquire property by eminent domain, but that approach is not favored by the Committee or the Town.
- The process of eminent domain takings requires more time than the Committee believes is advisable for relocating the BFS. Moreover, should the property owner contest the taking, the Town would face costly litigation and the possibility that a court would award the property owner a significantly higher acquisition price than that tendered by the Town.

**Conclusion**

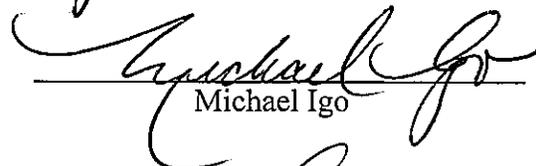
Evaluating the current BFS and finding a relocation site have not been easy tasks. The BFSBC is comprised of volunteers who have worked exhaustively to assess the best interests of our fellow citizens. Most of the committee members live within or have strong ties to the service area of the existing substation. We, like all of our fellow residents, have a personal stake in protecting the lives of our families and our neighbors. We have listened carefully to the concerns expressed by our neighbors, including those who would like to retain the substation where it is, those who want a modern facility in the best possible location, and those who oppose the particular site we are recommending. We have tried to balance these concerns. But, most importantly, we have tried to focus objectively on the factors that will contribute to saving lives and protecting property. We urge the Selectmen, the School Committee and our fellow citizens to move forward with this project.

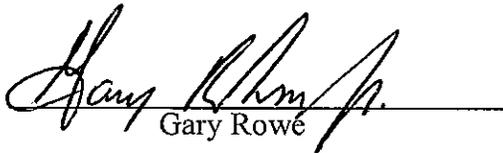
Respectfully submitted,

  
Daniel Casper, Chairman

  
James Curtis, Vice Chairman

  
Rebecca Backman

  
Michael Igo

  
Gary Rowe

  
George Thomson

## **Exhibits**

- Exhibit 1 - Charge of the Ballardvale Fire Station Building Committee, dated November 28, 2008
- Exhibit 2 - Andover Building Inspector's Office Report, dated June 17, 2009
- Exhibit 3 - "Manitou Study" of October, 2007
- Exhibit 4 - Strategic Plan for Andover Fire Rescue dated August, 2008 by Chief Mansfield
- Exhibit 5 - Space Needs Program by the Maguire Group, Inc., dated July 23, 2012, updated August 10, 2012
- Exhibit 6 - Fire Services Organizational Analysis dated October, 2006 by Municipal Resources, Inc.
- Exhibit 7 - 2008 Andover Citizens Survey: Preliminary Report by Russell K. Mayer
- Exhibit 8 - DJK, Inc. Traffic Study for four (4) sites along Woburn Street, dated August 6, 2010 PhD, as updated
- Exhibit 9 - Phase I Site Assessment dated November 12, 2010 by TRC Environmental, as updated by report of December 3, 2010
- Exhibit 10 - Ballardvale Fire Station Statistics
- Exhibit 11 - "Analysis of Fire Station Location Alternatives, Town of Andover, Massachusetts" by Criterion Associates, dated December, 2013
- Exhibit 12 - South Elementary School Site Plan, by Pare Corporation, dated April 27. 2012
- Exhibit 13 - Power Point Presentation by the BFSBC