

5. APPARATUS, FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT

Modern fire departments are called upon to perform a wide range of hazardous, complex and difficult tasks on a regular basis. To perform these tasks capably, they require a wide assortment of tools and equipment as well as sound facilities in which to house both equipment and personnel. This chapter examines the apparatus, facilities and equipment of the Maynard Fire Department.

Fire Department Facilities

The Maynard Fire Department operates out of a central fire station that is centrally-situated in the downtown area. There are no major rivers, interstate highways, railroad or other natural or manmade barriers that can obstruct emergency traffic. As a result, it has the ability to respond to emergency calls anywhere in the Town in an average time of three minutes or less.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Unfortunately the fire station is more than fifty years old and still has the original electrical and heating systems which are unreliable, break down frequently and are costly to maintain. The station is antiquated and does not adequately serve the needs of the Town or the fire department. Whether adjacent land could be acquired to permit the expansion

and renovation of the existing station is unknown. If this is not possible, it would be most advantageous to find a suitable site close by.

It is understood that a feasibility study was conducted a few years ago on the subject of constructing a new fire station and a site was selected on the edge of Town. This would not seem to be a desirable location since it is important to locate a fire station in a place that will provide prompt response to all parts of the community.

It is also understood that a committee was appointed several years ago to study the issue of constructing a new fire station but this was never accomplished due to other, more pressing, matters. But the present fire station is not getting any younger and the costs to maintain it can be expected to increase rather than decrease over time. Beyond this, the station severely limits the ability of the fire department to acquire and maintain suitable apparatus due to the ten-foot height limitation of the overhead doors. For all these reasons, a new fire station is sorely needed and should be constructed as soon as funds for this purpose are available. The Fire Chief did apply for a grant for this purpose from the federal government two or three years ago but it was not approved.

Recommendation 5.1: Town officials should place a high priority on finding financial support for site acquisition, architectural design and construction of a new station as soon as is practical.

Apparatus

Table 7 contains an inventory of the apparatus used by the Maynard Fire Department every year. The Town has adopted a Capital Equipment Budget which allows funds to be put aside each year for the purchase of major items of capital equipment such as dump trucks, fire engines and police squad cars. This ensures that funds will be available when major items or equipment needs to be purchased. However, there is no actual replacement plan showing the expected life cycle of each piece of apparatus that would help to plan for the timely replacement of fire apparatus before they become obsolete or too expensive to maintain.

Our inspection of the apparatus listed in Table 7 indicates that they are well-maintained and that all required tests and inspections have been performed on a regular basis. For the most part, the apparatus used by the department will meet its needs adequately well into the future. The single exception to this statement is the ladder truck (Truck 1), which is 25 years old and in need of replacement. This ladder truck was built specifically for the Maynard Fire Department to fit in the present station. It would be virtually impossible to refurbish this truck to meet National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards because it would add length to the truck and it would not fit in the existing station. Until a new station can be built or the existing one refurbished and expanded the best practice would be to keep the existing ladder truck in good repair and test the aerial regularly.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The Town is to be commended for adopting a Capital Equipment Budget that can provide for the timely replacement of a piece of capital equipment as it nears the end of its life cycle. The Fire Chief is to be commended as well for seeing to it that the existing equipment is regularly tested and that it is maintained in good working condition, With the single exception of Truck 1, the apparatus operated by the fire department should continue to meet its needs well into the future. If and when a new or expanded fire station becomes a reality, it should be possible to replace Truck 1 with a newer and more efficient model.

Recommendation 5.2: The Fire Chief should develop a formalized replacement schedule for all fire apparatus to aid in future planning and apparatus replacement.