

The Cross Mills Fire Station

- **Cross Mills Volunteer Fire Dept incorporated July 1938**

The Cross Mills Volunteer Fire Department was incorporated as a non-profit organization in 1938 to protect the homes and businesses in the Cross Mills area of Charlestown. With the help of an active Ladies Auxiliary, members raised funds to purchase a fire truck and build a station in 1939.

- **Original station built in 1939 with local fundraisers**

As the community grew the need for fire protection grew. Fund raising activities (bingo, community breakfasts, raffles, etc.) were used to purchase additional fire trucks, fire fighting equipment, additions to the building, truck repair/maintenance, and for volunteer training.

Several additions extended the original station to accommodate expanded services. These included housing a vehicle for the Charlestown Ambulance Corps.

- **1970 Addition to truck bay area**

Newer, larger fire trucks required an extension of the truck bay portion of the building in 1970.

Volunteer members of the Cross Mills Fire Dept. were called upon to fill rolls as firefighters, fundraisers, truck mechanics, and building maintenance. As our community changed, fewer members worked in the Charlestown area and their time became more and more precious. It became increasingly difficult to find volunteers who could contribute the amount of time needed to fill all of these rolls.

- **1974, The Fire District was formed by charter issued by the State Legislature.**

The Fire District began collecting a tax from property owners in Charlestown. The Fire District took over the responsibility for purchasing fire trucks, fire-fighting equipment, and for providing fire fighting training. The Cross Mills Volunteer Fire Dept. maintained ownership of the Cross Mills Fire Station and received rent from the Charlestown Fire District for housing the now district owned fire trucks. A similar arrangement was made with the Charlestown/Richmond Volunteer Fire Dept. and their station, which was located in the village of Shannock. This arrangement worked well for a time, but the burden on maintaining the fire stations took its toll on the volunteers.

- **2006 Station 1 completed (Rt. 2 and Rt. 112)**

In 2004 the Charlestown Fire District built a station at the corner of Rt. 2 and Rt. 112.

The trucks and equipment were moved from the Charlestown/Richmond station. The Charlestown/Richmond Volunteer Fire Dept. still exists and its volunteer members staff the station. The Fire District through the fire tax supports the expenses of the station and its trucks and equipment. Standard models of modern fire trucks are larger and the new station was designed to accommodate them.

The current Cross Mills Fire Station is not large enough to house new trucks. The existing fire engines housed at Cross Mills that are used in structure fires are 20 and 26 years old. While they still have useful life and will be refurbished, they will need to be replaced in the coming years.

- **2006 Fire District retained the Maguire Group to evaluate Cross Mills Station**

In 2006, the Charlestown Fire District, acting with Due Diligence hired a consulting firm (The McGuire Group {Architects/Engineers/Planners} headquartered in Foxboro, Massachusetts) to determine the most economical course of action:

1. **Renovate the existing building,**
2. **Demolish and build a new station on the existing site,**
3. **Purchase property nearby and build a new station on the new site.**

The consultant's report was clear that the most economical solution was to build on a new site.

From the Maguire Feasibility Study that was completed in April 2007,

"Given the required upgrades to the building, and site restrictions on the current parcel, the fire department has only one real option, and that is to construct a new facility elsewhere."

This past year, the Fire District purchased two lots down the street from the existing Cross Mill station and formed a building committee to plan for the construction of a new station. When completed the trucks and equipment will be moved from the existing station into the new and the Cross Mills Volunteer Fire Dept. members will staff the new station.

- **August 2007 District purchases land for new station**
- **December 2007 Building Committee begins work**
- **February 2008 Architect Lawrence Associates chosen**

The building committee began its work with the architect by looking carefully at the present Cross Mills station. What functions/activities took place? How much space is needed for the trucks and other equipment? What might be needed in the future? What areas in the old station were not needed in the new?

From this assessment we came up with a list of requirements for the architect to use in designing the building. It includes:

- Garage area for 4 fire trucks and an open bay for trailers and repairs
 - Mechanical work area
 - Space for firefighter gear storage
 - Wash area for firefighting equipment
 - Office for the chief to complete reports and store records
 - Meeting/training room
 - Physical fitness room
 - Men's and women's bathrooms
 - Company day room for volunteers of the fire company
- **November 2008 Gilbane chosen to provide cost estimating and value engineering services**
 - **January 2009 Geo-Technical studies initiated**
 - **February 2009 Initial Hearing before Charlestown Planning Board (three public hearings)**

Meeting this list of needs resulted in the building plans that were presented at a Public Hearing conducted by Charlestown's Planning Board on Wednesday, February 25th 2009.

- **March 19, 2009 Public Informational Meeting**

April 2009 the building committee responded to requests/suggestions from the Charlestown Planning Board and made changes to plans:

- Reduced building size from 9,998 sq. ft. to 8,901 sq. ft.
- Reduced parking spaces from 35 to 20
- Reduced paved area
- Additional landscape screening to buffer neighbors
- Reduced light poles from 13 to 5
- Decreased grass area and added natural vegetation
- Agreed to timers on outside lighting and full cutoff fixtures

- **April 22, 2009 Charlestown Planning Board denies application**
- **May 2009 Fire District appeals planning board denial to Zoning Board**
- **June 2009 Zoning Board overturned Planning Board denial**
- **September 2009 Chief Rathbone applies for federal grant**
- **March 2010 District submits pre-application for USDA funding.**