

## COAL CITY FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT Station #1 Improvement Project: Q&A

Many residents saw the Legal Notice in the March 26 edition of the Coal City Courant regarding the District's intent to issue Alternative Revenue Source Bonds not to exceed \$6,500,000. Undoubtedly, the Notice may have been confusing given it's legally required verbiage. So, with that in mind, the District would like to offer the following information to clear up any misunderstanding.

### **What is the Fire District planning to do?**

The Coal City Fire Protection District is planning to remodel and add an addition to our existing Station #1. **We are not constructing a completely new fire station.** While a new station would have been ideal, the costs were prohibitively high. Our current approach provides the most cost-effective solution for necessary improvements.

### **What type of financing is being used for this project?**

We are pursuing *Alternative Revenue Source Bonds* not to exceed \$6,500,000. These are **not** general obligation bonds that would impose a direct tax to fund the project. Alternative Revenue Source Bonds are debt paid *from the District's general funds*, just as a more traditional loan would be. However, Alternative Revenue Source Bonds command a better interest rate than traditional loans because, in the extraordinarily unlikely chance the District were to become insolvent, they are backed up by the District's taxing authority. Accordingly, the District chose to proceed with Alternative Revenue Source Bonds because they will save taxpayers a significant amount of money over the project's lifetime.

### **Why does Station #1 need improvements?**

When Station #1 was built over *60 years ago*, it was designed for volunteer firefighters who didn't require living quarters. Today, our station operates with full-time Firefighter/Paramedics who staff the station 24/7. The current facility has several critical deficiencies:

- **Inadequate living quarters:** Staff currently sleep in converted storage rooms
- **Outdated facilities:** Insufficient accommodations for both male and female personnel
- **Aging infrastructure:** Original plumbing systems need significant upgrades
- **Undersized electrical systems:** Current electrical service is inadequate for modern needs
- **Outdated bay doors:** Cannot accommodate the height of modern fire equipment
- **Insufficient decontamination areas:** Proper cleaning facilities for fire gear are essential for firefighter health and safety
- **Deteriorating bay floors:** Several cracks need repair
- **Inadequate HVAC systems:** Need replacement
- **Limited storage space:** Equipment organization is challenging

### **What improvements will be made to Station #1?**

The remodel and addition will include:

- Proper sleeping quarters to accommodate both male and female personnel
- Updated bathroom and shower facilities with lockers
- A functional kitchen for staff who live at the station during shifts
- A proper public entrance
- Dedicated training and exercise areas
- Specialized cleaning room for fire gear decontamination
- Taller bay doors to accommodate modern fire equipment

- Upgraded plumbing systems
- New 3-phase electrical power
- Replaced HVAC systems
- Repaired bay floors
- Additional storage space
- Potential window replacements (currently being evaluated)

### **What is the District's approach to this renovation?**

Our focus is on creating a functional, practical facility—not winning design awards. The improvements are targeted to address current operational needs, fix existing problems, modernize outdated systems, and accommodate potential future growth. The Coal City Fire Protection District is committed to using taxpayer funds responsibly while ensuring we can provide high-quality emergency services for years to come.

### **Why is the District moving forward with this project now?**

The timing is critical. With uncertainty surrounding the Dresden Station (our largest taxpayer), we had put plans on hold. Now that Dresden Station is in the process of applying for relicensing, we believe this is the appropriate time to proceed. Delaying further would only worsen the station's existing problems and increase repair costs. The Dresden tax base helps reduce the burden on individual taxpayers.

### **How has the demand for Fire District services changed?**

Our call volume has increased dramatically in recent years:

- 2009: 1,063 calls
- 2023: 2,490 calls (an increase of 1,427 calls)
- 2025 YTD (as of March 15): We are 88 calls ahead of last year's pace

This significant increase has required additional personnel and equipment to meet community needs.

### **What challenges is the Fire District facing with equipment costs?**

Fire and EMS equipment costs have risen substantially:

- Ambulance replacement costs have jumped to \$400,000 (an increase of \$60,000 in just over a year)
- Current delivery timeframes for new ambulances are 18-24 months
- New fire engines cost approximately \$1.2 million each
- A new aerial ladder truck costs over \$2.2 million

To manage these rising costs, we have:

- Extended our ambulance replacement cycle from 10 to 12 years
- Refurbished fire engines instead of replacing them (\$375,000 total vs. \$2.4 million for two new engines)
- Implemented rigorous maintenance programs to extend equipment life
- Added a fourth ambulance to meet increased demand and provide backup

The Coal City Fire Protection District is committed to complete transparency throughout this project and welcomes community input. We look forward to working together with residents to enhance our emergency response capabilities and create a safer future for everyone we serve.

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*For more information, please contact the Coal City Fire Protection District at (815) 634-4700.*