

Good Evening Commissioners.

Commissioner Canciello's explanation of how professional site searches are normally conducted identified the crux of the fire station dilemma.

The Town failed to demonstrate that the Bacon property is the only, or even the most feasible, site for the new station. So how can it hope to make a successful appeal on the grounds of "substantial hardship"?

The Town assured voters that an obviously unsuitable location was the only suitable option and many took that to heart. But choosing between preserving the Historic District and providing for "the public safety" was never at issue.

Emily Mitchell's assurances that 139 The Great Road would "save a whole lot of money and a whole lot of time" were groundless. Comparisons to the TD Bank site were cynical because eminent domain proceedings would have established the fair market value, not the building owner's inflated asking price.

And an eminent domain taking for a public purpose was likely to succeed, while going through the Historic District process would always have taken at least as long and the outcome was much less likely.

But the main reason the comparison was cynical was because it diverted attention from other feasible sites.

For the record, the following is just a small glimpse into what responses to my Public Records Requests (PRR) and other research have established:

- The Town couldn't produce a single e-mail, phone log, or anything else to establish that it ever contacted any of the interactive map's Site Candidates.
- The Town never produced any information to show that the relative merits of the properties had been scored– nor did it claim a PRR "deliberative process" exemption.

For instance: 1-9 Railroad Avenue was a candidate that offered great travel routes and response times, more square footage, and a similar valuation. But in the end, it was "ruled out due to needing to acquire multiple parcels to meet square footage required." So why was it on the map? And how could two property owners be an impediment unless they were approached and had no interest in selling?

- The Town's PowerPoint timeline started in Winter 2021, when the "Select Board requested staff to reevaluate sites, including historic and residential properties." But Public Records Requests failed to produce any evidence of a search before the next bullet point at least seven months later noted that "Staff reached out to Utah State University, learned that they were preparing 139 The Great Road for sale."

- Everyone assumed all along that the Select Board was engaged in the process in executive sessions. But when the minutes of those sessions were finally released it became clear that they weren't withheld because of what was said behind closed doors, but because of what was NOT said.

The Fire Station was not even mentioned in the first nine months of 2021 executive minutes! Not even a progress report to the Select Board. If the Board chose to leave the whole thing in Sarah Stanton's hands, they should have said so. In any case, the Town should still be able to back up the process with records showing precisely how it was conducted.

Those who think I am meddling in the town's business would be right if I were telling taxpayers how to run their children's schools or how much to pay Town employees. But as far as I can see, those who would disfigure the gateway to Bedford Center are meddling in the town's future.

Fifty years from now, many of these people will have died or moved on, but the results of undermining the Historic District will remain.

Would anyone really suggest that if 139 The Great Road had not been available there would be no new station? Or that a good alternative to TD Bank could not have been found?

It is time to stop trying to stuff a Size 10 foot into a Size 5 shoe and finally pursue the options it would have otherwise investigated.

No explanation was ever given for why advertising for potential interest wasn't the very first step in the Winter 2021 re-evaluation. And that's what should be done now.

Railroad Ave is no longer a possibility but who can know what might be possible until they ask.

Thank you.