

**City of Fairmont  
100 Downtown Plaza  
Fairmont, MN 56031**

City Council Minutes  
Special Meeting: Public Safety Feasibility Study 2023  
Brunton Architects & Engineers

September 19, 2024  
City Hall, 4:30 p.m.

**CALL TO ORDER**

The Fairmont City Council met in special session at the City Hall Council Chambers. Mayor Baarts called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m.

**ROLL CALL**

Council present:     Lee Baarts, Mayor  
                              Wayne Hasek, Councilmember  
                              Britney Kaweck, Councilmember  
                              Randy Lubenow, Councilmember  
                              Michele Miller, Councilmember

Absent:                 Jay Maynard, Councilmember

Staff present:         Matt Skaret, City Administrator  
                              Matthew York, Director of Public Works/Utilities  
                              Paul Hoye, Finance Director  
                              Michael Hunter, Chief of Police  
                              Bryan Kastning, Fire Chief  
                              Betsy Steuber, City Clerk

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

The City Council and all present stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Motion was made by Councilmember Lubenow, seconded by Councilmember Miller to approve the agenda as presented. All present voted in favor. Motion carried.

**ROTATING VOTES**

Please note that votes taken by roll call are called by the City Clerk on a rotating basis; however, the written minutes list the Councilmembers in alphabetical order.

**NEW BUSINESS**

Prior to Ginnie Schneider (Architect & Project Manager) and Corey Brunton, (President & Chief Executive Officer) with Brunton Architects & Engineers (hereinafter referred to as "Brunton") presenting the Public Safety Feasibility Study 2023, Administrator Skaret introduced this item of business. While no money was budgeted in 2024 or 2025 for a new fire hall, city hall or combination of the two, Administrator Skaret noted the purpose of the meeting is to inform Council of why the study was conducted and provide estimated costs of the various options.

### Project Timeline & History

May 2023: City contracted with Bruton to conduct a fire hall study

July – October 2023: Fire, Police, and City Staff worked with Bruton to conduct a needs assessment and facility options. Administrator Skaret stated due to the completion of the WOLD Study, which identified \$3.7 million in work for City Hall, it was worth having Bruton explore options for adding a City Hall component to a Fire Hall.

With offices out of Mankato and Minneapolis, Schneider shared images of completed municipal projects by Brunton across Minnesota. Schneider noted many projects outside of the metro area are combination facilities (combining fire, city hall, police and/or ambulance) due to finding efficiencies with multiple groups under one roof, ultimately saving the community money.

Brunton's approach is to focus on the "big picture", creating efficient structural systems by designing compact efficient structures while maximizing budget dollars. Schneider noted the process with the City started a little over a year ago, beginning with a feasibility study, meeting with the departments, conducting a needs assessment and establishing a scope of work.

### Existing Facilities Evaluation

Schneider mentioned a prior facility evaluation of the Fire Hall was conducted in 2015, and they supplemented that study with their additional observations. Additional safety concerns and general findings identified include:

- apparatus bays only 12 feet back from the sidewalk creating sight line and safety concerns when departing
- firefighter parking is not marked nor efficient (firefighters are parking on the street, running into the building from all directions)
- only one pull through apparatus bay with the other 6 apparatus bays being double loaded, and back in only (due to the narrowness of 4<sup>th</sup> Street, traffic is blocked backing into the facility)
- facility does not meet new standards regarding "hot, warm, and cold zones" allowing for physical and mechanical zone separation
- roof leaks throughout the building (roof is dated and only two roof drains)
- no exhaust capturing systems in apparatus bays (diesel fumes)
- gear lockers are located in the apparatus bay (this is concerning due to the tight quarters and diesel fumes)
- no designed tower for hose drying and decontamination after calls
- lack of office space, storage space, and bay space to house equipment on-site

- site facilities are not ADA compliant
- no dedicated space for fitness equipment or to conduct training
- apparatus doors are short and narrow for new equipment

#### Space Program

Brunton met with Fire and City staff to develop a space needs study with the understanding of exploring a single (fire) and combination concept (fire/city hall).

#### Existing Facilities Options (Fire Hall)

Brunton evaluated the existing fire hall site for renovation/addition concepts, knowing there are issues with the current site, but to explore what the scope could look like for the facility.

##### Option #1 & Option #2

Options #1 & #2 consisted of building a second floor or a partial second floor over the apparatus bays. These options were determined not feasible due to the facility's roof design.

##### Option #3 & Option #4

Options #3 & #4 include a single bay addition to the apparatus bay and a remodel of the existing administrative wing. Option #4 also includes an addition to the administrative wing.

##### Option #5 & Option #6

Options #5 included a bay addition and demolition of the administrative wing of the building, while Option #6 included a bay addition, two stories and a two-story addition to the administrative wing. Option #6 was the only renovation concept that fit the space program developed with Fire and Brunton. The cost estimation of Options #5 & #6 involves continuing operations of the fire department; with demolition and construction needing to be phased in and incremental in nature.

Cost estimates, for all options, assume 2025 construction.

#### New Construction Concept

A generic site for new construction was examined (location: NW corner of 4<sup>th</sup> Street and Downtown Plaza) to illustrate the feasible options that exist. This concept only site was selected due to its location for response time and the minimal number of property owners involved for potential acquisition.

Costs listed for the new construction concepts is for construction only – site acquisition costs were not considered.

### Option #1 – Fire Hall

Option #1 consists of a new two-story Fire Hall with pull-thru apparatus bays allowing for departure in multiple directions with ample site space and storage.

### Option #2 – Combination Fire Hall & City Hall

Option #2 allows for the combination of a fire hall and city hall with pull thru apparatus bays, dedicated parking spaces and ample site spaces for both entities.

Schneider concluded with stating the City has many options, weather it be a renovation/addition project or new construction project for any site the city identifies.

In discussion, Councilmember Miller inquired why the design including the Police Department was not presented. Director York indicated that at the time the study was taking place, conversations about the law enforcement center were also occurring. Director York stated Brunton examined options including a Police Department, but things have changed since the development of the study and that including the Police Department is not the focus at this time unless Council directs otherwise.

Councilmember Miller was interested in the financial benefits of the fire, police and city having a combination facility versus paying the County rent (for law enforcement), amongst other charges.

Councilmember Kawecki voiced support in hearing the options including the Police Department. Schneider shared the concept for fire, police and city hall, was a three-story concept which can referenced in the packet materials.

Councilmember Kawecki expressed concern for the firefighters as the building is not meeting safety standards, but stated there are so many expenses on the taxpayers.

Councilmember Lubenow inquired on the City's bond capacity considering current and upcoming projects. Director Hoye stated the debt limit is based on a percentile of our taxable market value, which is just over \$30 million with our current debt limit just over \$30 million, currently with \$6 million for the public works building counting against that limit. Director Hoye stated \$6 million is currently counted against that limit for the public works building and he noted on September 23, Council will consider a five-year street reconstruction plan that bonds

would be issued for, and count against the debt limit, leaving the City with a debt limit of \$18 million.

Discussion and questions were raised about site identified in the new construction concepts. Director York reiterated that site was utilized for concept purposes only, prior to Brunton offering to conduct brief site analyses for other potential sites prior to property acquisitions.


While not fond of increasing city debt, Councilmember Miller expressed interested in exploring options and continuing discussions on this topic instead of "pushing it down the road".

Councilmember Kawecki expressed interest to find additional funding options. Director Hoyer stated improvements to city buildings are included in the City's 5-year capital improvement plan (CIP), and Council can opt to update the CIP to meet the needs and times for the City.

#### ADJOURNMENT

Motion was made by Councilmember Miller, seconded by Councilmember Lubenow, to adjourn the meeting, as there was no further business to come before the Council. All present voted in favor. Motion carried. The Fairmont City Council adjourned at 5:34 p.m.

ATTEST:

  
Betsy Steuber, City Clerk

  
Lee C. Baarts, Mayor