

UPDATED: Notes on Wilmington's Fire Station Restructuring Plan

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July 9

The *Star News* [reported yesterday](#) that Wilmington Fire Chief Buddy Martinette briefed City Council on the fire station restructuring plan on Tuesday. His presentation can be [viewed here](#) in an audio and video recording of yesterday's meeting. His segment starts at 00:14:26. His slides include these high-level points about the plan:

- Deployment plan is a new system with nine stations instead of eleven.
- Ten engines, four trucks, one rescue.
- No reduction in staffing.

He also notes other objectives have already been completed: automatic aid agreement with New Hanover County FD, participation in a regional incident management system and regional tactical guidelines, and a programmed fleet replacement schedule for every piece of apparatus.

His presentation also includes an update on the new Station 3, and the bids they've received on the project. There are some options for council to consider, such as building the station minus one of the four bays. Or, minus two of the sleeping areas. Or, minus both. Plus a bid option of adding a security fence to the employee parking.

The *Star-News* story includes this partial image of the Station 3 design rendering:



July 8

[Firefighters for a Safer Wilmington](#) is a Facebook group, and a social media movement in response to the fire department's fire station plan. They oppose the closures and their position is noted in this handout, which is posted on the site (in the photos gallery).

Reminds me of a letter to the editor of the *News & Observer* written by myself a double decade ago (in collaboration with firefighters), when the Raleigh Fire Chief at the time was proposing closing Station 5 and 6, and Station 1 and 3, and building a pair of replacement, consolidated stations. The plan was later rejected by City Council.

Your Fire Station Is Closing!




Echo Farms Station 6 Municipal Golf Course Station 4

When seconds count...We'll only be minutes away

The Wilmington Fire Dept. Administrative Staff has proposed the closing of four(4) fire stations and increasing response times to you in your time of need.

The closing of station 3 at 2633 Princess Place Dr, Station 4 at 310 Wallace Ave (Municipal Golf Course), Station 5 at 1502 Wellington Ave, and Station 6 at 3939 Carolina Beach Rd will increase response times in the city by over 1.5 minutes. The W.F.D. Administration has also proposed to buy 4 acres of land at a cost of over 1.2 million dollars to factory. This plan would consolidate 4 city stations into 2, at a cost of 3 million dollars for each new station. An additional 3.5 million has been proposed for the purchase of new equipment for these new stations.

You will be paying the same amount of taxes for a reduced service, decrease in safety and increased response times to you and your family. Do you think this is fair?

In the past four years under the current fire administration the City of Wilmington has had over 12 fire fatalities. That is an average of 3 per year. Increasing response times to our customers will only increase this average over time. Our mission as firefighters is to help the citizens of Wilmington in their time of need. Now we need your help! Please contact your City leaders and Fire Chief to help us stop the reduction of Fire Stations in the City of Wilmington. Help us be able to continue our current level of service to you.

Follow us at www.Facebook.com/WFDsafewilmington

Chief Buddy Winkels 910-343-2892 or 910-443-4981 buddy.winkels@wilmington.gov	Neil Anderson 910-341-0204 neil.anderson@wilmington.gov
Mayor Bill Sells 910-323-2898 or 910-341-7913 bill.sells@wilmington.gov	Charles Rasmussen 910-343-0887 or 910-200-1244 charlie.rasmussen@wilmington.gov
Earl Stinson 910-399-0541 earl.stinson@wilmington.gov	Laura Padgett 910-763-0742 laura.padgett@wilmington.gov
Margaret Hayes 910-221-0541 margaret.hayes@wilmington.gov	Kevin O'Grady 910-254-9505 or 910-351-8858 kevin.ogrady@wilmington.gov

June 16

FireNews.net yesterday posted a story originating with WECT, that the Wilmington Fire Department is planning the restructuring of its fire stations. The plans, which have been cooking for some years, include the closure of four stations and the construction of two new stations. (Guessing that the "closure" aspect will be the prominent or first-appearing detail in subsequent headlines and stories.) Here's a hastily constructed overview of the story and the details gleaned thus far. Still have some to add. Still need some validation, such as... does WFD have just two ladder companies? But other aerial apparatus, with some engines operating quints, correct? And what are the ages of the stations planned for closure?

More later. Watch this space.

Department statistics:

- Serves population of 109,922 (2012).
- Serves area of 1,849.8 square miles.
- Eleven fire stations.
- Twelve engine companies.
- Two ladder companies.
- One rescue company.
- 207 uniformed personnel, 189 who respond to calls.

Four stations planned for closure:

- Station 4 at 310 Wallace Drive - Engine 4
- Station 3 at 3933 Princess Place Drive - Engine 3
- Station 5 at 1502 Wellington Avenue - Engine 5
- Station 6 at 3939 Carolina Beach Road - Engine 6

Two stations planned for construction, and one company relocated:

- Station 3 moved to Cinema Drive.
- Engine 4 personnel combined with crew at Station 8.
- Station 5 and Station 6 combined to new station on Shipyard Drive.

Closure planning:

- Station changes presented to City Council on June 6, 2011.
- Based on/influenced by facility study conducted in 2008 by Stewart-Cooper-Newell, that examined Stations 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and three divisions (Logistics, Training, Fire Prevention)
- Savings of over \$6 million, plus ongoing operational costs of running four stations. Cost compared to \$15 million to replace all of the

stations, which included recently rebuilt Station 2.

Construction planning:

- Budget for each new station between \$2.5 and \$3 million.
- Station 3 on Cinema Drive, planned 10,000 square-feet, city soliciting bids.
- Station 5 at 680 Shipyard Boulevard, smaller than Station 3.

Facility Study

Issues included:

- Station 3 lacks adequate interior space and only sits on .82 acres.
- Station 4 lacks adequate interior space and has bays that may be too narrow for modern apparatus.
- Station 5 sits on just .477 acres creating "extremely challenging obstacles(s) for improvement of the station."
- Station 6 has limited parking for staff and visiting public.
- The stations are not current with hurricane, seismic and energy codes.
- The HVAC systems are old.
- The facilities are not compliant with current ADA and storm water standards and codes.

Consultant-offered solutions for each station at different price points:

- Selective demolition and renovation of existing station with a new single story addition. Price range: \$1,621,440 to \$1,811,460.
- Purchase of adjacent property and construction of a new single story station on the existing site. Price range: \$1,994,000 to \$2,342,000, plus the cost of land.
- Construction of a multi-story station on existing site. Price range: \$2,454,000 to \$2,727,400.
- Construction of a new station on a new property site. Price range: \$1,994,000 to \$2,202,400, plus the cost of land.
- Interior renovation (Station 5 only): \$430,730 to \$559,510.

Consultant recommendations:

- Station 3 (mid-priority): Construct a new building on a new site.
- Station 4 (high priority): Construct a new building on the existing site.
- Station 5 & 6 (low priority): Construct a new building on a new site.

Forthcoming

- Response time changes cited in story.
- Reaction and social media campaign from firefighters.

Sources

- Bid advertisements for Station 3.
- City of Wilmington memorandum, May 7, 2013 - Found via Google.
- [FDmaps.com - Wilmington](#)
- [Port City Daily](#) - Cinema Drive fire station still in design, August 6, 2013.
- [Port City Daily](#) - With fire station on Cinema Drive, two others in town would close, March 3, 2013.
- [WECT - Fire Station Facts and Figures](#), June 18, 2014.
- [WECT - WFD Restructures Stations: How it Impacts You](#), June 18, 2014.

Name: (real name

Remember personal info?