

Alleghany Firehouse Improvement Project Update

October 18, 2021 prepared by Rae Bell

As mentioned at last month's meeting: The estimate for doing the entire job at prevailing wage came to \$200,000. This includes 15% for contingency. I went back to the engineer to see what could be done to possibly lower the cost of the project. Making the roof structure narrower would not help because as a "free standing" structure its narrow width in relation to its length is part of the problem for the snow load and earthquake requirements. We did come up with an alternative plan for the footings for the steel beams that would eliminate one concrete pour and save about \$5,000.

Since the last meeting I asked the contractor for an estimate of the savings if the room that was originally planned as a food pantry was removed from the plans. He came back with a savings of \$15,000. So, with the change to the footings above and eliminating the food pantry the savings would be approximately \$20,000, leaving a new project cost of \$180,000 .

I finally caught up with our USDA rep. Mike Vukas last week and we had a very long conversation. Regarding the amount of funding available to the district, it is rather complicated. He explained that the money that was already approved: \$28,500 is still there. If we want to request more money, he has to look at our ability to make loan payments FIRST and that determination is made from the audited financial statements. If the USDA determines that the district is able to make loan payments then it doesn't qualify for additional grant money. Currently the interest rate is 2.1% on a 40-year loan.

Based on the 2020 audit docs provided to USDA in May, the district would qualify for up to \$197,000 in loans. If we are trying to get more grant money, which of course is what we want, the USDA looks at the budget to make that determination. I sent him our most recent budget so that he could look again.

Mike Vukas and I tried to come up with a less expensive plan for making the firehouse ADA compliant and short of eliminating an engine bay, we did not come up with anything. Regarding the high cost of the project: it is the engineering requirements and ADA requirements for PUBLIC buildings that have blown this project from a simple roof extension into something much more expensive than we imagined, that and the State's prevailing wage rules. A LOT of time and energy has gone into getting to the point where we are:

- Project was developed over a period of several years.
- Site plan valued at approximately \$12,000 donated by engineer Kip Lybarger.
- Building plans prepared by Mark Jokerst for \$1,380 (50% donation).
- Plans approved by both the County and the USDA after six months of back-and-forth.
- Grant for 75% of the estimated materials cost of \$38,000 or \$28,500 awarded by USDA.
- Sierra County Building permit issued earlier this year.
- Updated materials quotes and other quotes obtained in 2021.

The only other potential funding source that I have found so far, is the Disaster Mitigation Program that CDF is administering. According to CDF it cannot be used to match other Federal Dollars such as USDA, but when I talked to Mike Vukas he encouraged me to pursue this money. Possibly we could get a grant via CDF and a loan from USDA.

The Hazard Mitigation funding requires that the district adopt a Hazard Mitigation Plan. We can also use the County's Hazard Mitigation Plan. I spoke to Lee Brown with Sierra County OES and he estimates four years before the County's plan is done. Based on this information, I went ahead and sent a technical assistance request to CDF to help Pliocene Ridge put together a Hazard Mitigation Plan. Once that is in place we could pursue money for other projects as well, such as the lift for the Pike Firehouse. This is one of the few funding sources that I have found that covers improvements to firehouses.

It is taking much longer than anticipated to come up with any hard figures for actual cost to the district.

As a refresher, here is a summary of the project's goals from several years ago.

Problems to be addressed by project:

- Inadequate drainage on the west side of the firehouse causing rot.
- Lack of safe pedestrian access, especially when there is ice or snow.
- Lack of ADA compliant access & bathroom.
- Lack of a second exit when snow is on the ground. (Snow blocks one door, see picture)

What is planned:

- Earth work to address the drainage problem will include the installation of French drains and a concrete slab.
- The existing roof will be extended by 8 feet creating a covered walkway on the west side of the building. (Due to Alleghany's heavy snow load requirements the frame will be partially made of steel)
- Stairs with a handrail will double as a retaining wall and make access safer when it is icy.
- A "food pantry" approx. 7.5' by 7.5' will be built under the north end of the new roof. (2021 note: this part of the project might be eliminated)
- The bathroom will be made ADA compliant.
- Both building entrances also will be ADA compliant with year-round access.
- The county is providing an ADA parking spot.

