

## Panel to mull fire department's needs

Written by Mark Jaeger  
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### **Fredonia firefighters have been coping with cramped conditions at fire station for decades**

The future needs of the Fredonia Fire Department will come under close scrutiny by the Fire Department Modernization Committee, which was created by the Fredonia Village Board last week.

Trustee Chuck Lapicola will serve as chairman of the ad hoc panel, joined by trustees Scott Ehaney and Mark Edbauer, Fire Chief Brian Schommer and fire department members Brian Weyker and Adam Gahan.

The shortcomings of the fire station on South Milwaukee Street have been a concern of department members for decades.

A 2000 facility needs assessment outlined significant space problems in the building. The study concluded that the station be expanded or a new facility built.

Budget concerns and other municipal priorities deferred action on a new fire building.

The issue came to light again as the Public Safety Committee discussed plans to replace a pumper truck that is more than two decades old.

Fire department officials noted that the truck is scheduled to be replaced in 2013, and is expected to cost between \$225,000 and \$250,000.

When the truck replacement was discussed at last month's board meeting, trustees asked Schommer whether the truck purchase could be deferred because of the current budget crunch.

"The truck is in pretty good shape. We can take care of some body work and make it last a few more years," Schommer said. "I just want to know what to plan for on replacing that truck."

The truck replacement is tentatively scheduled to come one year after an ambulance is purchased, which could stretch the village financially. A new ambulance is expected to cost between \$140,000 and \$160,000.

"If we can get two more years, we might be able to make the ambulance a cash purchase instead of financing it," Village President Joe Short said.

Of equal concern to village officials was whether the new pumper truck would be too large for the existing building.

The specifications show the truck would fit in the building, but officials said that does not diminish the need for a new station.

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"The time is going to come when we are going to need a new station, and there is not enough room for expansion in Fireman's Park," said Edbauer, a former fire department member.

When a modernization committee was proposed to assess the department's needs, Schommer supported the idea although warned the department would be leery of linking its vehicle replacement with a new facilities study, which is likely to be a lengthy process.

"I don't want to tie up equipment with this study, to the point where we can't get replacements until a building is decided. This is something we have been talking about for 15 years," Schommer said.

"I am concerned that we have a truck that is going to be 25 years old. I don't want it to be 30 years old before we can replace it."

Short assured the department that the focus of the modernization committee will be building needs, not equipment.