



Memorandum

Memorandum No: 15-005

Date: April 2, 2015

To: Lee R. Feldman, ICMA-CM, City Manager

From: Robert F. Hoecherl, Fire Chief

Re: Proposed Land Swap Analysis between Randolph Companies and City of Fort Lauderdale received and dated March 19, 2015.

Mr. Feldman, pursuant to your instructions following a hand delivery of the Tripp Scott land swap proposal to the Mayor, City Commissioners, yourself, City Attorney, and City Auditor we at the Fire Rescue Department conducted a preliminary analysis, site visit, operational risk-benefit analysis, and feasibility study of the Tripp Scott proposal letter and here are our findings.

On February 24, 2015 Stephanie J. Toothaker and Jordana L. Jarjura from the Tripp Scott Law Firm requested a meeting with the Fort Lauderdale Fire Rescue's executive Chief Officers. The purpose for this conference was for them to present a proposed land swap between their client Randolph Companies and the City. The reason they met with Fire Rescue staff first before presenting to elected officials or City Hall is due to the fact that the subject property, 1015 Seabreeze Boulevard is the present location of Fire Station 49. Incidentally this was the second of such meetings to discuss their client's proposed redevelopment of adjacent parcels to the Fire Station and their desire to acquire the tracts of land which belongs to the City which significantly impedes their building design plans. During the initial meeting in January 2015 they proposed swapping a parcel that was not on the water which we advised them was completely unacceptable.

To give you a historical and operational perspective Fire Station 49 has been in the same location since 1966 and is strategically located to deploy land based fire companies, an ALS medical rescue transport vehicle and a fireboat, which is the only fire rescue boat within Broward County. Fire Station 49 houses our firefighting Marine

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Team which staffs the fireboat and responds to a variety of aquatic emergencies such as boat fires, drowning's, marine and vessel accidents, injuries or medical emergencies aboard vessels off shore, underwater search and rescue responses and support functions for our ocean rescue division lifeguards.

The original 1966 Fire Station building was demolished in 2009 and a new modern state of the art 11,820 square foot firehouse was constructed as part of the 2004 Fire Bond and was completed and subsequently placed into service in 2011. Below is a list of concerns we as Fire Rescue Chief Officers have moving forward with this venture.

CONS:

- First, has a survey of the neighboring residential properties been conducted? We are concerned that nearby residents would not be in favor of having an active fire station next door or adjacent to their homes. Noise and traffic from emergency vehicles that are presently confined to the A1A corridor are now shifted to the smaller residential thoroughfare. Emergency vehicles using audible warning devices such as air horns, sirens and back-up alarms will echo throughout the neighborhood at all hours of the day and night.
- Traffic preemption and traffic controls are ideal at the present facility. Fire apparatus exiting onto the A1A transportation corridor to travel north or south are not doing so on a blind corner. Consequently, if we shift responding fire apparatus to using the proposed intersection our equipment is obscured to both southbound and northbound vehicles. Also, emergency fire apparatus using the smaller residential roadway for access to A1A at the intersection of Harbor Drive will now force vehicles sitting at the traffic signaling device onto the busy A1A which will increase the propensity of vehicle accidents to those giving the right-of-way to the emergency response.
- Due to the new FEMA flood plain requirements, the small proposed parcel must be elevated several feet. This will require not only raising the building footprint and driveway but the entire roadway approaching the fire station. Water run-off will be diverted to properties next door. Raising the building will require the ramp to the apparatus bays to have an abrupt angle which will bottom out the fire apparatus. Having an acute angle of approach and/or angle of departure is a serious concern to overcome. Also, Harbor Drive is very narrow and it would be challenging to attempt to back up fire apparatus into the apparatus bay. Our site visit confirmed this issue.
- Based on the furnished drawings contained in the proposal it lacks detailed information such as size and dimensions of the proposed new facility. Furthermore, upon review of the proposed floor plan because the lot is much smaller 0.38 acres opposed to the 0.51 of land our current Fire Station occupies. Having an adequate number of parking spaces is a major concern. There are only nine (9) marked vehicle spaces as opposed to the twenty-one (21) marked

spaces we have now. We also have the ability to double up with additional room to park even more vehicles during special events at the present site.

Furthermore, the community room is half the size of the existing one, storage rooms for equipment are non-existent, and only a single first floor restroom was illustrated on the exhibit. The existing fire station has drive-through bays increasing the margin of safety for firefighters; the proposed drawing due to the smaller size lot does not permit a drive through feature.

- We observed in the proposal they presented "Appraised Value (per BCPA): for both of the City owned properties, however they used "Actual Market Value" for their swap comparison.
- The present location of Fire Station 49 is highly visible by design; it is easily identified as a firehouse to tourists and visitors alike and is frequented by these visitors on a daily basis.

PROS:

- As noted in the proposal letter the original fire station 49 architectural plans included a third floor command center for special events. Due to the cost increase in construction materials in 2009 and limited fire bond funding the change order was necessary to exclude this third floor addition. Subsequently we now convert the community room into a command center whenever the need arises.
- The proposal mentioned an "industry standard fireboat". We have included an above the budget request to replacement of our existing fireboat for a cost of \$950,000. This sounds like an attractive offer but we will continue to explore alternative funding for a new fireboat.

In closing, the Fire Rescue Department staff has a difference of opinion and a number of concerns with the contents of present proposal which we have highlighted. We trust you will find our information contained in this document accurate and in the best interest of the City of Fort Lauderdale and the delivery of a quality fire and rescue service to our neighbors.

RFH/hc

cc: William C. Findlan, Deputy Fire Chief
Robert E. Simac, Deputy Fire Chief
Timothy Heiser, Deputy Fire Chief

