

*City of Taunton
Office of the Mayor*



For Immediate Release: 2/16/2023

Contact Person: Ligia Madeira
508-821-1000

O'CONNELL THANKS CITY COUNCIL FOR UNANIMOUS VOTE FOR PUBLIC SAFETY BUILDING

Taunton, MA... Today Mayor Shaunna O'Connell thanked the Taunton City Council for their unanimous vote to present the new public safety facility to Taunton voters in an upcoming special election.

"I thank the City Council for their approval with a special thank you to Council President Dooner and Councilor Postell for their efforts on the Advisory Committee that worked diligently to bring this plan forward. They understand that a safe community is a thriving community," said O'Connell. "This new facility will address the City's dire need for a modern public safety building that supports our Police and Fire and will help provide the highest level of safety to our community."

Taunton has not built a police station since 1909 when Teddy Roosevelt was President, and the Police Department has been located in a "temporary" facility for over 40 years. In addition, four out of five of the City's fire stations are over 100 years old with facilities built to accommodate horses and buggies.

Since being elected to office, O'Connell has made it a priority to bring forth initiatives that have been attempted in the past, but remain unfinished. She and her team have been working for over two years on the public safety plan which is supported by Police Chief Edward Walsh and Fire Chief Tim Bradshaw. Both Chiefs have enthusiastically embraced the project and devoted many hours to working with their staff and the project manager and architects to determine the present and future needs of their Departments.

Chief Bradshaw emphasizes the need for a training facility which will allow new firefighters to develop essential firefighting skills while more experienced firefighters will have the opportunity to hone their skills and practice new methods of fire safety. "Our City has built 6 schools in the past several decades but provided no training facility for our firefighters. The education and training of our first responders is critical to the safety of our community," said Bradshaw.

Police Chief Walsh posted copies of the public facility schematics and drawings in the police station hallway to include and engage his staff in the process of developing the building that will be a much-anticipated new home for the Police Department. "There is a sense of excitement. We outgrew our current building a long time ago, but we have continued to make do with limited space and cramped quarters. We're grateful to Mayor O'Connell and her administration for prioritizing the public safety needs of our City. A new public safety facility doesn't just benefit Police and Fire, it benefits our entire community," said Chief Walsh.

At the City Council meeting last Tuesday, first responders lined the back wall of Council Chambers at City Hall in support of the plan as City Councilors acknowledged the need for a new facility and affirmed their support. During the public safety facility presentation, Councilor Jeff Postell stated, “I appreciate that the Administration has seen the importance, necessity and value to move this forward. So, ‘what is at stake’ is asked and what is at stake is the public safety of this community. And what else is at stake is an increase to taxpayers if we don’t act now. Every year we delay, multiply the cost by 7-10%. Now is the time every member of the Council can say they support public safety because here is where it matters.”

O’Connell stressed the collaborative effort of all involved to develop a plan for a 21st century facility that can address the needs of the City while remaining cost-efficient and fiscally responsible. CFO Patrick Dello Russo provided a financial breakdown of the funding needed to bring this project to fruition, “The appropriation needed will cost approximately \$13.00 per month or \$0.44 per day for the average taxpayer. This is less than the cost of two lattes at your favorite coffee shop.” Dello Russo further explained that Taunton’s recent bond upgrade to AA+, the highest level ever achieved in the history of Taunton, will yield significant savings for taxpayers over the course of this project.

Taunton voters will have their opportunity to show support for this much-needed and long-awaited project at a special election scheduled for April 29, 2023. O’Connell plans on continuing to provide project information to City residents through a dedicated page on the City website (taunton-ma.gov), as well as through open meetings to educate the public about how this facility will meet the City’s critical needs and provide Taunton with the highest level of public safety to ensure the vitality and growth of a prosperous and safe community. ###