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February 22, 2024

Dear Ms. Connors and Members of the Design Review Committee:

This letter responds to questions or comments noted in the Draft DRC Minutes and in Ms. Connors written summary received prior to the Design Review Meeting. They have been numbered for reference by HKT. The Questions or Comment section is as written, and the Response includes a response (in italics) if provided during the meeting or subsequent responses by the HKT team (not in italics).

Responses to Planning Director Laurie Connors, Questions, Comments and Recommendations memo received on January 24, 2024 and based on the draft schematic design dated January 11, 2024:

#	Questions/Comments	Response
1	<p>The following additional information should be submitted for Design Review Committee review: in accordance with Planning Board Rules & Regulations Section 7.3:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">A. Complete Site Plan in accordance with the submission requirements identified in Planning Board Rules & Regulations Section 7.2.B. Schedule of all exterior materials and colors.C. Landscaping plan showing all proposed changes and describing all materials including plantings (identify species, number and size at planting)D. Photographs of adjacent buildings and properties. <p>Note that the permitting authority requires the submission of written waiver requests for any areas of non-compliance.</p>	<p>A completed site plan will be submitted under the Planning Board Rules and Regulations.</p> <p>A schedule of proposed materials and colors will be submitted following the final decision by the FSBC.</p> <p>Landscaping plans with plantings are included.</p> <p>Photos of adjacent buildings will be submitted.</p> <p>Should waivers be required a written response will be submitted.</p>

2	<p>The Table of Density and Dimensional Regulations (Zoning Bylaw Section 7-06-030) specifies that the maximum front yard setback in the Downtown Business District is 20 feet and the maximum building height is 45 feet. The proposed building is located 44 feet from the front lot line and the building height (hose tower) is approximately 58 feet. The Applicant should either adjust the building setback and height to comply with the dimensional requirements of the DB District or seek a dimensional variance from the Zoning Board of Appeals.</p>	<p>A dimensional variance will be requested from the ZBA for the front yard and the height of the hose tower.</p> <p>The building is placed to provide an appropriate apron for FD equipment at the front of the building and a clear line-of-site for the vehicles exiting the building. The hose tower height is based on hanging 100' long hoses, providing workspace for personnel to access that height, the structure and roofing.</p>
3	<p>In my opinion, the design of the building is very attractive and meets the spirit of the Design Guidelines adopted in 2012.</p>	<p>HKT appreciates your comment.</p>
4	<p>The schematic plan would be more legible if it were accompanied by a legend. Please include a legend on the next version of the plan so that it is easier to determine if the proposed features comply with the site design standards specified in Zoning Bylaw Sections 7-09-020 and 7-09-030.</p>	<p>A legend is included.</p>
5	<p>It is unclear if a sidewalk is proposed along the east side of the building as the surface treatment symbology is consistent with landscaped surfacing. If no sidewalk is proposed for this location, the Plan should be modified in conformance with Zoning Bylaw Section 7-09-030E. Note that sidewalks abutting buildings shall be provided with a 7" high safety curb at building egress locations per Zoning Bylaw Section 7-09-030E(4).</p>	<p>A sidewalk along the east side of the building is intended for use by fire personnel only but should meet Zoning Bylaw Section 7-09-030E(4) requirements.</p>
6	<p>All building and freestanding signage should be submitted for review by the Design Review Committee. Information pertaining to sign location,</p>	<p>A site sign has been presented and voted on by the FSBC and is included in this submission. Additional details of the sign will be completed during design development.</p>

	<p>construction materials, dimensions and lighting should be submitted. Sign design should conform to Zoning Bylaw Section 7-09-020D(2). Exterior lit signage is preferred for properties located within the Downtown Business District.</p>	<p>Building lettering has been changed to one with serifs and has been revised in its setting on the wall.</p>
7	<p>Please submit spec sheets and a photometric plan for all wall, walkway and parking lot lighting. Energy-efficient LED lighting is preferred and it should not cast light beyond the borders of the subject property. Exterior lighting should complement the architecture of the proposed building as well as the site.</p>	<p>Images of proposed lighting have been included on the photometric plan.</p> <p>LED lighting is proposed and will not cast light beyond the borders of the property. Exterior lighting that meets the needs of the site with full cutoff/dark sky requirements and complements the proposed building design is included.</p> <p>As this is a publicly bid project, at least three companies with similar products will need to be specified and the selected sub bidder or GC will ultimately present the material for approval based on a basis-of-design written description.</p>
8	<p>Electric, cable and telephone lines shall be installed underground per modification to Zoning Bylaw approved at the April 2023 Annual Town Meeting.</p>	<p>Noted.</p>
9	<p>Please include details of the benches and bollards encircling the transformer and generator pads.</p>	<p>Quantity and layout of bollards are mandated by the utility companies. Apparatus bay doors will also require bollard protection at each side of each door to protect exterior materials. The placement and design of that protection is on-going.</p> <p>A bench has been submitted for review.</p>
10	<p>Please denote the location of electronic charging stations. To satisfy the Town's climate change mitigation goals, I strongly recommend installation of rooftop solar panels and/or a solar carport. The formal site plan review submission package should include information about design features will be</p>	<p>The new energy code requires a percentage of parking spaces to be EV charger ready. Our review indicates 20% are required or 11 spaces. After discussion with the Town 6 EV charger locations will be located on the plan and 5 more EV charger locations will be ready for future installation. The cost of an EV station will be included in the SD</p>

	incorporated into the building to reduce energy and water consumption.	<p>estimate. The Town can revise their thinking on this at a later time.</p> <p>The roof also must be solar ready and as noted previously a Photovoltaic Solar Study to determine if PV is a preferred option for incorporation into the project has been approved and will be completed. Once the study is performed, if design services are requested for a PV system, an additional service proposal will be provided.</p>
11	Please demonstrate compliance with Zoning Bylaw Section 7-09-030C.(2)(b), which states that no parking space shall be located within 8 feet of a building wall. It appears as though the parking space in the southwest corner of the building (near the stormwater treatment area) does not comply with this requirement. If it cannot be moved, you could ask for a waiver.	No parking is within 8' of a building wall.
12	The design of the retaining wall should be submitted for Design Review Committee review. At its highest point, the retaining wall will be 29' tall. I recommend terracing at the highest point of the wall to make it less imposing.	<p>The retaining wall has been studied and options presented to the FSBC. 2 or 3 options were preferred due to costs and visual interests.</p> <p>Several options are included in this package for discussion.</p>
13	A bike rack for up to 6 bikes is required per Zoning Bylaw Section 7-09-030F(1). The location and specification of bike rack should be submitted for Design Review Committee review.	Bike racks for 6 bikes has been located near the front entry.
14	Street trees should be installed along the Route 20 frontage, set back from the roadway so as to not interfere with sight distances, at 25' intervals to soften the view and minimize heat island impacts (See Zoning Bylaw Section 7-09-030E(7)).	Street trees are included in front of the administration portion of the building approximately 10-15' from the façade so as to meet the guideline intent while not interrupting visibility for FD personnel or visitors to the site,
15	Please identify snow storage location(s) for the paved parking lot/area east and south of the building.	Snow storage areas are indicated in this package.

Responses to questions in Draft Meeting Minutes dated January 25, 2024:

#	Questions/Comments	Response
16	Ms. Connors asked if thought had been given to terracing the retaining wall to break up the massing.	<p><i>1/25/24: Ms. Dunlap said they've learned that sometimes the height needs to increase because the grade is steeper as they go back into the hill.</i></p> <p><i>1/25/24: Mr. Jackson added that another option would be to slope the wall.</i></p> <p>This package includes options to address retaining wall questions.</p>
17	Ms. Connors requested that the Planning Board submittal include the location of the solar panels and the size of the installation. She requested that that be put in the context of the expected use of electricity for this particular property; if whether there would be a net gain or a deficit in between the expected use versus the power that will be generated, and if that could be on an annual basis.	<p>A Photovoltaic Solar Study to determine if PV is a preferred option for incorporation into the project has been approved and will be completed.</p> <p>The construction documents will include possible locations for PV arrays.</p>
18	Ms. Poretzky wished to start with review of the landscaping. She said the plantings in the drainage swale which would impede drainage.	<p><i>1/25/24: Mr. Dunetz noted that this was just a schematic to show that there are plans to revegetate that area where significant grading will occur.</i></p> <p>A planting plan is included in the attached package.</p>
19	Discussion followed regarding plans for the stormwater treatment area.	<p><i>1/25/24: Ms. Capistran said the schematic shows some surface treatment areas and that they are also looking into below grade systems that hold back the water to meet the existing conditions.</i></p> <p>Updated documents are included in the attached package. Stormwater calculations and design is ongoing.</p>
20	Ms. Poretzky asked about plans for snow storage.	<p><i>1/25/24: Ms. Capistran said that is still being looked into, it goes hand in hand with the plans for the site lighting location. There is the possibility of pushing the retaining wall back to give</i></p>

		<p><i>a location for those lights, which would free up space for snow storage, or they could consider pushing the wall back to provide either a paved or landscaped area for snow storage.</i></p> <p>The updated civil/site drawings show areas that will provide for snow storage. In addition, the FD has spoken with personnel from the DPW concerning removal of large quantities of snow should that be required.</p> <p>The Fire Station Building Committee (FSBC) has approved this plan.</p>
21	<p>Ms. Poretsky next asked if a fence was planned along the top of the proposed 30' wall. Ms. Poretsky requested to have views of the wall, the fence, and the proposed materials for their next meeting.</p>	<p><i>1/25/24: Ms. Capistran said that a fence would be included.</i></p> <p>This package includes options to address retaining wall questions. The intent will be to have a fence at the top of each wall in the construction documents.</p> <p>Final design and material selection is ongoing. Once that design is resolved the retaining wall information will be included in the construction documents. As this is a publicly bid project as well as a delegated design, at least three companies with similar design features and colors/finishes of materials will need to be specified and the selected contractor will ultimately present the materials and methods of construction for approval based on a basis-of-design written description.</p>
22	<p>Ms. Maselli requested elevations of the landscaping, as seen from the street.</p>	<p>Once the site and planting plans are fully developed one elevation from the street will be completed.</p>
23	<p>Mr. Veron requested a listing of the plants.</p> <p>He was concerned with the location of snow storage as described by Ms. Capistran. He suggested using a heated apron or perhaps working with the DPW to remove snow from the site.</p>	<p><i>1/25/24: Chief Parenti said the plans include a heated apron in both front and back. Discussion followed regarding the size of the heated area. Ms. Dunlap wasn't sure if they'd come up with a final determination; she said they typically have a concrete apron that's between 10' to 20' with asphalt beyond, snow melt can be in just the concrete or into the asphalt, that it is a discussion needed to be had with the committee and with the fire</i></p>

		<p><i>department about what will work best, as well as considerations regarding cost.</i></p> <p>The list of proposed plantings is included in this package.</p> <p>A heated apron in the front and rear is included in the schematic design package that is currently being estimated. In addition, the FD has spoken with personnel from the DPW concerning removal of large quantities of snow should that be required.</p>
24	<p>Mr. Veron asked if the lighting was planned to light the parking lot or the wall.</p> <p>Mr. Veron suggested shading for the rooftop area.</p>	<p><i>1/25/24: Ms. Dunlap said they are still in the planning stages.</i></p> <p>Site lighting with photometrics has been included in this package.</p> <p>Shading of the rooftop area has been included in the schematic design package out for pricing.</p>
25	<p>Ms. Poretsky next had questions regarding the site plan. She requested that at the next meeting they have a plan that shows the building dimensions.</p> <p>Ms. Poretsky asked if this plan leaves less room for expansion; if they wanted to expand and include the police station, that they will be held to this footprint with the wall around the outside.</p>	<p><i>1/25/24: Mr. Theiss said the building is about 230' long.</i></p> <p>Dimensions are included in this updated package.</p> <p><i>1/25/24: Ms. Dunlap said they'd had a similar conversation with the fire department regarding projected staffing and equipment and operations looking 40 years out, and they designed the building accommodating those operations. Adding the police station was not part of the discussion.</i></p> <p>Town officials have clarified that a police station was never intended to be a part of this project.</p>
26	<p>Ms. Poretsky asked if it would be possible to move the location of the training room into a lower level under the administrative side, on the west side; she felt that would provide room for snow storage.</p> <p>Ms. Poretsky didn't know how much the community would use the building, and that over</p>	<p><i>1/25/24: Chief Parenti said he could speak to that from an operations point of view and that putting a training room below ground is not really optimal; a room with no windows would have egress issues, it would not benefit them or the community to bury that room.</i></p> <p><i>1/25/24: Mr. Frederico had several comments in response. Costs would</i></p>

	<p>\$600/sf, that it should be based on fire station needs only.</p>	<p><i>increase if they were to go underground; it would have to be handicapped accessible, so there would be a need for at least one more stairway and the elevator would have to go to the bottom. HVAC going underground would create issues in terms of heating and cooling, dehumidification, and mold. Additionally, a room such as this should be on grade level as it could be used for emergency services.</i></p> <p>HKT concurs that placing this room below grade complicates response times for the FD, and would require two stairs, the elevator, toilet rooms and related service rooms should a lower level be included. A redesign of the second floor would also be required. This most likely will increase the square foot total for the building. Snow storage has been accommodated in areas on the site.</p> <p>The FSBC has approved the plan as shown.</p>
27	<p>Ms. Poretsky next questioned the footprint dimensions of 22,000 sf listed on page C300 of the site plan, her calculations were closer to 30,000 sf.</p> <p>Ms. Poretsky asked why the footprint of the plan had changed since 2019, when the building's size was 26,400 sf, and what those changes were.</p> <p>Ms. Poretsky noted that change in square footage adds to the taxpayers' cost. Ms. Poretsky noted if the training room went below, the parking lot in the back would go away and there would be less need for a wall.</p> <p>She asked if the use of a Kalwall versus the roof monitors had been considered.</p>	<p><i>1/25/24: Ms. Dunlap said that is correct, and that the dimensions need to be updated.</i></p> <p><i>1/25/24: Chief Parenti answered that the 2019 plan was just a conceptual design, there was no site survey at that time.</i></p> <p>The plan represents the operational needs of the Fire Department following extensive and complete programming and accurate site information. This program, for both interior and exterior needs, considered personnel needs and equipment possibilities far into the future. FD officials feel confident that the plan as presented by HKT accounts for current and future needs.</p> <p><i>1/25/24: Ms. Dunlap said they do not tend to use that product (Kalwall); fiberglass panel products have a tendency to yellow over time and</i></p>

		<p><i>decrease the amount of natural light that gets into the space.</i></p> <p><i>1/25/24: Ms. Dunlap noted that Massachusetts has a new energy code and that any of the products put into the building must contribute to the building's overall energy efficiency in order to meet the requirements of the energy code, that is what they are investigating as they move through schematic design.</i></p>
28	<p>Ms. Poretsky suggested that instead of the clock on the hose tower, perhaps thought could be given to displaying the Northborough fire department emblem instead.</p> <p>She asked why the tower was so wide, and why the tower was so tall, at 58'.</p>	<p>Elevations were developed and included options for clocks, a specific emblem, or the town seal. Individual FD patches change on a regular basis and were not considered. At this time, the FSBC has selected a tower with a clock and a Maltese Cross.</p> <p><i>1/25/24: Ms. Dunlap explained the width of the tower was due to the operations and the layout of the stairs. The height of the tower is because the fire department uses 100' hoses, the hoses fold in half when hung over the structure, so 50' is needed to allow them to dry and the additional height allows for someone to be up at that level and standing under the structure. The hoses, when dry, will be stored at the bottom of the tower.</i></p> <p>The overall tower including height to roof structure and the roof structure itself will be +/- 68' high. The width is based on the stair layout.</p>
29	<p>Ms. Poretsky next asked about the material to be used around the apparatus bay doors. Ms. Poretsky suggested using brick.</p> <p>She also preferred a design with six arches that she felt was more classic than the two proposed now, which she felt was more contemporary. She shared images of other fire stations, including Natick's, with that type of look, including red doors. She asked if a design could be shared at the next meeting showing six</p>	<p><i>1/25/24: Ms. Dunlap said they are still looking into that; it will likely be a panel product.</i></p> <p>The design intent is to recess the apparatus doors and their surrounds back behind the piers/arches. Material selection is on-going, but a panelized metal system designed to match the overhead doors, tower detail, entry doors and building windows is planned.</p> <p>HKT presented the FSBC with 4 massing studies and 7 preliminary</p>

	<p>arches, which she felt would be a classic look for the downtown.</p>	<p>elevation studies including a six arch option. 6 updates, based on responses by the committee, were then presented and the committee directed HKT to continue developing the option presented in this package. At a subsequent meeting, a review of banding and trim options, as well as a discussion on arches, affirmed the previous direction. HKT has continued that approach as voted by the FSBC.</p>
<p>30</p>	<p>Ms. Maselli said she also liked the design of Natick’s fire department. She hoped that the color of the brick would be specified so they know it’s red, not orange or otherwise and agreed that red doors are a classic look. She hoped to have a three-dimensional image of the building for the next meeting, residents need to understand how large this building is going to be. She hoped that arches in doors and windows would be included, arches are a design element seen throughout the town.</p>	<p>The brick shown in the original 3D imagery was a generic brick rendered by that 3D program used. The brick shown now is red as requested and HKT toured brick buildings in town to see what colors of brick were used in the past. A brick company representative has also visited town to assess brick and is in the process of gathering options. Ultimately HKT will present the Committee with options and the Committee will select the direction that will be specified.</p> <p>As this is a publicly bid project, at least three companies with similar colors/finishes of brick will need to be specified and the mason will ultimately present the brick for approval based on a basis-of-design written description.</p> <p>The colors of the doors at the apparatus bays, along with other openings throughout the building are meant to harmonize with each other and to tie together the distinct elements of the building. At this point in time the Committee has suggested that those be the same, or nearly the same.</p> <p>3D images of the building were included in the previous package and have been updated to match the current schematic design, one from the east side and one from the west side. Once the overall design of building and site are finished a larger site image will be completed.</p>

<p>31</p>	<p>Ms. Maselli noted that the site abuts the Hillside Grill at 73 West Main Street, which had a good portion of the hill behind carved out during the building process. She expressed concern about the possibility of the ledge being blasted and the potential impact to neighboring properties.</p> <p>Mr. Veron added that in his experience, blasting is the last resort, and if the Hillside Grill did not pull a blasting permit, then the hill was probably hammered down instead.</p> <p>Ms. Maselli said she was uncomfortable with the amount of water coming from the hill. Mr. Veron asked what the difference in elevation was from the top of the wall to the ground.</p> <p>Mr. Veron asked if there was a way to re-engineer this without a wall.</p> <p>Mr. Veron suggested thinking outside of the box.</p> <p>Ms. Poretsky suggested reducing the plan and referred again to the 2019 plan.</p> <p>Ms. Poretsky said that plan had twenty parking spaces, if they cut back on the proposed 30 parking spaces, then the wall would not be needed and gets rid of a lot of problems.</p>	<p><i>1/25/24: Chief Parenti said that no blasting permits were pulled at the time the Hillside Grill was built, he didn't believe any blasting was done. Discussion followed. Chief Parenti said that if blasting was needed to be done, it would be done according to the laws of the Commonwealth.</i></p> <p><i>1/25/24: Ms. Capistran said the elevation was roughly 30' in the highest corner and decreases to the east, the wall is about 200' back from the property line.</i></p> <p><i>1/25/24: Ms. Capistran said parking for program needs is pushing the site back into the hillside. They are looking at options for terracing.</i></p> <p><i>1/25/24: Chief Parenti said the 2019 design is irrelevant, it was simply a conceptual design, the plan they have now was done with a survey and is a much more accurate design than the one in the 2019 plan.</i></p> <p>Geotechnical work is underway which will provide subsurface data to the design team.</p> <p>A reduction in parking spaces will not meet the programming needs identified in the 2023 programming study.</p> <p>The parking layout in 2019 included 7 parking spaces, of the 34 depicted, in front of the building façade, which would not have meet design standards.</p>
<p>32</p>	<p>Ms. Maselli said she wanted to see arching in the windows, the sides and back of the building are very modern and industrial looking. She also requested a cornice or a higher parapet so that the windows on the roof can't be seen, that is too industrial looking.</p>	<p>We do not agree with the characterization of the design as institutional or modern looking. Industrial buildings, used for production or storage of materials, are typically designed to be both efficient and minimalistic in surface decoration. The design of this building includes arches and trim which have been strategically placed as major building elements and prominently used to</p>

		<p>enhance the design of the major building elements. Institutional buildings would not typically include such elements. This design has been voted on by the FSBC.</p> <p>The parapet height compliments the overall proportions of the apparatus wing and view of the roof monitors will be obstructed by the parapet height. The roof monitors are placed to provide light into the large and deep interior of the apparatus bays. They are a very traditional method of lighting interior spaces such as this.</p>
33	<p>Ms. Maselli added that she didn't want to see any metal on the front of the building; they should go with red doors, and there should be more spacing above the 'Northborough Fire Department' sign.</p>	<p>The development of the design is entering the Design Development phase of the project in which all design elements are detailed.</p> <p>As noted before, the design intent is to recess the apparatus doors and their surrounds back behind the piers/arches. Material selection is on-going, but a panelized metal system designed to match the overhead doors, tower detail, entry doors and building windows is planned. This building material has been historically used in New England vernacular design and was prominently used in the addition to the Free Library. The final color selection will be approved by the FSBC.</p> <p>The lettering on the apparatus bays has been revised and the final type and layout will need to be approved by the FSBC.</p>
34	<p><i>Ms. Maselli said the windows in the front are just rectangular shapes that are repetitive, with an almost art deco look. The schematic being shown doesn't provide any dimension or depth. She referred to Natick's fire station with less windows done in a repetitive fashion; she appreciated the arch they'd added in the middle, and that along with the banding makes the building</i></p>	<p><i>1/25/24: Ms. Dunlap asked for clarification on the windows, she and her colleagues are struggling with the comment made that the window patterns in their design are industrial or modern.</i></p> <p><i>1/25/24: Ms. Dunlap said these are very conceptual schematic elevations and not representative of final materials, they use neutral tones early on so the contrast between different materials is not being seen, for</i></p>

	<p><i>looks less modern and more classic.</i></p> <p><i>Mr. Veron said that the design does not 'pop' due to the lack of positive and negative space.</i></p> <p><i>Ms. Maselli thought the design was bland.</i></p>	<p><i>example, it's difficult to see the banding of the building. She felt there were similarities in the windows of buildings favored by FDBC members to those in the design. She said her team can look at the color options and the materiality and see if that helps convey the ideas better.</i></p> <p>The window patterns were developed based on our experience and knowledge and after study of many prominent buildings including those by H. H. Richardson. Natick's fire station design is deferential to other older buildings in its immediate vicinity including the town hall and library. Natick's station design comprises primarily one major façade that includes similar details to those other related town structures. Multiple window sizes and types are visible including rectangular shapes with larger lites below and smaller upper lites above the main vision lite, not unlike the ones proposed on this building. The remaining elevations of this building are extremely limited in the design response and does not fully match the detailing at the front of the building.</p> <p>The design of Northborough's building is classic in its response, subtle and holistic in its approach to detailing, and though the decorated skin approach was considered, there are no other buildings in the immediate vicinity of note to emulate, the FSBC chose to emphasize how three major elements are designed as a complete building. Therefore, the design is unique to the program and the site configuration.</p>
35	<p>Ms. Maselli asked how deep the recess at the front door was.</p> <p>Ms. Maselli suggested at least 4' to give people more protection from the elements.</p>	<p><i>1/25/24: Mr. Theiss believed it was about 2' deep.</i></p> <p>HKT has increased the depth of the recess at the entry to 4'.</p>
36	<p>Mr. Frederico had more suggestions for the architects;</p>	<p>The new energy code requires a percentage of parking spaces to be</p>

	<p>electric charging stations will have to be shown on the plan and a section of the roof will have to be designated as solar ready.</p>	<p>EV charger ready. Our review indicates 20% are required or 11 spaces. After discussion with the Town 6 EV charger locations will be located on the plan and 5 more EV charger locations will be ready for future installation. The cost of an EV station will be included in the SD estimate. The Town can revise their thinking on this at a later time.</p> <p>The roof also must be solar ready per code and as noted previously a Photovoltaic Solar Study to determine if PV is a preferred option for incorporation into the project has been approved and will be completed. Once the study is performed, if design services are requested for a PV system, an additional service proposal will be provided.</p>
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Very truly yours,
HKT Architects Inc.



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Principal