



City of Beacon, New York

Office of the Mayor

Lee Kyriacou, Mayor

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 3, 2020

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CITY OF BEACON ANNOUNCES MODERNIZATION INVESTMENT IN FIREHOUSES, CLOSURE OF BEACON ENGINE

Beacon, NY: Beacon Mayor Lee Kyriacou and Beacon Fire Chief Gary VanVoorhis announced today a proposal for a long overdue investment in Beacon's firehouses, and also the decision to exercise the City's right to leave the Beacon Engine firehouse on East Main Street.

Mayor Kyriacou said, "Major investments in two firehouses – Tompkins Hose off Route 9D and Mase Hook & Ladder on Main Street – will allow us to house our career firefighters in tandem at two sites, and to modernize and upgrade fire protection facilities. The consulting contract to be approved by the City Council this evening is the first step in this multi-year effort."

Regarding the Beacon Engine firehouse, the City owns only the newer one-third of the Beacon Engine building, while the original structure is owned by the private Beacon Engine Fire Company. The City has for decades been expending public funds to maintain a privately-owned structure. A lease agreement between the City and the private entity was put in place at the end of 2019, with a 60-day exit clause. The previous Mayor and Council unanimously agreed that the City should begin to consolidate Beacon's three firehouses.

The Mayor announced, "Today I am providing 90-day notice that the City is exercising its legal right to exit from the lease agreement. Taxpayer-funded firefighters and equipment are expected to leave the private portion of the Beacon Engine firehouse by the end of April 2020."

The decision follows two separate analyses by the engineering firm Tri Data and the Beacon Fire Department, both of which determined that reducing the number of firehouses will improve long-term safety, health and logistics. Currently during the day, all Beacon career firefighters operate out of Tompkins Hose. And, according to the Tri Data analysis, the City's response time results after consolidating firefighters into two stations will continue to well exceed National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) guidelines. Additional studies have found that in the long run, a single fire station will best serve the fire protection needs of the City.

Beacon Fire Chief Gary VanVoorhis stated: "Moving to two fire stations will be safer for our firefighters, who will now be able to work in pairs. National guidelines do not recommend allowing one firefighter operate an apparatus on their own.

"The Fire Department takes very seriously our responsibility to safeguard Beacon. We're confident that Tompkins Hose and Mase Hook & Ladder, which is within a few hundred yards of Beacon Engine, will continue to provide safe and comprehensive fire and emergency coverage for Beacon."

The original portion of the Beacon Engine firehouse is over 130 years old. The building cannot properly house modern fire apparatus, does not meet NFPA safety standards, and would be extremely costly to upgrade. In the 1990s there were over 20 active volunteer firefighters on the roster at Beacon Engine; now there is only one.

Mayor Kyriacou said, “This was not an easy decision – although multiple City Councils have reached the same conclusion. I want to thank the hundreds of volunteers across more than a century, who have selflessly served this community in the Beacon Engine, Tompkins Hose and Mase Hook & Ladder volunteer companies. We will find ways to preserve that history and to honor the proud legacy of our first responders – while also modernizing the City’s fire protection facilities for the 21st century. And while the City does not own the larger portion of the Beacon Engine building, we will collaborate with the private volunteer company in determining an appropriate future for the entire building.”

About the Beacon Fire Department

The City of Beacon Fire Department currently has 13 full-time career firefighters (16 are approved in this year’s budget), over 18 volunteer firefighters and two support personnel, with five fire apparatuses in three stations: Beacon Engine (built 1886 at 57 East Main Street), Mase Hook & Ladder (built 1911 at 42 Main Street) and Lewis Tompkins Hose (current building built in 1982 at South Avenue and Route 9D; original 1886 Main Street building now owned by Hudson Beach Glass). The Department responds to more than 1,800 emergency and fire calls per year, and boasts the county’s fastest response time. The fully allocated cost of police and fire services represents an estimated 50% of the budget.

About the City of Beacon:

Beacon, New York is located on the eastern shore of the Hudson River 60 miles north of New York City, with a population of 15,000. Originally a Native American settlement, the area was purchased from the Wappinger Tribe in 1683 and settled by Dutch and other Europeans, leading to the riverfront community of Fishkill Landing on the Hudson, and the mill community of Matteawan on Fishkill Creek. The two communities were incorporated together as the City of Beacon in 1913, named for the Revolutionary War signal fires on Mount Beacon. Beacon thrived as a 19th and 20th Century factory city, but as factories closed after WWII and the local economy declined, the city went through a period of hard times. Today, Beacon has successfully reinvented itself as a 21st Century river community centered around tourism, the arts and access to the scenic Hudson River heritage area. A diverse and thriving small city, it is now home to DIA:Beacon (one of the largest exhibition spaces for modern and contemporary art), a network of Hudson River parks connecting to Fishkill Creek and Mount Beacon trails, and a vibrant historic Main Street of art galleries, shops, cultural venues and restaurants.

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