

Was Peekskill Central Firehouse Penny Wise and Pound Foolish?

To the Editor,

One thing Mayor Frank Catalina can take credit for is the downsized Central Firehouse under construction in Peekskill today. Eventually we will see whether the total construction costs, including the cost to redesign the firehouse, did in fact save the city any money. It is possible that it did not, as construction costs may well be higher today than they would have been four years ago. It may turn out to have been Penny Wise and Pound Foolish (or just political grandstanding).

When Mr. Catalina became Mayor, the firehouse design was ready to proceed to construction once the city completed the purchase of the final parcel of land necessary. Mr. Catalina felt that a smaller firehouse would save the city a few million dollars. What remains to be seen is if the smaller plan required cutting out certain amenities which could well result in fewer folks wanting to join the volunteer force. If the City were to have to increase the number of paid firefighters, over time that cost would be many times greater than the savings which were hoped to be made by reducing the size of the firehouse.

Firefighters are not just folks who fight fires together. They are like a fraternity. Their entire lives are interwoven. They work together, train together, and eat together. They become extended families. The last administration, with input from firefighters of all ranks, felt it was important for our home-town heroes to have a good training facility and an event space, which would attract new volunteers. Many firefighters testified that a proper training facility would save an enormous amount of time and money on travel down county for training and possibly earn some revenue from other north county fire departments.

The new smaller firehouse is going to look beautiful, and will finally get our firefighters out of the deplorable buildings they now work in. What remains to be seen is what, if anything, the redesign saved the city taxpayers in the short term, and whether or not it will actually cost the taxpayers a lot more money in the future.

Very truly yours,

LESLIE MASSON