

Jackson looking for options on fire station

Newspaper December 17, 2009 | New Haven Register (CT)

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495 Words

HAMDEN - By year's end, the town will seek proposals for sites for a new fire headquarters and replacement for the dilapidated Circular Avenue fire station.

"We're going to be extremely flexible in terms of how the submissions come in," Mayor Scott Jackson said.

Jackson is interested in hearing from property owners or builders who could provide options, from a long-term lease to building on town-owned land on Putnam Avenue with the town leasing the facility back from the builder.

The Legislative Council in early October gave then Mayor Craig B. Henrici permission to seek proposals for a lease-build arrangement in an effort to save money. The town had bought the former Dadio Farm on Putnam Avenue with the idea that four acres would be used for a fire headquarters, training center, space for administration and a replacement Station 2, Circular Avenue. Then, the Henrici administration floated the lease-build idea, which Jackson is carrying out. "We're looking at options for cost-effectiveness and speed of construction," said Curt Balzano Leng, chief administrative officer.

Jackson, who took over as mayor Nov. 29, said he expects to seek proposals by the end of the year. The council will then review the information, he said.

He is hoping that the information he receives will give the town an idea of what commercial properties are available for development, including space for an **animal shelter**. Getting an **animal shelter** is second on Jackson's list after a new fire headquarters and Station 2.

After the plan to put the **animal shelter** on Rocky Top Road failed, Henrici suggested the Maselli Farm as a location when the town acquired the 34 acres off Dunbar Hill Road and Gilbert Avenue. Neighbors, however, opposed having barking dogs so close to their homes.

Jackson on Monday said people got ahead of themselves on the idea because the Maselli Farm was bought around the time the Rocky Top plan had dissolved. Maselli Farm now is being considered for various farming

alternatives, but there are no plans to put the animal shelter there. Putting an animal shelter at Maselli would be difficult because of neighbors' opposition, he said.

Dolores Giannini, president of the Hamden Happy Tails Foundation, said that the only plan was at Rocky Top and Shepard Avenue. "From that point on, we were evaluating Maselli and a couple of other places," she said. She doesn't want any option taken off the table, because the town desperately needs an animal shelter.

Hamden rents space at the North Haven Animal Shelter, which is getting more unacceptable for a number of reasons. "The animals are being kenneled for longer periods of time than they should be because of lack of accessibility. People don't want to travel (to adopt an animal)," she said.

Giannini doesn't think dogs should be housed near fire stations because they will howl when they hear sirens, but a shelter is needed immediately. Cats also need a place where they can stay because they're "being abandoned and not in the most humane way." Ann DeMatteo can be reached at adematteo@nhregister.com or 203-789-5716.