

Executive Summary

A briefing for the Board of Selectmen

THE RECOMMENDATION

OPTION D

adopted 6-1

One consolidated public safety facility housing the Police Department (with consolidated 911 dispatch), the career Fire Department, and the Volunteer Fire Department — on a central **5.3-acre campus at 217–221 Danbury Road.**



~48,000 SF

meeting Ridgefield’s public safety needs

for operations, employee health, safety, security, privacy and dignity



~\$55M (ROM)

defensible with detailed cost estimates

modelled from the ground-up with conservative assumptions and appropriate contingencies



Centrally Located

to advantage response time and public access

adjacent to the Recreation Center, enabling new opportunities for current Police & Fire HQ.

THE COMMITTEE'S MANDATE

The Charge, and this briefing

THE PURPOSE

“ The Purpose of the Public Safety Facilities Committee (“the Committee”) is to evaluate and recommend the most effective, fiscally responsible, and community-supported path forward for meeting the long-term facility needs of the Ridgefield Fire, Police, EMS, Volunteer Fire and central dispatch Departments.



Scope of Work Item 7

The Charge's final directive — Scope of Work item 7 — requires the Committee to present its recommendation to the **Board of Selectpersons, sitting as Fire and Police Commission: the town's executive body**. This briefing summarized the Majority Recommendation for the body empowered to act.

SCOPE OF WORK — ALL EIGHT ITEMS DISCHARGED

- ✓ **1. Comprehensive Review of Options** — extensive discovery of needs and sites with seven options developed by three Tiger Teams
- ✓ **2. Targeted Timeline** — milestone updates delivered March 31st and July 15th with Recommendation adopted Aug 27, 2026
- ✓ **3. Needs Assessment** — public due diligence list for RFD and RPD, multiple site visits and tours of RFD and RPD facilities (and comparable departments with facilities built in the 21st Century), KBA space-needs analyses
- ✓ **4. Site Evaluation** — 28 public parcels + commercial candidates, without prejudice
- ✓ **5. Financial Analysis** — detailed financial model driving one methodology to model the all-in project costs
- ✓ **6. Community Engagement** — 24 public meetings and statistically valid survey;
- ✓ **7. Recommendation & Rationale** — Option D adopted 6–1 with accompanying report incorporating work referenced above, plus review of comparable projects and practices throughout county, state and country.
- ✓ **8. Charge Summary** — all options kept on the table, with Majority Recommendation detailed herein.

How the Committee worked



Weekly Thursday sessions, January 24 – August 27, 2026. Agendas, minutes, and the recorded chief interviews are posted on the Town website.



THE TIGER-TEAM METHOD

To examine every option in parallel, the Committee split into three two-member teams — each charged differently so no viable configuration went unexamined:

- **Scalzo / Martinez** — two separate facilities, on private or public land
- **Graves / Tyrrell** — Town-owned buildings & land; new build or renovation
- **Dunaway / Safir** — combination-building solutions

Each ran independent research and field visits, worked with the chiefs, KBA, and the estimator, and reported in writing.

WORKING CLOSELY WITH THE EXPERTS



The public-safety chiefs

Continual engagement with Police Chief Jeff Kreitz and Major Fowler, Fire Chief Rommie Duckworth and Deputy Chief Anthony Cerulli; significant discovery, analysis and review of current facilities operations, goals, data, needs and Tiger Team options.



The architect — KBA

Kaestle Boos Associates (Todd Costa) delivered the space-needs assessments and the August 20 buildability test-fit drawings.



The cost estimator

Committee member David Brickley's Brickley/NASCO estimates priced Tiger Team options on a single professional methodology.



The expert advisors who counseled us

Town Engineer Jake Muller, Board of Finance Chair Mike Rettger, Surveys & Forecasts (the resident survey), soil scientist Mary Jaehnig, and peer building committees including Wilton's.

What the chiefs presented to the Committee

The Police and Fire departments each made the operational case for their facility needs throughout our work, including on the record presentations in February and recorded interviews in June.



POLICE DEPARTMENT

44 sworn + 14 civilian · 20,826 incidents, 6,215 911 calls (2025)

TODAY

- 2 report-writing desks — reports queue up
- 1 shared interview / conference room
- Holding cells below safety & ADA standards
- 42 men share 1 shower; gear stored in halls & garage
- Parking short 26 staff + 2 patrol spaces

NEEDS

- ✓ Evidence storage & chain-of-custody
- ✓ ADA compliance; secure access control
- ✓ Separate prisoner release point
- ✓ More workstations; victim-privacy space
- ✓ Hardened dispatch & fire suppression



FIRE DEPARTMENT

36 career + 40 volunteers · 4,596 calls (2025), 75% EMS

TODAY

- Turnout gear stored on the bay floor
- No decontamination room or gear extractor
- No code-required diesel-exhaust capture
- Living quarters not separated from bays
- No dedicated training space

NEEDS

- ✓ Hot / warm / cold decon (NFPA 1500)
- ✓ Source-capture bay exhaust (mechanical code)
- ✓ Drive-through bays — no apparatus stacking
- ✓ Secure meds & EMS supply (NFPA 1581)
- ✓ 24-hr living quarters; training space

Both cases converge on one theme: the current buildings force daily “workarounds,” fail modern safety and ADA codes, and can’t support a 24/7 tempo — the operational basis for Option D’s program.

We assumed nothing and reviewed the available record

Three working groups ran structured discovery, each with a written due-diligence request list, before any option was priced or recommended*.

 Needs Assessment & Site Evaluation • Department staff, fleet & equipment inventories • NFPA & ISO / PPC benchmarking • Multiyear calls-for-service and response time analyses • Geotechnical & environmental data on candidate sites • Town- and State-owned parcel inventory	 Finance & Cost • Cost building blocks — land, site prep, core/shell, MEP, fit-out • Escalated to 2026, validated against the referendum estimate • Benchmarked to nearby towns' recent stations • 20-year life-cycle operating costs • Contingency provision • Bond-advisor debt-service → tax-impact modeling	 Community Engagement • The registered-voter sentiment survey • Weekly newsletter to ~1,700 residents Deferred until Recommendation accepted: • Kickoff town hall + communications calendar • Outreach to Founders Hall, Library, Rec Center & HOAs • Civic groups and residents' organizations • Presence at town events
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*Note: while not all of the specific items were available in the form or format that various Committee members initially asked for, the Committee Chair is confident that the data, information and operational input discovered from RFD and RPD form a sound basis for the Committee’s development and consideration of the Majority Recommendation and various options presented herein.

The Tiger Team Options

Six reports, seven distinct recommendations.

TEAM / RECOMMENDATION	CONFIGURATION & SITE	EQUALIZED (ROM)
Option D — shared core Scalzo / Martinez (§8.6)	One consolidated building on the Campus, designed around a shared public core; both legacy properties returned to use	\$55.0M
Option C — full consolidation Scalzo / Martinez (§8.5)	One combined building on the Campus, additive program (no shared core); RVFD housed with dedicated bays	\$56.6M
Option A — two buildings Scalzo / Martinez (§8.4)	Police HQ + career fire HQ as two buildings on the Campus; volunteers keep Catoonah Street	\$57.6M
Option B — split site Scalzo / Martinez (§8.4)	Career fire + volunteers on the Campus; police HQ at Quarry Ridge (incl. site prep)	\$61.8M
Combination building Dunaway (§8.1)	Single combined building of ~61,500 SF at 36 Quarry Ridge; volunteers as-is	\$63.6M
Police-only, Town land Graves / Tyrrell (§8.3)	New police HQ on Town-owned Quarry Ridge; fire TBD within the \$50M combined budget ceiling.	\$50M ceiling*
Three-station fire service Safir (§8.2)	Examined for current needs and deferred as a solution for future needs based on anticipated growth in Branchville. Conceived as a third fire station to reduce burden on current RFD headquarters.	framework*

The Baseline Needs Met by Option D

The baseline rooms and systems — two independently secured wings around a shared public core. Carried from the July 8 Options A/B report into Option D.

POLICE WING	SHARED PUBLIC CORE	FIRE WING
• Command & administration • Patrol operations & lockers • Investigations & interview suites • 911 dispatch (consolidated) • Drive-through sally port & detention • Chain-of-custody evidence suite • Armory & weapons handling • Fleet garage & storage outbuilding	• Welcoming public lobby • Community / training room (also the EOC) • Public interview & fingerprinting • Fitness room • Central mechanical plant <i>Reachable without entering either secured wing.</i>	• 5 career + 2 volunteer drive-through bays • Hot / warm / cold decontamination • Living quarters — bunks, kitchen, day room • Administration — Chief, Marshal, EMS • EMS & medical-gas storage • SCBA fill & operations support • Volunteer program — 24-hr access, identity kept

Both wings built to Essential Facility (Risk Category IV) standard. This is the baseline; how much, how little, or what more is for the Town's public-safety leadership to decide — within reasonable cost, space, and location parameters.

What Option D Provides Versus Current Facilities



**Central location
& rapid deployment**

VOTERS' TOP
NON-COST PRIORITY

TODAY — two facilities over 100 years old



Aging downtown HQs south of geographical center; RFD apparatus parked three deep with no drive-through bays; RPD shift change operations require three floors plus an out-building instead of one continuous flow

OPTION D PROVIDES ROOM FOR:



Central campus at the call center of gravity; seven drive-through bays + sally port; apron egress onto Route 35



**Health
(contamination)**



Turnout gear stored on the apparatus floor; no decontamination zoning or gear extraction; gym and laundry on apparatus floor



Hot/warm/cold progression; gear washer + transition showers; exhaust extraction keeps carcinogens out of living space



**Safety
& security**



No sally port; substandard booking & detention space; no hardened dispatch, substandard facilities for evidence chain, or backup power



Secure sally port; compliant detention & chain-of-custody evidence; zoned access control; Risk-IV essential-facility build



**Privacy
& dignity**



Substandard security, privacy and separation between public reception, employee parking, booking/detention and back-of-house operations

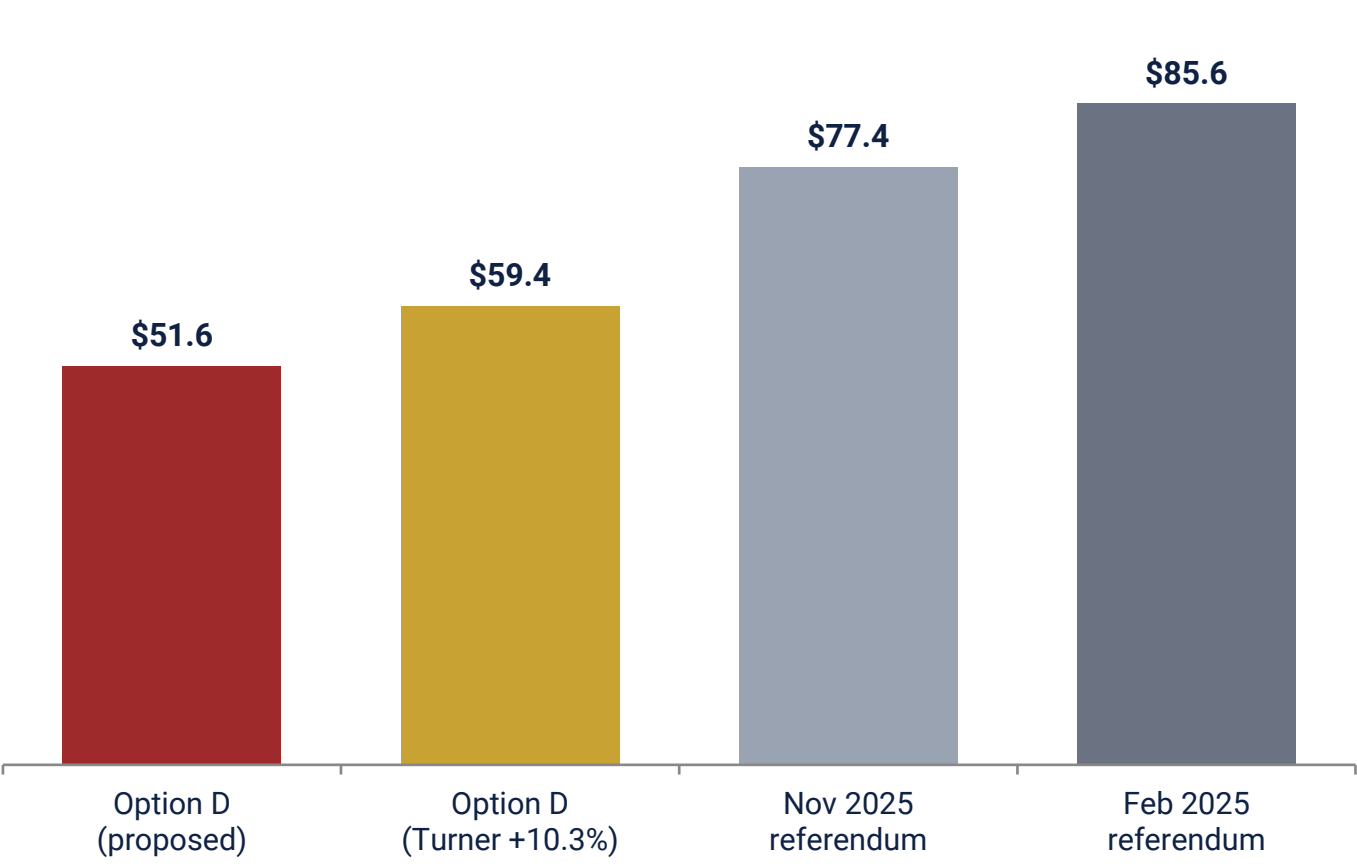


A shared public core as a neutral zone — residents reach the lobby, community room, and interview room without entering either secured wing

73% of voters rate faster response times — and 67% better coordination — as important to their next vote. Option D delivers exactly that; the \$10.8–12.6M do-nothing repair buys none of it.

Option D prices far below both failed referenda

Total project cost — Option D vs. what voters rejected (ROM, \$M)



Even carried at the Turner index's escalated rate (\$1,237/sf, the 2025 referendum rate + 10.3%), Option D lands near \$59M — still well below both defeated proposals, and before any legacy-property offsets.



ONE METHODOLOGY, EVERY OPTION

Brickley/NASCO estimate, Aug 17, 2026. **Every option is also priced at the 2025 referendum's own unit cost (\$1,121/sf)** — an apples-to-apples baseline the comparison can't be dismissed as a change in accounting.

On the same basis, equalized to a common scope:

Option D — shared core	\$55.0M
Option C — no shared core	\$56.6M
Option A — two buildings	\$57.6M
Option B — split site	\$61.8M

The recommended option is also the lowest-cost build at normalized scope.

What Option D means for the Ridgefield taxpayer

 THE MEDIAN RIDGEFIELD HOME

+\$33.90

/ month

at peak — averaging **about \$26/month** (\$310/yr) over the 20-year bond.
Assessed \$454K · market ~\$789K.

MILL RATE

28.36 → 29.26 (peak +0.90)

Peak monthly impact — Option D (equalized)

BY HOME VALUE

Starter \$250K	+\$18.65
Median \$454K	+\$33.90
Mean \$555K	+\$41.40
Above-avg \$700K	+\$52.23

BY CURRENT TAX BILL

\$8,000/yr bill	+\$21.05
\$12,500/yr bill	+\$32.89
\$20,000/yr bill	+\$52.62
\$30,000/yr bill	+\$78.93



THE LOWEST-TAX BUILD OPTION

Of the four build options, Option D carries the smallest peak mill increase — **+0.90 mills**, versus **+0.92 to +1.01** for the alternatives.



“DO NOTHING” IS NOT FREE

\$10.8M–\$12.6M in capital repairs over 10 years — up to **~\$15M all-in** with operating costs — for two 100-year-old buildings and **no operational improvement**. It carries no bond, so the cost lands on the operating budget and reserves.



Every year of delay

+\$2.5–2.8M

~5% annual escalation to bid day



New-facility operating savings

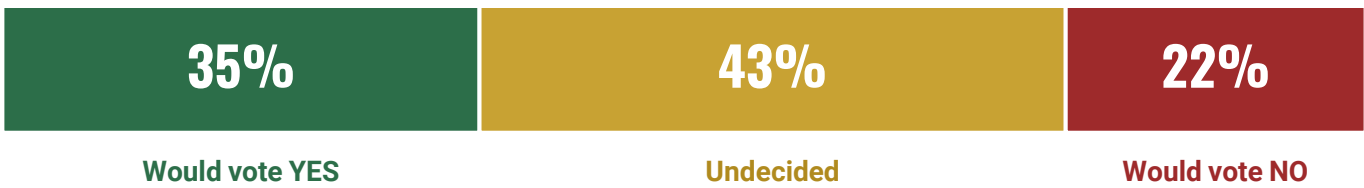
\$2.1–2.6M

over 20 yrs (maintenance, OSHA, comms)

What the voters told us back in April

798 registered voters surveyed by Surveys & Forecasts, LLC (April 2026).

If a referendum were held today (April 2026)



Not a rejection problem — a persuasion problem. With only 22% firmly opposed and 43% undecided, the path to approval runs through the persuadable middle.

What will decide the next vote (% extremely / very important)



82% agree the facilities are outdated

The one thing that crosses every voter segment — the common ground any campaign starts from.

Cost is the barrier.

60% of all voters — and **74%** of opponents — named cost as their reason.

 **OPTION D IS THE ANSWER**

The need they already agree on, at a price built to clear the cost objection — far below both failed referenda.

Respondents self-selected from the Town's civic-notification list — directional guidance for decision-making, not a projectable probability sample.

Not a smaller version of what failed — a different method



Size to what's reasonable

Right-sized by facility condition, code compliance, and operational adequacy for a town of ~25,000 — triangulated against real, recent buildings our neighbors have actually built.



Consolidate the duplication

One building doesn't need two of everything. The shared-core method KBA used at Hingham, MA puts public and support functions between two independently secured wings.



Keep the volunteers whole

The Volunteer Fire Department's program, identity, and 24-hour access are preserved on-campus — and both legacy properties can return to the tax rolls.



THE COMMITTEE'S VOTE

Adopted 6–1 on August 27, 2026. The configuration was chosen first (Aug 20 straw poll), the estimator's single-methodology revision was heard next (Aug 25), and the final vote was taken on the final figures. A two-site alternative and a Quarry Ridge combined facility did not command majority support.

6–1

in favor of Option D

The architect's Aug 20 test-fit drawings confirm the consolidated building, bays, sally port, and parking fit on the campus with room to expand.

An all-of-town effort — the path forward

- 1

Assemble the site

Acquire the second parcel and combine it with the parcel the Town already owns.
- 2

Establish the Civic District

P&Z recognizes the existing public-asset corridor — Rec Center, Founders Hall, the campus.
- 3

Move the teams

Police, career fire, and volunteer fire to one consolidated campus, sequenced with the chiefs.
- 4

Build right-sized

Reasonably, at a cost the Town's voters can defend.
- 5

Return value (if desired)

Sell or lease the legacy properties, restoring them to the tax rolls.

“
With the whole town working together, Ridgefield can build the facilities it needs, that our first responders deserve, and at a cost its voters can support.
Step out of the gallery and into the arena.