

Date: July 26, 2026

To: Falmouth MA Select Board

Mike Renshaw, Town Manager – Jed Cornock, Town Planner

Subject: Station 4 CPC Application – Request to Expand the Scope

Good morning Chair Goldstone, Vice Chair Reed, Members of the Select Board, Mike, and Jed,

I appreciate the Town's efforts to pursue Community Preservation funding for the preservation of Station 4. I believe this is exactly the type of project the Community Preservation Act was intended to support. Falmouth Community Preservation Fund literature specifically states that the fund supports projects that “acquire, preserve, rehabilitate and restore historic resources.” Station 4 is not only an important historic building on the national register within the West Falmouth Historic District, but it also continues to serve the same vital public purpose it has for generations. It is also a town owned asset in critical need of restoration.

I have spent the past several weeks reviewing historical records and condition reports related to the West Falmouth Station. While I appreciate the recommendation to move forward with exterior improvements, I am concerned that the proposed scope does not reflect the well documented needs of the building.

I would also like to clarify a point. The West Falmouth Village Association did **not** agree that exterior improvements alone represent an appropriate long-term scope for this project. In a meeting with the Town Manager and the Town Planner, we understood that the recommendation being advanced to the Select Board would be limited to exterior improvements. That should not be interpreted as support for limiting the project to the exterior. We supported bringing the project to the Select Board for discussion and seeking approval to file an application for CPC funding. As you know, the deadline for application submissions is imminent and we did not want to lose the opportunity to begin this much needed investment in this building.

The Town's own documents show in detail what is required to bring this building to acceptable standards.

- Every annual station inspection on record since at least October 2022 obtained through public records request — prepared by the station captain and submitted through the Fire Chief — concludes, in nearly identical language each year, that Station 4 is *"not suitable for long term occupancy within the industry standard and meeting with OSHA and NFPA standards 1500, 1710, 1720, and 1851."*
- The October 2022 and September 2023 inspections each specifically flagged the rear stairs/emergency egress as not appearing structurally sound. A firefighter subsequently fell through those stairs and was injured seriously enough to go on disability. The hazard was known in advance but was addressed only after someone was hurt rather than as part of a planned renovation.
- The town's own facilities assessment identifies approximately **\$340,000 in immediate capital needs**, including electrical systems, communications and fire alarm systems, plumbing, sanitary waste systems, and roofing - not just windows and siding. That number rises to \$431,942 by 2030.

- The Gale Associates feasibility study (August 2025) further documents hazardous building materials that will ultimately need to be addressed as part of any comprehensive rehabilitation.

Taken together, these reports make clear that preserving Station 4 means preserving the entire building—not just the portions visible from the street.

The question I continue to come back to is this:

If we are relying on the Town's own facilities assessment to justify investing Community Preservation funds in this building, why are we proposing to address only a portion of the needs identified in that same assessment?

I understand that the Town is continuing to evaluate the long-term configuration of its fire stations, and I appreciate the importance of that discussion. However, those future decisions should not prevent us from responsibly caring for a Town-owned building that remains in active use today.

From a stewardship perspective, I also believe a comprehensive rehabilitation is the most responsible long-term investment. Whether Station 4 continues serving as a fire station for decades to come or whether future operational needs eventually change, a properly rehabilitated historic building will remain a valuable public asset. Deferred maintenance rarely saves money; it simply shifts greater costs into the future while allowing a significant Town asset to continue deteriorating.

Most importantly, this building is more than a historic structure. It is the workplace—and for 24-hour shifts, the temporary home—of the firefighters who protect our community. We routinely acknowledge the importance of providing safe, functional facilities for our first responders. I believe the firefighters assigned to Station 4 deserve that same commitment.

For these reasons, I respectfully ask the Select Board to consider expanding the scope of this CPC application beyond the building's exterior. I believe the application should acknowledge the building's documented needs and establish a comprehensive vision for preserving this important public asset. The investment should reflect the full responsibility we have to preserve both the building and the essential public service it continues to provide.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to a thoughtful discussion at Monday's meeting.

Respectfully,

Tammy Gilbert, Town Meeting Member Precinct 6
West Falmouth Village Association