



New Malden Police station on time, within budget

Tuesday Posted Oct 18, 2016 at 2:01 PM

Updated Oct 19, 2016 at 11:45 AM

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At 8 a.m. next Tuesday, Oct. 25, if all goes according to plan, the Malden Police Department will have a new home.

That's when the first shift is set to begin and the dispatch center is expected to go live at the new police headquarters at 800 Eastern Ave., a project that began in August of 2015 and has remained on schedule and within its budget, according to city officials.

"When you're on time and under budget, that's as good as it gets in this business," said Malden Strategic Planner Ron Hogan.

Hogan could not yet provide final cost figures for the project, but he said they would not surpass what was initially budgeted: just under \$20 million, including land acquisition, construction and "soft costs," and around \$12.5 million for construction alone.

The project is being funded in part by a \$9.85 million grant through the MassWorks Infrastructure Program.

On Saturday, the 24,000-square foot station will open to the public with a ribbon-cutting ceremony at 9 a.m., followed by tours. Residents will see a well-lit lobby with glass windows and high ceilings, a community room for use by local groups, and locker rooms significantly larger than the ones at the outgoing station.

"That's a morale booster, for officers to have a nice, clean, working locker room with large lockers," said Officer Jeff Drees, an 18-year Malden Police veteran.

Drees also sees improvements in the dispatch area on the ground floor, and the booking and processing area in the basement.

"The booking and processing area has significant upgrades, both in technology and in officer safety types of issues," Drees said. "And the dispatch center - we have a lot of great technology now, but it's coming over and being reworked, we're getting some new stuff, and it's a brand new room that functions well."

The existing police station on Pleasant Street, which was built in the 1970s, has experienced glitches in heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC), as well as some trouble accommodating new technology.

"We're starting from scratch, so the technology is consistent with the age of the building," Drees said. "I would guess that most of the officers are excited and glad to be a part of this department when this is happening."

The site at 800 Eastern Ave. was previously occupied by a couple of buildings and by large mounds of soil that were brought in and out by a contractor. Neighbors were "constantly complaining" about the situation, according to Hogan.

"It's that before and after that I think is the greatest improvement to the site," Hogan said.

Hogan added that he has been thrilled with the work of Commodore Builders, a mid-size construction management firm based in Waltham that is working with Malden for the first time. The architect, Flansburgh Architects, also designed Malden's Forestdale, Linden, Beebe, Ferryway and Salemwood schools.

The new police station is the first step in a long-term plan to demolish the existing government/public safety building and the First Church on Pleasant Street and erect a new, mixed-use City Hall facility over the next three years.

Demolition is scheduled to take place next spring.