

## MIDDLETOWN

## Officials have plan to cover firehouse costs

*A proposed addition will more than triple the size of the fire station built in 1963.*

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STAFF WRITER

Middletown has a tentative plan to cover the remaining costs of a renovation-addition project at the William Penn Fire Company's station on Bristol Oxford Valley Road, assistant township manager Frank Farry said.

Farry said he didn't want to release details of the plan until the board of supervisors had a chance to consider it at Tuesday night's meeting. If the supervisors green light the funding plan, it must also be approved by the Skyline Fire District, an organization of four fire departments that serve the township — William Penn, Penndel, Langhorne-Middletown and Parkland.

Township and William Penn officials found out they needed more money when the low bid for construction came back at \$1.28 million. Counting design and engineering, furniture and other costs, the total project cost is expected to be about \$1.49 million, William Penn Building Committee Chairman Barney Wheeler said.

Most of the project will be covered with an \$800,000 grant awarded to the township by county government's redevelopment authority with money from Philadelphia Park Casino in Bensalem. The William Penn company could come up with another \$200,000, said Wheeler, who asked the supervisors if the township could pick up the remaining \$490,000.

The supervisors weren't ready to commit to that at the May 6 meeting, but a committee of township and fire company officials has worked out a tentative plan that will be discussed Tuesday night, Farry said.

Township and fire company officials had previously discussed delaying some of the project until next year and funding remaining costs with another casino grant township officials would hope to get late this year. However, township Manager Richard Gestrich is now recommending any casino grant received later this year be used for another purpose, Farry said. The newspaper was unsuccessful in its attempts to reach Gestrich for comment.

Wheeler was not receptive to a suggestion made by a township-hired architect to cut out certain parts of the project.

"We've spent a lot of time designing this project and believe it's the right one for our members," he said at the May 6 meeting. "Scaling the building down is not something we want to do."

The plan calls for an addition more than triple the size of the station on Bristol Oxford Valley Road near Woodbourne Road. A 5,476 square-foot addition will have three vehicle bays, an engine room, office and storage.

The existing 1,745-squarefoot building, built in 1963 by members of the fire company, will be converted into a recreation room, multipurpose/exercise room and storage.

William Penn is in dire need of the project that will better enable members to serve the fire protection needs of Middletown, Wheeler has said. The company also has a station on Main Street in Hulmeville.