The Real Story About Why Engine 2 Needs To Be Replaced

If you have been following the Fire Department in the papers over the past six months you will see that we have been actively trying to persuade the Board Of Selectmen to approve the replacement of Engine 2, a 1981 American LaFrance pumper and Rescue 1, a 1979 rescue truck. Regarding Engine 2, it has been reported in the papers that one of the main reasons for its replacement is safety, and the **NFPA regulations** prohibiting fire departments from running front-line apparatus with open cab construction. It also has been reported that this is a "second alarm" piece and only responds to a few brush fires a year. So, you as a taxpayer would naturally say, why in the world does this fire department want the taxpayers of Middlebury to pay for the replacement of Engine 2, when it only goes out a few times a year?

The truth is that the need for Engine 2 to be replaced has little to do with Engine 2 itself, but has everything to do with **Engine 3**. Engine 3 is a 1988 American LaFrance 1000 gallon pumper. This is Middlebury's "Front-Line Attack pumper." If your house catches on fire, it will most likely be Engine 3 that will be the first engine that arrives in your driveway. This apparatus is getting older and if you follow the town's 20 year replacement policy, it should be replaced in 2008.

Our biggest fear is that Engine 3 will fail at a fire someday. It is already 18 years old, and although the body is stainless steel, the other components within the apparatus are aging. Would you trust your car if it were 18 years or 25 years old as Engine 2 is? The protection of life and property is our number one priority, and we do not want to have to rely on an aging apparatus as our front-line piece. But we are not the only ones who feel this way. In a survey conducted on April 18th, 2005 by Firehouse.com it was reported that only **7%** of the 6827 respondents had "First-Out " apparatus **over 16 - 20 years old**. Only **6%** had first-out apparatus **over 20 years old. 53% of the respondents had apparatus newer than 6 years old.**

Our plan is to move Engine 3 from its first-out position and transfer it to the West End station where it will be used far less. Engine 4 will be moved from the West End station to Engine 2's position where it will respond to second alarms and brush fires. Current Engine 2 will be sold. A new Engine 2 will be purchased and put in the place of Engine 3 as a new pumper that the town will be able to rely on for another 20 years. Having Engine 4 in place of Engine 2 will give the department a back-up pumper that is NFPA compliant in the event that either new Engine 2 or Engine 3 goes out of service. This is just good planning. In addition the new pumper will preserve the town's ISO rating which directly reflects on our residents homeowner's insurance.

What is happening now? Instead of making the decision on Engine 2 and Rescue 1 replacement last spring, **the Board of Selectman voted to create a fire commission** to look into the matter. Although, the individuals that were appointed are very nice people, and are working very hard to help the fire department, they know nothing about the needs or the operations of this department. Thus they are seeking a company that will do an analyses of the town's apparatus needs, an idea first proposed by the chief before the commission was formed and was rejected by the Selectmen. **The Fire Commission by its very nature establishes an unnecessary new layer of bureaucracy** that not only slows down the entire process, but will ultimately cost the taxpayers more money. If the Board of Selectman had approved the fire department recommendation for replacing apparatus back in April, the fire department could have saved the taxpayers approximately $100,000.00. That is $50,000.00 per piece. Now, after only 4 months in existence, the Board of Selectmen would like to make this Fire Commission permanent with a change to the charter.

Recently, there were two pump tests performed on Engine 2. In one test the pumper failed completely, and in a second test the pumper barely passed. Now the town will be forced to make repairs that have been estimated at anywhere between $5000.00 and $8000.00. The longer we wait to replace this apparatus the higher the risk Engine 3 will fail. The longer we wait the higher the price of replacement. The longer we wait the longer the list gets of apparatus over twenty years old. In 2008 Middlebury will have four pieces of apparatus over twenty years old. We have to react now and keep public safety and politics separate. You can help us. **Please Vote against the charter change that would make the Fire Commission permanent.**

Current Configuration

Engine 3 -1988, 1000 Gallon Pumper.
Due For Replacement 2008.
Currently First-Out Attack Pumper. Should be reassigned to second-out piece because of its age.

Engine 4 - 1987, 1000 Gallon Pumper.
Due For Replacement 2007.
Currently Second-Out Attack Pumper. Grossly underpowered. Should be reassigned as 2nd alarm piece.

Engine 2 -1981, 1000 Gallon Pumper.
Due For Replacement 2001.
Open Cab makes it not NFPA compliant. Can not be used as back-up first-out piece. Can hurt town's ISO rating.

New Configuration

New Engine 2 - 2007, 1000 Gallon Pumper.
Due For Replacement 2027.
Will replace Engine 3 as First-Out Attack Pumper.

Engine 3 Second-Out Pumper.
West End Station.

Engine 4 - Becomes 2nd Alarm piece. Responds to brush fires as well. Can be used as a backup pumper in case Engine 2 or Engine 3 goes out of service.

Old Engine 2 is sold