

FIRE TRAINING / CONTROLLED BURN FACT SHEET

A fire training / controlled burn to provide training for fire departments of Vergennes , Ferrisburgh, Addison and New Haven, has been proposed at 40 North Street in Vergennes.

According to the State of Vermont, “burning of solid or liquid fuels or structures for the purpose of bona-fide instruction and training of municipal, volunteer, and industrial firefighters in the methods of fighting fires is permissible when conducted under the direct control and supervision of qualified instructors. Firefighters involved in the training must be residents of Vermont or affiliated with the mutual aid systems within the state of Vermont.

In order to provide training, fire departments burn structures such as commercial buildings and residential homes that are to be demolished. Situations where these structures are legally burned as part of a supervised fire training exercise are invaluable to fire department personnel. Fire Departments are required to follow certain steps to minimize potential exposure to toxic fumes and hazardous materials.

Source: Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation’s Fire Training Fact Sheet – Acquired Structures Training

<https://dec.vermont.gov/sites/dec/files/aqc/compliance/documents/2018-08-07%20FireTrainingFactSheet.pdf>

How did this proposed Fire Training/Controlled Burn come about?

Vergennes Fire Chief Jim Bruer, learned of the proposed sale of the 40 North Street property from Don and Theresa Clark to Dan and Rebecca Hassan and the proposed demolition once the sale occurred. Dan and Rebecca are owners of Grand Senior Living, the company developing “Vergennes Grand”, an Assisted Living and Assisted Living Memory Care Community.

Vergennes Grand will renovate and expand the existing, operating Vergennes Residential Care Home at 34 North Street. The existing operation today serves up to 18 residents, will serve as many as 82 residents when expansion and construction is complete. In addition to a tastefully designed expansion, the original 1820 historic building will be restored back to its original Italianate splendor. Vergennes Grand is designed to serve seniors of all financial abilities by participating in various state and federal programs that support the “forgotten middle” of the senior population who need and deserve dignified housing and care services. The project is planning construction in 2021 with occupancy available in the summer of 2022.

When Chief Breur first met with Dan and Rebecca, he asked if Vergennes and other communities could use 40 North Street as an opportunity to train firefighters. The Hassan's said yes as they believed it would be beneficial to the community, in spite of the fact that this will increase their own costs, versus a mechanical demolition.

Who currently owns the 40 North Street property?

The sale of the property from its current owners, Don and Theresa Clark, to Dan and Rebecca Hassan has not yet occurred. The Hassans are currently wrapping up project funding for the Vergennes Grand project. Once that funding is set, they anticipate the sale of 40 North Street to be completed in late May.

Has the 40 North Street property been assessed for the presence of asbestos by a licensed asbestos contractor?

Yes, and lab results returned showed that the only suspect material was Vermiculite attic insulation, containing less than .3% Chrysotile, which is a regulated asbestos containing material (ACM). The EPA and State of Vermont consider anything less than 1% a trace concentration, and do not require special removal or disposal for materials containing less than 1% asbestos.

Will any identified asbestos-containing material be properly removed and disposed of?

Out of an abundance of caution, the owners have nevertheless engaged a certified asbestos abatement company to remove the Vermiculite attic insulation, before any demolition or burn activity. The abatement work will take 1 or 2 days after the sale of the property has been completed. In addition to the asbestos abatement firm, the Hassans have also engaged a specialty "deconstruction" company to remove roofing, siding, windows, doors, appliances, etc., in preparation for demolition or controlled burn. Regardless of whether there is a burn or not, the property owner is still required to make the notification to the US EPA and VT Department of Health prior to demolition.

Has lead paint been removed from the building?

The property is scheduled to be inspected for the presence of lead paint. Should lead be detected materials coated with lead-based paint will be removed to the greatest extent possible prior to a controlled burn.

Will copper pipe (solder) and electric wiring be removed?

Regarding copper pipe (solder) and electric wiring, neither of these items are required to be removed prior to a burn, and at this point there are no plans to remove them. The Hassans anticipate removing all other materials as identified in this fact sheet, or as listed in the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation's Fire Training Fact Sheet – Acquired Structures Training

What permitting is required by the building owner?

The Building Owner submits (regardless of asbestos being present) the [NESHAP Demolition Notification Form](#) (attached) to the [Vermont Department of Health Asbestos Program](#) and [US EPA](#) at least 10 business days prior to asbestos removal and/or fire training. The Hassans will not make this final notification to the EPA or VT DOH to demolish or burn the building at 40 North Street until after it has been purchased.

What is the date for the fire training/controlled burn?

As of this writing, there is not a hard demolition date. Before the fire training can occur, the property must be cleared of all potentially hazardous items “to the greatest extent possible,” according to the State of Vermont. As mentioned, the Hassans are working to wrap up project financing. Until they legally acquire 40 North Street, they will not be able to make that notification.

What are the steps the Vergennes Fire Department must take?

Once the property is sold and all mitigation has occurred, VFD must then:

- a. Submit the [Fire Training Notification Form](#) to the Vermont Air Quality and Climate Division at least 14 days prior to the fire training.
- b. Notify the local Fire Warden
- c. Notify residents within a ½ mile of the Fire Training.

In summary, following is the six-step checklist that will be followed by the property owner, Vergennes Fire Department and City of Vergennes.

1. Asbestos survey complete, followed by abatement if needed.
2. Building Owner complete and submit the NESHAP notification form to USEPA Region 1.
3. Contact the Vermont Department of Health and include a copy of the NESHAP notification.

4. Complete and submit “Fire Training Notification Form” to the Vermont DEC Air Quality and Climate Division at least 14 days prior to the fire training.
5. To the greatest extent possible, clear the proposed fire training facility of all potentially hazardous items. Notify the local Fire Warden of the proposed fire training.
6. Notify residents within ½ mile of the proposed fire training.

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If you have any questions about this, please contact Ron Redmond, City Manager at 802-382-7985 or manager@vergennes.org; or Jim Breur, Fire Chief, Vergennes Fire Department at 802-316-2067.