

WHATELY TOWN HALL: COMMUNITY CENTER AND HISTORICAL MUSEUM

By the Municipal Building Committee
and Historical Commission



What Will the Town Hall Renovation Accomplish?

- Stabilization and preservation of one of the Town's most important historic buildings
- A fully accessible second-floor auditorium for performances, exhibitions and events (seats 150+)
- A permanent, secure and climate-controlled home for the Whately Historical Society and Museum
- A general meeting room for lectures and meetings (seats 30)
- Fully accessible restrooms and kitchen

What Are the Practical Improvements?

- Updated plumbing and other mechanical systems that are more efficient and meet current standards
- Energy efficiency through added insulation, restored historic windows and mini-split heating and cooling units
- Small rear addition (and new "back door") to accommodate new stairs and a platform lift, with stops at the first and second floors and second-floor stage
- Improved accessibility through a redesigned ramp at the front (west) entrance
- State-of-the-art smoke and fire detectors connected directly to the fire emergency system
- Redesigned parking, including handicapped spaces, and better grading around the Town Hall and the Post Office

IMPORTANT DATES

Monday, April 3: Open Meeting to Learn More about Town Hall Renovation Plan

Tuesday, April 25: Annual Town Meeting, to Vote on Town Capital Funds and CPA Funding For Town Hall

Why Is This Project Important?

- Restoring Town Hall will make it the focal point for the Town's 250th anniversary in 2021, as it was for Whately's bicentennial in 1971.
- Sixteen community groups are eager to begin using Town Hall for rehearsals, performances, lectures and meetings, and the opportunities for additional classes, play groups, fundraisers for local organizations, as well as private functions (birthdays, anniversaries, showers, etc.), will be great as Town Hall gets up and running.
- The Whately Historical Society, whose lectures, public programs, and oral history project preserve our Town history and its artifacts, has operated in Town-owned space since its incorporation in 1974. Providing a permanent space for the Museum in Town Hall will reinforce that long-standing commitment.
- Town Hall is the anchor of the Whately Town Center National Historic District. By collaborating with other Whately organizations (Nasami Farm, Quonquont Farm, Watermelon Wednesdays, the Whately Inn, and others), we have the potential to increase our visibility as a tourism destination, which will benefit retail businesses, restaurants, and bed-and-breakfasts in town.

What Costs Will the Town Incur Going Forward?

- Town Offices will maintain a schedule of events for the meeting room and auditorium, but will not be responsible for programming. Little additional staffing will be needed for maintenance.
- Energy-efficient HVAC systems and better insulation will reduce utility bills considerably.
- The Select Board will put in place a fee schedule for space rental that helps to offset operating expenses.
- The Whately Historical Society will contribute to ongoing operation costs for Town Hall.
- Re-use of existing auditorium seating and meeting tables, as well as retrofitting of light fixtures in place, will save money and maintain the historic character of Town Hall.

How Much Will This Cost, and How Will It Be Funded?

- The Municipal Building Committee and Historical Commission have worked hand-in-hand with Jones Whitsett Architects to reduce the total project cost of Town Hall renovation to \$1.3 million – down from an initial estimate of \$1.7 million (construction costs only).
- The Select Board and Finance Committee will recommend using \$315,000 of the proceeds of last year's cell tower sales (which can only be used for capital purposes) for Town Hall.
- Private fundraising has yielded over \$90,000 thus far. The volunteers who are leading the Friends of Town Hall effort have set a goal for \$150,000 in gifts and private grants for the project.
- The Town is submitting proposals to three Massachusetts grant programs (for cultural facilities, preservation, and energy-saving measures) this spring. Total dollars requested exceed \$550,000.
- Because the entire renovation project will meet federal standards for historic preservation, Town Hall renovation is fully eligible for funding with CPA dollars, beginning with \$340,000 in currently available reserves and including borrowing against future CPA revenues, if needed.
- **Bottom line? This funding plan – public grants, private gifts, CPA dollars, and Town capital funds – ensures that the Town Hall renovation will not, under any circumstances, require increased property taxes.**