

## **WE ARE ALL CONCERNED CITIZENS: A Town Hall Status Report**

Our Town Hall has serious safety issues, does not meet current building codes and is not compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Necessary meeting space is lacking at times. In addition, overcrowding and shrinking storage space have made municipal functions increasingly difficult to carry out.

Article 10 of the 2012 warrant requesting \$135,000 to further design development and cost estimates for a proposed renovation and/or addition to the Town Hall 1839 building was defeated; but time does not stand still. As building deterioration continued and overcrowding escalated, exacerbated by space requirements for the mechanical portion of the geothermal installation, the Board of Selectmen decided to undertake the initial cost free portion of the intended planning through appointment of a Town Hall Space Needs Committee.

### **Space Needs Committee Membership**

Members of the Space Needs Committee were chosen based on a number of factors including a track record of working in the interest of the Town as an elected or appointed member of a board, committee or commission, particularly one related to Town planning, business, history or other area possibly associated with the study.

Committee membership was as follows: Curtis Boivin, architect (Planning Board); Paul Goldman (Budget Committee Chairman); Peter Kasnet, builder (Sewer Commission); Mel Low (Planning Board, Long Range Planning/Master Plan); Tom McCormick (Planning Board); Paula Merritt (Historic District Commission); Gregg Mikolaities, engineer (former Recreation Commission member); Lucy Neiman, (former Energy Committee member) who assisted in writing the Geothermal Grant; Ned Paul, (CIP member, Budget Committee member), Peter White, (Heritage Commission) and Phil Winslow, (Historic District Commission). Priscilla Jenness served as the selectmen's representative and the following Town employees were included to ensure committee ease of access to information: Town Administrator Mike Magnant, Assistant TA/Financial Director Cyndi Gillespie, Planning /Zoning Director Kim Reed, Public Works Director Dennis McCarthy and Town Clerk/Tax Collector Beth Yeaton who served as employees' representative.

Ned Paul was elected to chair the Space Needs Committee, Curtis Boivin was elected as vice-chair and Beth Yeaton volunteered to serve as clerk.

### **Charge to the Space Needs Committee**

The Selectmen's charge to the committee was as follows:

1. *Members will become familiar with all of the recently compiled data related to the Town Hall building and it's uses to include Needs Assessment (AG Architect's Report), structural analysis, financial estimates, engineering reports and the work accomplished to date.*
2. *The Committee will seek an economically sound proposal to resolve the space needs of the Town as an integral part of the preservation/renovation of our historic Town Hall, giving equal weight during deliberations to the Town Hall as a historic entity and to Town Hall as the center for the conduct of the business of the Town of Rye including ease of access by the public and accommodation of the Americans with disabilities Act.*
3. *The Committee will formulate and explain a plan to address the Town's space needs problems including:*
  - A) *any additional information deemed necessary*
  - B) *initial decision: should the Great Hall revert to meeting space or remain office space?*
  - C) *options considered*
  - D) *preferred option with rationale*
  - E) *steps to be taken to strive for citizen awareness and consensus (which may or may not include presentations, visioning sessions, survey, development of a time line, proposal of warrant article(s), etc.)*
  - F) *consideration of and response to Article 27 of the 2012 Warrant*
4. *The Committee will prepare and submit a report to the Board of Selectmen detailing the work and recommendations of the Committee no later than November 1, 2012.*

NOTE: The Town Hall Space Needs Ad Hoc Committee is a Selectmen's Committee. As such, no sub committees may be appointed without approval of the Board of Selectmen. Unless continued by the Board of Selectmen, this committee will sunset in March of 2013.

## **Space Needs Committee at Work**

The Space Needs Committee was provided with basic data on Town Hall accumulated as the result of work and studies done to date including Energy Assessment, Structural Analysis of roof and foundation and the Facilities Space Needs Assessment carried out by AG Architects.

The Committee met frequently from its inception until late October. Preparation for deliberation included guided tours of both the Town Hall and the Public Safety Building. Beth Yeaton took extensive minutes of each meeting in order to provide the public with details of the committee's progress. They remain available on the Town website. Despite the size of the committee, Chairman Paul was open to the concerns of members of the public in attendance and provided for input at each meeting. Contributions of ideas and documents from the public were incorporated into the final report.

Consideration of 2012 Article 27 caused the Committee to consider a broad range of alternative solutions which included use of the Safety Building, Transfer Station Area and purchase of new land. Assist. TA Cyndi Gillespie prepared a comprehensive comparison of Town Hall facilities in 19 communities in southeastern N.H. which made clear the diversity of facilities in use nearby.

Space needs proposed by AG Architects were refined through interviews with department heads that included scrutiny of records required, accumulated and stored. It became apparent that, due to N.H. law, record storage is a complex issue and growing problem for all municipalities.

### **Initial determinations:**

- Town Hall safety issues must be addressed.
- The historic character of Town Hall should be maintained
- Restore the Great Hall as a usable meeting space/retain the two curvilinear stair cases.
- Create additional space to meet current needs of the Town's departments, including recreation department administrative needs, going forward for at least 30 years.

### **Basic recommendations in response to the charge:**

- Renovate Town Hall: to code and ADA requirements
- Retain the Town's business in the center of Rye, in the same general location
- Create 3,500 to 5,500 square feet (total of 10,500 sq. ft. + or - 10%) to meet the need of the Rye Town Hall business functions, this goal to be accomplished by:
  - Addition to Town Hall, limited in size to prevent detracting from the existing building or
  - New Town Hall (annex) on the same site

### **Additional recommendations resulting from the Space Needs Committee's activities:**

- Devise a long range Strategic Plan for Delivery of Services
- Develop a Facilities Master Plan
- Evaluate the old police station
- Develop a plan for record retention
- Explore easier public access to the Safety Building Meeting Room
- Provide for employees during renovation of Town Hall.

The complete reports of the Space Needs Committee, as well as meeting minutes, are available on the Rye Town Website: [www.town.rye.nh.us](http://www.town.rye.nh.us)

## **2013 Warrant Articles resulting from Space Needs Committee's Report**

The work of the Space Needs Committee has provided the basis for 3 warrant articles on your 2013 March ballot:

**Article 4** requests \$60,000 to retain a licensed architectural/engineering consultant to prepare schematic designs for restoration of our 1839 Town Hall building, including restoration of the Great Hall and its curvilinear staircases and construction of additional new town office space in accordance with the November 2012 report of the Town Hall Space Needs Committee and to prepare a Rye Town Facility Master Plan.

**Article 5** asks \$9,800 for a detailed study of the former police station property to determine cost of structural, architectural, environmental, mechanical, electrical and wastewater improvements to make it serviceable for storage or other building space uses.

**Article 8** seeks \$25,000 for the purpose of retaining the services of a company specializing in New Hampshire municipal records retention management.

**Gratitude**

We wish to publicly thank the members of the Town Hall Space Needs Committee for their investment of time, contributions and dedication to the completion of this extensive and difficult assignment in a timely manner.

**In Closing**

If you pay taxes, expect efficiency in Town government, wish to protect the Town's assets and/or revere Rye's heritage, you are a concerned citizen. Despite the diversity of our concerns, it will take all of us working together in a spirit of cooperation to reach consensus on the best path forward for a successful resolution of the problems at our Town Hall.

Board of Selectmen,

Priscilla V. Jenness, Chairman  
Joe G. Mills, Jr., Vice Chairman  
Craig N. Musselman, Selectman