

Chatham Building Committee
Letter to the Townspeople of Chatham, NH
October 2014

The **Purpose** of this letter is to give information on the current and future state of the Town-owned buildings to every member of the Town of Chatham

Mission Statement: The Building Committee was created to protect and or preserve the existing Town Buildings and to help plan for any future buildings, going forward 50 to 100 years.

Introduction:

Every municipality in New Hampshire is governed by Revised Statutes Annotated (RSAs), which are laws of the State that are arranged into a systematic code, subordinate to the New Hampshire State Constitution. Chatham's executive power is our Board of Selectmen, and they are bound by NH law to enforce all RSAs that pertain to Town governance and planning.

Due to lack of compliance with existing RSAs, the current state of our Town Hall as a public meeting space, as well as lack of access to and proper storage of our Town records, leaves us open to private law suits and to fines and law suits from the NH Attorney General's Office. ***These statutes are not open to debate, and we ignore them at our own fiscal peril.*** The Town is subject to random audits by various State administrative offices, and we need to be proactive in planning for our future. It is the Town's responsibility to be in compliance with State laws, and we are not.

Dear Chatham Resident:

As many of you might be aware, we have formed an exploratory building committee to review the current conditions of all Town buildings, possible upgrades to them and also to possibly explore the building of a new municipal building that would house our Selectmen's and Planning Board meetings and serve as our Town Clerk and Tax Collector's office.

It has become apparent that our Town Hall is in need of some significant repairs to stabilize the building. Bill Perry has had the State Fire Marshall inspect the Town Hall, and I have had our insurance company do a loss prevention assessment of the building as well. There are a number of State fire code regulations that we are in violation of. These issues are real, and they must be dealt with if we are going to utilize the existing Town hall for public meetings. In other words, we do not have the option of doing nothing.

As you know, for many years the Town has been very fortunate to have had Wayne McAllister and Mark and Trish Pitman use their home as our Town Clerk's office and for our selectmen and planning board meetings. The Town has paid nothing in rent or reimbursed them for electricity or heating costs. Going forward we need to plan for all contingencies, and it seems to a number of us that exploring a new building, conservatively built, for our Town offices might make sense. We need to plan for growth and have a building or buildings that meet all State laws regarding regulations that apply to public buildings. In addition, we need to be certain that our current Town buildings are maintained and the historic character of them preserved for future generations.

In closing, the Selectmen and building committee want your input. Many of you do not regularly attend our Annual Town Meeting or special public meetings when held. We want you to get involved, and we want you to share your concerns and ideas.

Later this month we will be having a public meeting to discuss in more detail what needs to be done and will be developing costs associated with the projects mentioned above. Obviously all of this is up to you, the taxpayer. Become part of the solution as we strive to make Chatham a better place to call home.

Best regards,
Wayne Infinger

Improvements needed to bring Town Hall up to code (Phase One):

- lighted exit signs
- fire alarm
- eliminate the wood stove, due to chimney issues. Simple efficient heating system installed
- must have two exits
- the exit doors must be fitted with crash bars
- wire building for 100 amp by a NH Certified Electrician
- septic system for bathrooms
- well for same
- roof and foundation updated; sills and floor beams replaced.

We are currently working to obtain real-world estimates on the cost of these repairs/upgrades to the Town Hall, and that information will be available shortly.

How Do We Pay For It?

When doing a major project in a town, the first question townspeople want to know is how much this is going to cost us. I will attempt to explain the budgeting and forecasting of a general project. Below is an example only, and the numbers are not what the Town Hall project is going to cost. We are working with a local general contractor to put real numbers to the renovations.

For tax rate projections we are using the "Three Finger Rule." This is explained in detail in "Property Tax: Understanding the Math, Dispelling the Myths." This article is on our town web page.

www.chathamnh.org, or we can provide a copy upon request. I will use round numbers in the example.

Let's say a project's total cost is \$150,000.00. We can pay for this in a number of ways, but paying for what we can out of reserve and spreading the payment out over a period of time puts less tax burden on the Town.

Example:

\$150,000 project: We use \$50,000 from capital reserve funds to pay for a portion, leaving \$100,000 to be funded. We can bond/borrow. A \$100,000 note for ten years at 3% interest would be an annual payment of \$11,592 using the three finger method. Our total town property evaluation in 2013 was \$51,941,240. You cover the last three digits of this value, and that is the amount we can raise costing \$1.00 per thousand. \$51,941 in one year would raise the tax rate approximately \$1.00 per thousand. \$519.00 would raise the rate one penny per thousand. This is based on the valuation of property. Revenue and budgets stay the same as the year before.

So, a \$100,000 project over 10 years with an annual payment of \$11,592 would raise the tax rate .22 cents per thousand. This would be \$22 for a property valued at \$100,000. If your property is valued at \$200,000, it would be an increase of \$44 per year. This is an estimate only. Hopefully, this helps to explain the funding of a project like the renovations of our Town Hall. This way it makes it affordable for all townspeople.

If you have any questions please feel free to contact me. My cell # 603-662-9680.

Thank you,
Bill Perry

Chatham Town Records- History of Town Hall

Book 3 1814-1832:

p. 468 meeting held in Center School March 8, 1831: voted to build a Town House. Committee: Jonathan Eastman, Issac Chandler, James Clay

p.489 March 1832:

Article 9: voted to pass over article about building a Town House.

Article 10: voted to have Town securities to remain in the hands of Committee. They are to report at next meeting the probable expense of building a Town House and where the land can be had to set the house on.

p. 501 November 5, 1832:

Article 3: voted to have Town House 30 feet X 36 feet on the ground and to have 12 feet between the joints.

Voted to accept land as reported by committee to set Town House on.

Voted to auction to lowest bid by having \$100 paid to him by first day of January next and \$100 by first of March. Rest of money paid when the Town Hall is done which is to be last of Oct next by his procuring sufficient bondsman that he will finish the house by that time to the acceptance of the Town.

Committee purchased of Frederick MacDonald, one quarter acre of land to set Town House on for \$5 and taken warrant deed for same.

Town house struck off to Captain Abraham Webb for \$399.

Superintendents to building of Town house will be the Committee.

Signed, Samuel Phipps, Town Clerk

Selectmen: Luther Richardson, Russell Charles

Changes to building:

Electricity put in 1938-1939 .

Annual Town Report Jan 31, 1938, Article 10: Voted to raise \$1500 per year for 5 years to bring electric line from East Conway to Herb Andrews home. 1939 under Town expenses: paid Everett Pitman \$41.50 for wiring and fixtures for the Town Hall.

Shed and Toilets moved from school house to back of Town Hall 1957 (?)

Town built office in 1981.

Annual Town Report year ending Dec. 31, 1980, Article 12: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate \$7,500 to build a Town Office and fireproof storage vault for Town Records at the rear of the Town Hall, and to authorize the withdrawal of three-thousand five hundred dollars (\$3,500) for this purpose from the Federal Revenue Sharing Fund.

RSA 41:49 reads as follows: Care and Preservation: The selectmen shall cause all books of public records belonging to the town to be well and strongly bound, and all papers and documents to be filed and arranged in an orderly manner convenient for reference and examination and shall provide suitable fireproof safes or other means for their care and preservation, all at the expense of the Town. Voted on March 10, 1981: Town built ramp on front and paved the driveway

Parsonage Lot

Will of Caroline Eastman Clay dated June 20,1902, Probate September 12, 1902:

"I give and bequeath unto the Congregational Church at Chatham Center, NH the so-called Cole Place near my present homestead as a parsonage lot together with the sum of fifteen hundred dollars to build thereon a suitable building for a parsonage, in accordance with the request made by my said husband (Ithiel Clay) in the 12th item of his said will."

A building typical of the continued architecture with main house, shed and carriage shed or barn was built by Seth Jewett by 1904-1905. It burned in November 1939 while the Dean Charles family was living in it. Hot oil ignited on the stove.

This lot and the land where the current Chatham Center Schoolhouse is standing (Cole lot) was purchased by the Town of Chatham for \$40,000 in 2002 from the Congregational Church.

Phase Two: to be determined at a later date by the Voters of Chatham, NH: Records Storage and Office Needs of the Town

1. Fireproof and secure records storage-for tax collector, treasurer, town clerk, planning board, selectmen, cemetery, trustees, checklist
2. Handicapped Accessibility in accordance with ADA laws
3. Compliance with the Right to Know Laws, accessibility to public records
4. Secure mail/package delivery drop for Town business (voting registration papers, ballots, auto registrations, etc.)
5. Internet
6. Bathrooms , septic, well (for running water)
7. Efficient and safe heat
8. Offices for Town Clerk, Tax Collector, Treasurer, Planning Board, Selectmen, Trustees, Supervisors of the Checklist and others.
9. Meeting space for Officer's Meetings - large enough to accommodate the voters AND be in compliance with fire safety, ADA, etc.
10. Set regular hours for offices to be open and for business-security purposes, have 2 people there at All open times; no one is left alone.

Conclusion:

As the Building Committee, we have tried to bring as much information and share the process of gathering that information in this letter to you. Our hope is that, going forward, we can all work together to make the necessary repairs to the Town Hall, so that we can continue to safely and legally use it. In the future, we will be presenting the Townspeople with more information on the construction of a Town Offices Building (Phase Two above). All of our meeting notes are available on the Town's website: www.chathamnh.org.

Our next Public Meeting on this topic will be Wednesday October 29th at 7 pm at the Chatham Town Hall. Everyone is welcome!!

We welcome any input and questions you may have, so please contact us!

Respectfully,

Chatham Building Committee: *Ron Briggs*, Chair; *Bill Perry*, Selectmen's Representative; *Barbara Eastman*, Historian, 694-3623; *Susan Logan*, Grants, 694-3743; *Maryann Eastman*, Scribe, 603-447-2665 (Bookstore), 694-2108 (home)