

Town hall plans moving forward

By Caitlyn Kelleher
JOURNAL CORRESPONDENT

The Ashburnham Town Hall renovations are moving along quickly with a conceptual design completed and final designs in the works.

The renovation committee is working on trying to keep the costs manageable as they plan for renovations to start in the late-fall or early winter, said Town Administrator Kevin Paicos.

"Their work has already saved the town a lot of money," he said.

The committee approved a conceptual design with one wing instead of the two additional wings that were proposed. Paicos believes this will reduce the cost \$300,000 to \$400,000.

He said the elimination of one of the two vaults in the original conceptual design, which will also reduce the cost.

"With ever passing month the construction costs are still escalating," Paicos said.

Architect Kaffee Kang is working on a final design,

which the committee will review and the decide whether to approve or not. After the committee approves a final design, construction documents will be drawn up and then the entire project can go out for bid.

The designs are also being reviewed by the project manager, Dave Buchanierri, out of New Hampshire, to reduce the cost, said Paicos.

"He is working with the committee to try to find some value engineering," he said.

Voters approved \$2.7 million at a town meeting in May 2005 for the renovation project.

The contracts of Kang and Buchanierri are still being finalized, Paicos said.

At the same time as the committee members plan for the new building they are trying to find a location for the employees to work during construction.

"We have determined the staff can't stay in the building because there is going to be such radical building renovations," Paicos said.

The town has received one bid for office space so far. They received a quote of \$2,300 a month for 22,000

square-feet of finished space and 600 square- feet of unfinished space from the owner of 31 Main St. The owner, Paicos said, would also like a \$6,900 deposit, which is "typical."

He added that Rich Wright, the owner of the town's hardware store, did not bid on the project. Wright decided not to submit a bid to lease the town office space in case the public safety building committee decides they would like to buy the entire building.

"He doesn't want to get involved in any long-term leases with the town if there is a sale pending," Paicos said.

Wright might reconsider his decision if the public safety building makes the decision not to buy his building by mid-September.

Paicos said that the town hall committee is still waiting to make a final decision about where to move the employees until they receive the price quotes for trailers. Those bids have not been opened yet.

This puts a possible moving date for town hall employees at Nov. 1. Paicos warns that date is still tentative but is a goal because of increasing costs.

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ROTARY ROUND-UP

News of the Ashburnham/Westminster Rotary Club

During the month of August, the Club presented checks for \$500 to each of the following organizations, to assist them in their public service work in the community:

- The Westminster Community Food Bank;
 - The Ashburnham Community Food Bank;
 - The Montachusett Veterans Outreach Center in Gardner;
 - Massachusetts Veterans Inc., of Worcester;
 - The Battered Women's Center in Leominster.
- The club has also donated \$1,000 to the local Habitat for Humanity Project.

We wish to thank once again all those who have contributed to or attended the Club's fund raising activities, such as the annual Benefit Dinner. It is because of your support that we are able to help those in need in our area.

— On Aug. 23, our speaker was Heather Connell, who has just returned from Cambodia where she is working on a documentary film. The film will explore the plight of an estimated 10,000 Cambodian orphans on the streets of Pnom Penh, and hundreds of children living and scavenging at a garbage dump, and in relocation camps in the countryside. Heather is working closely with the Cambodian Children's Fund (CCF), founded by Scott Neeson, to bring safe housing, healthcare and education to these children. She thanked us for our donation of vitamins (provided at cost by Vincent's Country Market) that she provided to the CCF. Heather hopes to complete the documentary by this time next year.

— On Aug. 30, our speaker was fellow Rotarian Barbara Friedman who had just returned from a librarians' conference in New Orleans. She described in heart-rending detail the devastation of that city and the efforts being made to recover and rebuild.

If you are interested in learning more about Rotary, please call Roland Morin at (978) 537-1010

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