

Town Hall renovations cost estimate exceeds budget

Selectmen revive debate on where to relocate town employees during construction

By Nora Cardec and Caitlyn Kelleher
JOURNAL STAFF

"We're not where we want to be," said Town Hall Renovation Committee Chairman David Sargent as the estimated renovation cost presented at last week's committee meeting surpassed the project budget.

The committee has a budget of \$2.7 million, which was passed at a town meeting in 2005. The cost estimate is based on construction documents by architect Kaffee Kang and on a design approved by the committee.

The estimate came in at \$3.29 million, which does not include the "soft" costs of the project that equal about \$300,000.

"Going to the voters for more money is off the table," said Town Administrator Kevin Paicos at the Dec. 27 meeting. "It's better to sacrifice less important things that do not affect the (Town Hall) operation in any significant way."

The committee discussed ways to cut about \$600,000 to bring the cost within budget. Then after a Jan. 2 meeting with Kang, they voted on expected reductions.

The committee voted to authorize Kang to finish the final drawings for the building but to eliminate the addition that would have housed the vault and eliminate air conditioning for the entire building.

The committee debated at length whether to redesign the entire HVAC system at this stage in the process.

"We should do one system," said committee member Tim DuMont. "We only need two months of air condition-

ing."

The committee decided against redesigning the ventilation system because of the time delay it would cause.

"It's sooner or never," said Sargent. "It's not going to get better."

The committee also voted to make the repair and replacement of Town Hall windows an alternate, which would only be done if there was enough money in the budget. It is estimated that the replacement of the windows would cost about \$142,000.

Relocating the employees

The committee has left it to the Board of Selectmen to decide where to relocate Town Hall employees during the estimated 15-month renovation. They estimated the cost for moving and housing Town Hall staff at between \$70,000 and 80,000. The money is not included in the renovation project budget, said Paicos.

"We're not in a position to finance the moving (of the Town Hall employees)," said Sargent at the Dec. 27 meeting.

Selectmen debated the employees' move during their Jan. 2 meeting. They agreed to have an article to pay for the relocation of the employees on the warrant of the Jan. 24 special town meeting.

Selectmen and Paicos discussed four possible locations for the employees. They talked about renting office space on the basement level of the hardware store in town, which would cost about \$62,000.

They also eyed the option of splitting the employees

between the empty room in the VMS building, the senior center in the VMS building and the meeting room of the library.

Also being considered is the Stevens Building, which houses the Fredericks Historical Piano Study Center. There has been a significant public outcry about using the building.

"It's not surplus today," Paicos said. "We need it."

The issue he said becomes whether the town wants to spend public money to rent a private place, while a private entity uses a public building.

Board of Selectmen Chairman Jonathan Dennehy said it is going to come down to whether the path of least resistance politically is more costly than the financially cheaper option.

Selectman Christopher Gagnon said he does not want to spend a lot of money on repairs or costs that wouldn't benefit the town in the long run. He said the decision should in part be made as though the Stevens Building is empty.

"I'd just assume to decide this without the piano museum clouding the issue," he said.

The Town Hall employees will do a space analysis on the VMS Building and the third floor of the library, similar to the ones already done on the Stevens Building and the hardware store's basement, Paicos said. He added that the town inspectors would go through both buildings as well to determine electrical and other issues.

He plans to have more details for selectmen at their Monday, Jan. 8 meeting.

"We have to sit down and do this very carefully," said Paicos.

Regardless of where the employees are relocated, the cost of moving telephone and computer systems will exist, to the tune of about \$10,000, said Paicos. He said the cost will rise if the systems have to be split.

"Going to the voters for more money is off the table. It's better to sacrifice less important things that do not affect the (Town Hall) operation in any significant way."

—KEVIN PAICOS,
TOWN ADMINISTRATOR

Public asked to chime in about fire horn's future

By Karen Mann
JOURNAL CORRESPONDENT

Town officials are trying to decide what to do with the historic fire horn when the Town Hall is renovated.

"We want to hear from the people in town," said Selectman Chairman Jonathan Dennehy.

Voters will be asked at a future town meeting if they want to spend the money to have the fire horn temporarily removed from Town Hall and installed somewhere else.

Dennehy said the Town Hall Renovation Committee and the Public Safety Building Committee do not have money in their budgets to move the fire horn.

While there is no firm estimate yet, Fire Captain William Nolan III thinks it would cost a few thousand dollars to relocate the horn. Dennehy said selectmen would get an accurate estimate before bringing the article to town meeting.

Nolan thinks that residents will pay to keep the horn running.

"There is a nostalgia with the people of town for it," said Nolan. "It is a New England thing."

According to Nolan the fire horn was installed in the late 1950s or early 1960s. It is used to call volunteer firefighters to duty.

are activated. The air horn is hooked up to an air compressor machine. The code sent to the compressor determines the bursts of air sent to the horn. The air horn will blow a certain code to alert the firefighters as to where the fire is. Nolan said there are cards with the different codes on them for people to use.

The horns were located in a central spot in town. This one is right below the cupola horn itself is about 2.5 feet long, and 30 to 40 pounds in weight, hard to relocate the

He does not think it would be some coordinating,"

"It can be moved, it just needs dispatch building, ing. Some residents

He said it could be moved to the Meetinghouse Hill, running new wires where fire alarm wires would have to

Nolan said the department is also looking into

replacing the old horn with an elec- tric fire horn, which

would cost about \$8,000 more. The department will propose both options to the public.

Dennehy said the fire department technically does not need the horn anymore, since firefighters have cell phones and pagers.

Nolan likes it though, because sometimes firefighters don't hear their pagers.

central spot in town. The 8 to 10 inches tall, according to Nolan. hard to relocate the

some coordinating,"

dispatch building, ing. Some residents Meetinghouse Hill, running new wires where fire alarm wires would have to

also looking into

electric fire horn, which

"It also alerts residents of no school, early dismissals, storms, and it counts toward our insurance rating," said Nolan.

He believes there are two schools of people when it comes to the horn: those who love it, and those who hate it.

Nolan said those who grew up in town, and the folks who use the sound of the horn plan their coffee break everyday, will want to keep it.

"I know a lot of people in town are nostalgic for it," said Dennehy. "People may want it maintained."

Dennehy said selectmen are not taking a stance on the issue until they hear from the public.

"There is a nostalgia with the people of town for it."

—WILLIAM NOLAN III,
FIRE CAPTAIN



My New Year's resolution is to stop putting my foot in my mouth all the time
I'll bet yours is to get a new hair style, huh?

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HAPPY NEW YEAR!!!!

Fire alarm boxes were installed on telephone poles and buildings around town. These boxes, said Nolan, have metal discs inside of them that send a certain code through the wires when they

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