

**TOWN BUILDING ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
TOWN OFFICE BUILDING STUDY  
REPORT**



**25 AUGUST 2008**

**VOLUME 1**

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**Committee Members**

Robert Corson, Chair  
Amy Bailey, Vice Chair  
Jonathan Ring  
Gerry Hamel  
Mark Leighton  
Kevin Smart, DPW Rep.  
Julie D. Gilman, Selectmen's Rep.  
Russ Dean, Town Manager

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The Town Building Advisory Committee was formed in December of 2007 to continue discussion of plans to renovate, expand, or construct a new Town Office facility. This Committee was instituted to assure that any plan and associated costs meet the goals of our community as well as the staff members who work in the Town's facility. It is a priority of the Committee to define a project which will serve our community for the foreseeable future and be flexible enough to accommodate any potential changes to town government and operational models. The current Advisory Committee consists of design and construction professionals who live within the community and bring considerable experience in the examination of the viability of this project.

The following report shall outline the work performed by the Town Building Advisory Committee from December of 2007 to August 11, 2008. The Committee has performed the following tasks:

- Reviewed and evaluated the project proposal presented in 2006.
- Conducted a community wide survey to look at consensus.
- Conducted a survey and interview with all of the departments housed in the Town Office Building.
- Toured other town offices, Portsmouth, Dover, Derry and Londonderry to look at space planning and operational models of peer facilities.
- Prepared and executed an interim space plan to accommodate new staff and required operational changes.

The report shall present the findings in each of these areas. It will include planning options as well as the process and time line for completing the scope of work defined.

The committee has been charged with reviewing the planning process started in 2005 and put on hold in 2006. The Town of Exeter contracted with SMRT of Portland, ME to provide a feasibility study for the Town Office administrative functions. Their work consisted of a facilities assessment of the Town Hall, Town Office Building and a series of other site options. SMRT worked with a space study committee consisting of Town employees from various departments.

A conceptual design was presented to the Budget Committee in 2006. The design proposed to renovate the existing building and construct a small addition to the rear of the building. The design also included renovations to the ground floor of the Town Hall to accommodate the Planning Department functions. The cost of this project was \$4,600,000.00. The Budget Committee voted not to recommend this project for the 2007 budget. Subsequently the Board of Selectmen abided by the recommendation of the Budget Committee and the project was tabled pending the formation of this Committee.

## **TOWN BUILDING ADVISORY COMMITTEE CHARGE**

**(Adopted by the Board of Selectmen, August 2007)**

There is hereby created the Town Building Advisory Committee, herein called the "Committee."

The Committee is composed of not more than seven (7) members appointed without terms. They are advisory to the Board of Selectmen and the Town Manager.

The purpose of the Committee is to:

- Determine whether future uses of the Town Hall and Town Office should be considered jointly or separately in future use decisions in order to facilitate an efficient process;
- Review the prior plan developed in 2006 for the renovation of the existing Town Office building and Town Hall building, known as "Option 3."
- Evaluation of future options for location of the Town Offices;
- Examine ways citizens are served and develop recommendations for "best customer service practices" to serve Exeter residents in a new or renovated building;
- Develop "best service provisions" for general public including use of modern technology wherever possible, including potential "customer kiosks."
- Evaluate current and potential non-municipal tenants and users in one or both buildings to address community use concerns versus municipal needs, present and future.
- Review community build out assumptions in an attempt to ascertain future service needs taking into account future regulatory activities where possible;
- Explore "green technologies" as part of any new building project and report on same to Board of Selectmen and Town Manager; evaluate costs and benefits of these options;
- Develop set of measurable criteria to evaluate "workable" solutions to municipal space needs evaluated against cost.

This committee will issue a findings report not later than January 31, 2008. Its recommendations may be adopted by the Board of Selectmen.

## **PLANNING ASSUMPTIONS**

The goals of the committee are to provide for both short term and long term recommendations regarding the use and location for the Town's administrative functions currently being housed at 10 Front Street. The goals are guided by the following set of objectives:

1. Service access - Provide for space that meets the needs of the community in regards to access and utilization currently and for the next fifty years.
2. Environmental Conditions - Provide a healthy and comfortable environment which meets the requirements of a contemporary work place.
3. Life Safety - Provide for a space that meets current life safety requirements for both the staff and community.
4. Space Needs - Address current and expanding need for space and plan to meet projected needs.
5. Infrastructure - Provide for the proper mechanical, electrical, plumbing, telephone and data support system that meet current standards.
6. To be good stewards of the facilities and assets of the community.

The principal premise of this project is that the current Town Office building does not meet some of the most basic environmental requirements for a modern work place. The facility, as outlined in the assessment, does not meet the following building code requirements:

1. Mechanical systems - heating and ventilation systems are inefficient and/or inadequate.
2. Electrical requirements - insufficient infrastructure to support the equipment currently being used in the building.
3. Plumbing - the building does not meet the plumbing code requirements for the number and type of bathrooms.
4. Fire protection systems - there are no hardwired smoke detectors, horn strobes or a systems monitoring location.
5. Life safety code - all floors of all commercial buildings require two means of protected egress. They are required to exit directly to the exterior or into a fire rated separated vestibule.
6. ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) - the facility does not meet many of the requirements of this Act in regards to providing access to public functions.
7. The facility contains lead paint and is continually monitored to insure that the level of lead in the air does not exceed guidelines.

The Committee finds the space constraints are significant and create substantial inefficiencies in the day to day operations of our Town. As the Committee reviewed this project it found initiatives to modernize these facilities that have been repeatedly voted down. It is time to address the issue of providing the basic environmental needs that are required by other employers of this size and complexity.