



barrett architecture

FRANK J. BARRETT JR., A.I.A.

## Memorandum

**To: Town of Bradford Select Board**

**From: Frank J. Barrett, Jr., A.I.A., Architect**

**Date: December 18, 2017**

**RE: Bradford Town Hall Restoration and Rehabilitation; Bradford, NH**

**Subject: Architect's Estimate and Opinions of Next Steps, Probable Project Costs, and Overall Approach.**

Last month, when I met with the Select Board (SB) concerning the Bradford Town Hall (BTH) project, it was agreed that we would meet again in December to discuss the next steps to move the project forward. The purpose of this communicate is to provide the SB with information such that they can formulate those plans, beginning with a brief outline as to the present state of the project.

As you know, the general contractor, Trumbull-Nelson Construction Company (T-N), based in Hanover, has been actively working on site since early October, with good results. The historic building is now back down on new permanent foundations, and those foundations are now properly protected from winter weather conditions. Rough carpentry work is ongoing to both enclose and protect the building and to begin the task of making structural repairs and upgrades to it. I am very pleased to report that all of the work undertaken to date has been of excellent quality and being accomplished in a most professional manner. Communications between the three players that comprise this team effort - the general contractor, the owner (the Town of Bradford), and the architect and structural engineer - have been ongoing and excellent. The work presently taking place is on schedule, on budget, with no surprises or upsets yet encountered, or otherwise anticipated. This phase of the work is expected to be complete by the end of February or the first week of March 2018 at the very latest. At that time, as I have suggested to the SB, I plan to conduct a public tour of the building so that Bradford taxpayers can see and fully comprehend what has been accomplished and why; overall where the project is at; and what the next phase of planned construction work will be.

For purposes of this communicate, I am choosing to continue to call this phase of construction work Option Number 2, as per the written report that I made to the SB on October 16, 2017. That option, which the SB approved, is presently ongoing at a cost of \$509,235. That option and its associated cost covers all work by T-N from the time of their arrival on site, through the end of February. It includes all remaining concrete work including pouring the basement floor slabs; all necessary new rough carpentry throughout the entire building; and all of the necessary structural repair and upgrade of the building as per the structural engineers plans and specifications, including the installation of new structural steel required to address a serious existing structural situation within the existing attic/roof area.

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Admittedly, this work, as Option Number 2, although very important and necessary for the long term preservation of the historic building, has limited “curb appeal” to the non-architect, engineer, building contractor lay person. However, the SB realized the critical importance of getting this phase done first, in its entirety, before moving forward. And thankfully, this present phase of work is a very finite amount of work, involving relatively few building sub-contractor trades and suppliers. It is very self-contained and free standing as it were. Unfortunately, the next phase of work, which the October 16<sup>th</sup> document refers to as Option Number 3, is nowhere near as simple, self-contained, free standing, and free of sub-trades. It is far more complex.

As the SB will well recall, in later October there was a very informative meeting held with two representatives from the New Hampshire State Fire Marshal’s office, where we discussed certain requirements of the State Fire Code, especially the matter of the proposed sprinkler system installation in the building. The outcome of that meeting was an acknowledged way forward whereby for the short term the first floor of the building could once again be occupied by the Town’s municipal offices, including a room for routine meetings of the Town’s boards and commissions, but not gatherings as large as the annual town meeting. With this short term arrangement, it was recognized and understood that no use can be made of the second floor or the basement, with the exception of the placement of electrical and mechanical equipment. There can be no storage or any other use. As a result, the SB has asked that once again I, as your architect, examine what the costs and steps are to complete Option Number 3 to the point that would allow the building to be re-occupied sometime during the 2018 calendar year. However, to properly address that question, several important factors need to be acknowledged and understood.

First, this next phase of work cannot reasonably nor cost effectively be broken down into a series of small stand-alone projects. Each individual aspect of the work required to get the building from where it will be by about March 1<sup>st</sup>, to the point that it is legally, safely, and practically usable, on the first floor level only, involves trades and sub-trades that are each dependent on one another – much like a symphony orchestra. Although there is no sprinkler system installation required for this phase, consider the following that will need to be completed prior to re-occupancy:

- The construction of an on-site septic disposal system, functioning, and connected to the building’s new plumbing system.
- The extension of new water service into the building, and the connection to the building’s new domestic water distribution system.
- A certain amount of site work to maintain proper drainage, parking, safety, and access in and out of the building.
- The installation of a new heating plant and that portion of the heating system necessary for the first floor area.
- The installation of new electrical service entrance into the building, and the complete re-wiring of the first floor area, installation of new lighting, as well as a certain amount of exterior lighting.
- The installation of the new interior water supply and waste water plumbing systems for the first floor area, even if not all of the new plumbing fixtures ultimately required for the building are installed.
- Insulation within at least the first floor area of the building.
- Dry wall and plaster; and floor, wall, and ceiling finishes and trim, including interior painting.



The above itemization is not intended as an all-inclusive list; but instead is offered as a reminder of what the general scope must be, and to let one understand that most of these tasks are performed by sub-trades dependent upon coordination and cooperation with one another in an integrated manner. Hence, the realistic inability to separate things into individual stand-alone projects, incrementally funded as taxpayer dollars, donations, or grants might gradually allow.

At this time, to cut to the chase for the benefit of the reader, as your architect I am seeing this next phase of work, Option Number 3 Revised as it were, as costing \$950,000. And I believe that, at this time, there are only two realistic approaches to getting this phase accomplished, as follows.

#### **The Bond Approach**

This approach would be to bond for the entire \$950,000 amount this March, and have construction continue to the completion of all Option Number 3 Revised related work, probably sometime in the fall of 2018.

#### **The Savings Approach**

This approach would be to each year, starting with the 2018 annual town meeting, appropriate a sum of money evenly divided over the course of three or four years, saved away, and then in one single push complete all of the necessary work at hand. And with further study it might indeed be possible to break the entire amount of work into several phases; however, I wish to reserve judgement on that prospect. Regardless, there are several important key points with this approach that need to be clearly kept in mind.

1. If from this coming March until a time when the building is re-occupied, the historic building remains vacant, it is going to each winter need to be kept heated at a minimal temperature of say 45 degrees to adequately protect the building structure. The cost of this at this time I project at \$20,000 a year, or as much if not more than \$60,000 to \$80,000 over a three or four year period.
2. Construction costs like everything else are subject to inflation, and this would certainly be true in this circumstance.

#### **Conclusions and Further Recommendations**

During the past almost six months I have had the sincere pleasure and distinct honor of working for the Town of Bradford, and with those many persons who in some way and to varying degrees and roles, represent the community and this unique public building project. Because of my varied back ground, I continue to look at this project through not a single, but instead multiple lenses. There are times when I view the complexities of the project as an experienced and committed architect, historian, and preservationist. And there are other times that I view the project from the perspective of one who has spent well more than thirty years active in community affairs; and therefore, yes, one could certainly go so far as to say that I see things through the eyes of a seasoned "politician" as well. While I find both broad lenses to be beneficial to the difficult tasks that at times have presented themselves with this project, we appear to be at a cross roads of sorts with potentially conflicting short term goals and ambitions concerning the historic building.



On the one hand, we all want to do what is best for the historic building that is an immensely important part of the fabric of the Bradford community; and arguably its most valued asset. And certainly the work that is presently ongoing will help insure that centuries from now the building will continue its long traditional role of being an integral and valued part of the town and of the region. Therefore, it concerns me to think of the building languishing unused, unoccupied, and only minimally heated for a span of the next however many years while additional funds for its continued rehabilitation are secured. It is clearly apparent to me and others associated with this project that the six months or so time that the building spent up on cribbing, and now for a month back down on new foundations, have contributed to increased amounts of plaster loss inside the structure. And minimally heating it, at considerable expense, will only further exacerbate the potential of increased such damage. Nor, from the standpoint of animal and insect damage as well as potential human vandalism, is it good for buildings to be left vacant and unused.

On the other hand, through the lens of a local politician, the prospect of raising the necessary funds from local tax paying constituents is, I understand from my own multiple experiences, a sobering and daunting prospect fraught with multiple issues, conflicts, and difficulties. The idea of getting local town government back into the building as soon as possible, and then politically gathering new additional support so the remainder of the work at hand can be undertaken and finished, is certainly an admirable approach. But to do so is going to require that approximately \$950,000 be spent, and there is simply no way around that fact. To responsibly protect this important Town asset and get the necessary work done sooner rather than later will require a bond. However politically fraught this approach might be, it is the approach that would be in the best interest of the building.

Were the SB to instead consider a phased or "Savings Approach", as suggested above, I believe that what would then be in the building's and the public's best interest, would be to prepare the building to be mothballed for say a five year period of time. As potentially amusing as the term might sound, this is a process that to varying degrees is done with historic buildings at times like this. But it is a controlled process, and not just a stop work process.

As your architect, and as I contemplate how the potential process of mothballing this specific building might best take place, I would propose that you consider the following work be undertaken in 2018:

1. Completely insulate the entire building from the basement all the way through to the attic.
2. Make all exterior window and door repairs and upgrades.
3. Get permanent electrical power back into the building.
4. Outfit the building with a basic fire alarm system so as to protect the Town's recent investment in the property.
5. Install the permanent new forced hot water heating plant (boiler) in the building; and install several or more temporary unit heaters to protect the building.
6. Complete the exterior foundation stone masonry work.
7. And generally get the exterior of the building and premises cleaned up, graded, and looking presentable.

By doing this, the building is protected and once again presents itself well to the public while it remains unoccupied. And although the premises will not be occupied, it will at least be heated, and those



heating costs will be minimized. Since this approach only occurred to me late this past Saturday evening, I have not yet had the opportunity to more fully flush the idea out. But, with that said, could this be accomplished in the \$125,000 to \$150,000 range? At this time, I believe that to be possible. The reader should keep in mind that all of this work, with the possible exception of some suspended forced hot water unit heaters and related piping, is of long term, permanent value to the building and work that needs, at some point, to be undertaken.

Admittedly, this is an approach that is trying to thread both eyes of two very different, and perhaps conflicting, needles. But it accomplishes what is best for the building, while perhaps buying some time to do politically what is necessary to accomplish the end goal of eventual full preservation and re-occupancy of the entire historic building. Not only would this allow time to appropriate taxpayer funds on an incremental basis; but also to allow time for securing grants from outside funding sources.

In closing let me once again state that I remain honored by the trust that the SB has placed in me, and the working relationships that have ensued as a result. Most importantly, for purposes of moving this important and worthwhile project forward, I remain committed to assist you and the Town of Bradford in whatever way that I might be of best use and service.



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Architect

