

## Town Hall Renovation Project Fact Sheet

### What will this project accomplish?

- Provide accessibility for all by meeting the demands of the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- Meet current life safety standards by providing a second means of egress from the second floor.
- Create a safe working environment and improve air quality by eliminating hazardous materials like asbestos and providing proper ventilation throughout as required by code.
- Comply with current energy codes by adding insulation and modernizing systems.
- Provide meeting space for Town boards, committees, community groups, and the Council On Aging as recommended by its needs analysis.
- Preserve and update the historic 1873 Town Hall for the next century.

### What will this project cost me?

We are paying now for the Library, the Schools, the DPW facility and other significant projects/acquisitions with what is known under Proposition 2½ as "Excluded Debt". This "Excluded Debt" will be paid off soon. The Town Hall project would be funded by that type of borrowing. Town Meeting will vote on the maximum amount to be borrowed. The approved budget cannot change without an additional Town Meeting vote. Additionally, the Town pursues every available grant opportunity to help lower the cost to the taxpayers.

Currently, the average annual tax bill includes about \$256 to service our current Excluded Debt. The Town Hall project would cost about \$260 per year per average tax bill, which would replace the \$256 cost of the retiring debt. That will result in a net increase on the average tax bill of about \$4 annually.

### What is the difference between "Excluded Debt" and an "Override"?

"Excluded Debt" is eliminated when the project debt is paid; it is not permanent. This Proposition 2½ "Excluded Debt" is designed specifically for capital projects such as this. An "Override" is used to fund increases in operating costs. Unlike an "Excluded Debt," an "Override" permanently increases the tax levy limit.

### Why should we undertake this project now?

We say "It's Time" for this project because now we have the ability to utilize a unique fiscal window:

- The project cost will replace existing debt with a very small change in citizens' tax bills.
- Interest rates are at an all-time low.
- Construction costs are rising at about 8% a year in Massachusetts, significantly higher than general inflation.
- The non-compliance of Town Hall relative to health, safety and accessibility codes must be addressed. Moving forward now allows us to control the project ourselves, rather than wait for a "crisis" caused by an incident, an accident, litigation or an order from a federal or state court or government agency.

### Will there be more Town employees?

Absolutely not. This project does not include any expansion of Town government. It would simply house the existing eleven Town Departments plus provide meeting space for the 38 volunteer Boards and Committees that are a part of town government in an accessible, safe and efficient building for years to come.

### What about the design?

The current design is a "schematic" design that will be developed in greater detail in the next phase of the project. We will conduct public design workshops with the architects so that the community can provide

input. In this “design development” phase, the fine details of architectural form, materials, and interior layout are developed. This will allow plenty of opportunity for input from the community.

### **What will happen to the Top Floor of Town Hall?**

The top floor of Town Hall was originally designed as a community center. While Town Meeting and large public hearings were held there, this multi-function space saw much greater use by community groups. There were concerts, performances, plays, dances and lectures. Because the top floor does not meet accessibility and fire codes, continued public use of the space had to be curtailed about 15 years ago.

The space will be restored to its original purpose, a multi-function community center. It is anticipated that the space will be heavily subscribed. The top floor will also include an office for COA, a meeting/conference room, and bathrooms, all with convenient elevator access.

