

**NOTES OF AUGUST 22, 2012 RYE TOWN HALL SPACE NEEDS
AD HOC STUDY COMMITTEE**

Final Revision D – Provided by the Rye Civic League

NEXT MEETING, SEPTEMBER 12, 2012

NOTE: These are not the official minutes of this meeting. They are prepared by the Rye Civic League from notes taken during the meeting by members and are not prepared after listening to recordings of the meeting. Every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of these notes, including the review by those RCL core committee members in attendance at the meeting.

Town Hall committee members present: Peter White, Priscilla Jenness, Paul Goldman, Ned Paul, Curtis Boivin, Cindy Gillespie, Paula Merritt, Michael Magnant
Present to take notes and prepare minutes: Diane _____.
Present for building tour: Fire Chief Sullivan, Police Chief Walsh.
Present from the public: Marty Klenke, Peter Crawford, Alex Herlihy

Presentation of Public Safety building options and tour

Editor's note: at the August 8, 2012 meeting of the Committee, member Peter White was assigned the task of looking at possible use of the Public Safety Building for Town employees currently based at the Town Hall. Victor Azzi, a Town resident who worked on the committee responsible for the Public Safety Building, was present in the audience at the time and volunteered to assist Mr. White in the effort.

Member White opened the presentation with the statement that he, member Tom McCormick and Victor Azzi were to have taken a tour of the Public Safety building but that Chairman Paul agreed that the entire committee should take the tour. Member White then referred to a packet of drawings provided to the members at this meeting. These show the ground floor (split between the fire and police departments), the second floor (dormitories for firefighters, records storage, and exercise room) and the basement (meeting room, locker room, and record storage, including town archives). The last page shows a 2005 design for a fire department living area above the equipment bay that was not implemented.

Mr. White indicated that a better option than building out the area over the equipment bay for Town use would be to move something else, for example the fire department living quarters, over the equipment bay.

During the presentation, member Merritt asked about the next meeting date. After some discussion, it was revealed that the next meeting would be in three weeks, on September 12, due to the unavailability of a meeting room on one of the normal Wednesday meeting dates.

The Fire and Police Chiefs then conducted a tour of the facilities, excluding the equipment bay, which the group had viewed at its first meeting.

While viewing the Fire Prevention offices on the first floor, Fire Chief Sullivan suggested that the building inspector could be moved into this area, with a window

opened up into the adjoining hallway which leads to a back door. The Chief indicated that Fire Department, as well as building inspector, approval is needed for certain construction. The co-location of these functions could provide one stop shopping for the public. A secure door located in the hallway on the other side of the public access window could provide security for the rest of the building.

Chairman Paul commented during the tour that the facilities were far nicer than those provided at Town Hall. Police Chief Walsh indicated that there are 1-2 officers on duty at all times. In addition there is a secretary on duty during the day on weekdays. The Police Department has 10 full time employees. Fire Chief Sullivan indicated that there are enough personnel on duty to get the first fire truck or ambulance out the door in response to a call, but no more. Dispatching for both police and fire functions is handled, along with that of 23 other towns, out of Rockingham, except in emergency situations, such as the recent ice storm. *Editor's note: The facilities are very spacious considering the number of employees. For example there are large break rooms and kitchen facilities for the fire fighters. There is a separate room of approximately 8x15 feet for the armory. There are 5 individual dormitory rooms for the firefighters.* Chief Sullivan stated that these rooms may also be used during emergencies such as storms when staffing needs increase and commuting home between shifts may not be feasible. *Editor's note: there are two large rooms on the second floor. One is devoted to exercise equipment and the other to storage. The latter was not filled close to capacity.* With respect to this room, Chief Sullivan indicated that it is loaded to capacity around Christmas time with items for the Toys for Tots program.

Town Resident Peter Crawford asked the two Chiefs what reconfiguration would be needed if the second floor was to be converted to Town use, given that the building is a secure area. This elicited a vigorous response from both Chiefs. Chief Walsh indicated that locating Town Hall functions on the second floor would cut the life out of the building, which is designed to accommodate Town needs 30-50 years into the future. He said that is what happened in North Hampton. *Editor's note: That building has the space over the equipment bay devoted to Town functions.* Chief Walsh added that the water mains are not sized to handle the additional demand from Town offices and the septic capacity would probably need to be increased. He stated that the elevator runs through a secure area. Major changes to the building would be required to locate Town offices on the second floor, he said. *Editor's note: review of the drawings indicates that it might be possible to maintain security by extending the public lobby on the first floor a few feet to encompass the area in front of the elevator, and relocating the secure door so that the elevator entrance was in the public area. Basement access could be limited by requiring a key to direct the elevator to that floor. Similarly the stairway nearest to the equipment bay could remain secure by opening the adjacent hall (which leads to a door at the back of the building) up to public access. A secure door could be added to prevent public access to the stairway leading to the basement and another secure door added to prevent public access to the first floor other than the corridor leading from the back door to the stairway to the second floor.*

Fire Chief Sullivan was also opposed to converting the second story of the Public Safety Building for Town use. He indicated that discussions around the time that the building was constructed were focused on use of that area for a Senior Citizen center or the Recreation Department. Those options could be made to work. Member Curtis

Boivin interjected that the need was for 13,000 square feet, and that the second floor of the Public Safety building only provided for 5,000 square feet. *Editor's note: Member Boivin was apparently suggesting that, since the existing Town Hall is approximately 6,000 square feet, that the total space would be 2,000 square feet short of meeting the Town's needs.* Town resident and Rye Historical Society Chairman Alex Herlihy stated that the space needs issue was debatable.

After returning to the meeting room, and after the two Chiefs had left, Ned Paul commented that their backs were up. Additional people would stress the building. The Town could force the Chiefs to convert the second floor, but this might not be advisable. Member Paul Goldman suggested that there might be space above the equipment bay that could be used for storage in a less expensive way. *Editor's note: this is an apparent reference to the AG Architects January 2012 estimate of the cost of building out this area of \$1.15 to \$1.37 million for 7759 square feet, including an addition for elevator and stair access.* He also indicated that the police or fire departments could also use this space to open up other space. Member Boivin agreed that there was potential in doing that.

Chairman Paul then approached the blackboard and indicated that he wanted to document the option and move on. Member White stated that the option of locating Town offices over the equipment bay use was not as viable due to the need for an additional elevator and parking issues. Member Boivin stated that the problem is the number of square feet. Member White stated that not all of Town Hall would need to fit on the second floor, although he knows that everyone wants everything under one roof.

Member Jenness indicated that Fire Chief Sullivan's suggestion of moving the building department would necessitate hiring more people due to interactions between that department and the planning function and Zoning Board of Adjustment.

Chairman Paul referred to the AG report and its reference to the interoperation of functions. They must be sensitive to this. *Editor's note: this is an apparent reference to pages C-2 and C-3 of the AG report, accessible at www.town.rye.nh.us, by clicking of Departments, Selectmen's Office, Town Hall Space Needs Study, then Final Rye Study.*

Member White indicated that the Committee must get back to costs sooner or later. Intuitively, it should be less costly to take advantage of an existing foundation, roof and outside landscaping than to construct anew.

Chairman Paul stated that the member who was to have the square footage analysis done was not present. There is room at the Old Police Station (if money is put into it) or at the Public Safety Building, for storage. If the Old Police Station were reconstructed for storage use, not a lot would be needed as legal requirements would be less.

Member White stated that the impact of technology must be considered. Constructing a building for storage is archaic. Chairman Paul responded that there are legal requirements and historic documents need to be retained.

Member Merritt stated that the Old Police Station is chock full of Town stuff. The mold is terrible. She doesn't know how much more can be stored there unless the footprint is enlarged, the feasibility of which is questionable. *Editor's note: according to www.visionappraisal.com, the Old Police Station at 37 Central Rd. is a one story structure of 2372 square feet on .28 acres. There is little land for an expanded footprint,*

however it would seem feasible to reconstruct the building with a second story, doubling the square feet with the same footprint.

Member White indicated that step one must be to confirm how much space is needed. They are not done with the Public Safety Building topic.

Square footage needs

Chairman Paul agreed and moved on to the space needs. He commented that the 30% circulation requirement of 3500 square feet seemed excessive to everyone. *Editor's note: this is an apparent reference to page C-8 of the Final Rye Study referred to above.* Member Boivin stated that he will look at the 30% to see if it is reasonable compared to other buildings. Chairman Paul asked whether the square foot figures included the area occupied by walls. Member Boivin stated that it does not, and explained the difference between Net Square Feet (NSF) which excludes walls and Gross Square Feet (GSF) which includes walls.

Chairman Paul then asked about the meeting chambers. Member Jenness stated that the Selectmen like the room as it is, including the size.

Member White suggested that the group look at the conference rooms. Member Boivin agreed that there appeared to be some repetition of functions.

Member Jenness indicated that looking at numbers of meetings is comparing apples and oranges. For example, the Jenness Beach Commission is small. In addition, nobody meets on Fridays. The meetings must be scheduled into the other four weeknights. *Editor's Note: a document passed out at the meeting indicates that there are 178 meetings in the Town Hall Courtroom (also referred to as the meeting chambers) annually.* Member Jenness indicated that Town Clerk and Committee Member Beth Yeaton (not present) would like to see the elections brought back to Town Hall. She doesn't know whether or not conducting the deliberative session there would be feasible.

Apparently referring to the Final Rye Study, Member White stated that he sees four meeting spaces including the Great Hall. *Editor's Note: Page D-6 and C-5 to C-8 of the AG Final Report referred to above shows five meeting rooms. The plan includes the 1698 square foot Great Hall, 500 square foot Meeting Chamber, a 180 square foot Committee Work Room, a 120 square foot Town Clerk Meeting Room and a 200 square foot Building Department Conference Room. The plan shows a table and four chairs in the Town Clerk Meeting Room. This is apparently intended for meeting privately with marriage license applicants as referenced in the Final Rye Study, and reiterated by the Town Clerk before the Committee. According to the Town's 2011 annual report, 9 marriage licenses were issued in 2011.*

Member Boivin stated that the meeting rooms are repetitive. Why can't there be just one conference room? Member Jenness referred to the need for privacy for marriage license applicants.

Member White suggested that the Great Hall could have temporary partitions for privacy, permitting multiple meetings in that room.

Chairman Paul stated that having a Court Room and the Great Hall appeared duplicative. Member Jenness expressed doubt regarding this.

Member and Town Administrator Magnant indicated that the problem with partitions is the ceiling. Member Boivin indicated that there could be a soffit in the middle of the room and soundproof ceiling panels.

Member Jenness indicated that for two weeks each year the auditors spread out their materials in the Court Room. The room is unavailable for anyone else to use during this time. Also, the room is used to roll out large documents, such as maps.

Member Paul stated that he had been for restoring the Great Hall. Although he has not made up his mind, tonight he will play the devil's advocate. He suggested that taking up 2000 square feet cannot be justified given only occasional use. The public is worried about the cost. The space for the Great Hall is over 10 percent of the total space requirement.

Member White indicated that a hybrid model was used in the 1990s, with part of the Great Hall still available and part used for offices. Member Jenness indicated that there was a partition in the middle and that the Selectmen met on one side. Historically, Town Halls have not been used solely for business.

Member Boivin stated that demand for the room must be considered.

Member Jenness stated that the Recreation Department should reside in the Town Hall until they get their own facility. She likes the idea of using the space that they would then free up for further expansion. Member Paul agreed that Recreation should have their own facility.

Member Paul indicated that a problem with the Court Room is the poles that are in the way. The space is often inadequate for ZBA meetings. Member Jenness stated that taking out the two bathrooms behind it could provide additional space. Steel beams might be needed so that the poles could be eliminated. Member Boivin responded that if the poles cut up the area it should be programmed for office use so that this is not a problem.

Member Boivin then addressed the addition of another floor. The Great Hall ceiling is 17.5 feet high. Another floor could be added halfway up. The window issue could be dealt with using railings, provided that no dividing of the space is required because of fire regulations. *Editor's Note: this apparently refers to discussion at the prior meeting about an additional floor falling in the middle of the tall Great Hall windows.*

Member Merritt reminded the committee of the Americans with Disabilities ("ADA") requirements. Member Boivin stated that a modular elevator outside of the building would be the easiest way to accommodate ADA requirements. The stage area could be reconfigured to provide level access. Elevators cost a minimum of \$100,000.

Chairman Paul suggested that the citizens be presented with alternatives, including costs. Member White referred to the questionnaire results. That survey indicated that fewer than half of residents thought preserving the Great Hall was important. *Editor's Note: The results of the survey appear at page B-47 of the Final Rye Study referred to above. There were 187 surveys returned, and 182 responses to a question about restoring the Great Hall to public use. On a scale of 1-5, with 5 most important, 21 ranked restoring the Great Hall a 4, and 39 ranked it a 5.* Member and Town Administrator Magnant stated that many people don't even know that the Great Hall is there.

Member Boivin stated that the Town Hall had been out of compliance with the ADA for 20 years. It's only a matter of time before there is a lawsuit. Chairman Paul indicated that that meant that there must be an addition, to accommodate at least an elevator. Member White suggested that the elevator could be added where the Recreation Department currently is. Chairman Paul asked whether the AG study included the use of that space. Member Boivin replied that this space, which he referred to, together with the Building Department records storage area below it, as the "porch," was to be demolished.

Member Boivin returned the discussion to the square feet. He has another concern about the 400 square feet for storage for the Recreation Department. *Editor's Note: see page C-5 of the Final Rye Study, referred to previously.* Member Paul indicated that, long term, Recreation would be moved out and growth would fill the vacated space. He stated that balls and bats don't need to be stored at the Town Hall. Town Hall will be a very nice post and beam structure and shouldn't be used for storage. Member and Town Administrator Magnant indicated that the Recreation Department passes out balls, shirts and whistles from their Town Hall office. Member Jenness indicated that it would be five years before the Recreation Department had their own facility. There was no disagreement.

Public input

Town resident Alex Herlihy, speaking from the audience, indicated that it was 8:15 p.m., the time committed to opening up the meeting for public comment. Chairman Paul then indicated that he could proceed.

Mr. Herlihy stated that the problem of determining what the voters would support was a very challenging one. In 2012, 1400 voted, 300 more than in the prior year. He thinks that a modest 2400 square foot addition off of the back, with a "ramp" to the upper parking lot is the appropriate solution. He fully supports restoration of the Great Hall. The building inspector and planning department could be moved into the Court Room. He sees the Great Hall as the meeting room. Meeting in a space larger than necessary would not be a problem.

Chairman Paul asked whether the Great Hall would be the only meeting room. Mr. Herlihy responded that he doesn't see a need for additional meeting rooms with the Library and the Junior High School also available.

Member Paul questioned whether an addition that small would work. Town Administrator and Member Magnant indicated that a small conference room upstairs would be needed. Mr. Herlihy agreed, indicating that the conference room could be in the addition. He indicated that the extension could be a wooden structure following the existing roof line.

Town Resident Marty Klenke indicated that a certain number of Town residents won't sign up for renovating the Great Hall. The discussion needs to move to ways to use the Great Hall, including for social functions.

Member Jenness indicated that there would be 125-150 chairs for use in the Great Hall. Provision needs to be made for their storage.

Town resident Peter Crawford then spoke. He indicated that he agreed with most of what Mr. Herlihy said. A 2400 square foot addition, depending on whether \$200 or \$300 per square foot is used, would cost \$.5 million to \$.75 million. Town residents

would support an expenditure of that magnitude. He indicated that the figure was before expenditures to restore the existing Town Hall facility. While the group has started to look at reducing the number of square feet required, more needs to be done. The 30 percent addition for circulation appears excessive, particularly as the Final Rye Study already includes space for corridors and lobbies. He asked about the status of the square foot per employee analysis of other towns. Member Gillespie approached Mr. Crawford and pointed to the document had been prepared and was passed out at the meeting. This document was not discussed during the meeting.

Editor's note: this document indicates an average of 829 square feet per employee for 13 towns, mostly of similar size to Rye, and mostly in New Hampshire. Part time employees are counted as .5 employees. Rye has 13.0 employees according to the document. If the 3 Recreation Department employees are subtracted (i.e. assumed to be located elsewhere), the 10 remaining employees, using Ms. Gillespie's average, would need 8290 square feet. Mr. Herlihy's suggestion of a 2400 square foot addition, when added to the 6000 square feet already existing, is 8400 square feet, almost the same figure. Ms. Gillespie's analysis needs further review. For example Stratham and Newington are included in the average at 1780 and 1892 square feet per employee, which may not be accurate, and in any event skew the average. Subsequent note: your editor visited the Stratham and Newington town halls. The 22,247 square feet for Stratham includes that town's library. Town hall use is approximately 10,625 square feet, for 850 square feet per employee, not 1780. The Newington Town hall is about 2/3 meeting rooms, with a very large hall used for town meetings. That explains the 1892 square feet per employee. Adjusting for these will lower the average square feet per employee well below the 829 stated.

Mr. Crawford also pointed out that 2011 Warrant Article 14, which passed, providing \$40,000 for Town Hall study, had been amended to require consideration of the impact of 21st century technology. The AG report ignored this issue, and the Committee seems not to have addressed it either.

Member Goldman suggested that the Library could be a location for cultural events, given the decreasing need to store paper documents. He also agreed that "gigabytes are cheap."

Member Paul asked about expansion of the vault from 58 square feet to 180 square feet. Mr. Crawford indicated that AG planned to relocate, rather than expand, the vault.

After Mr. Crawford suggested that the department heads should be brought in and asked to justify their requirements, just as the Budget Committee reviews the budgets and the Capital Improvements Program ("CIP") Committee reviews the capital expenditures each year. Member Goldman indicated that there may be requirements for hallways, water pipes and similar items, which the department heads may not be qualified to estimate. Mr. Crawford agreed that space for these would need to be added in.

Mr. Crawford indicated that only if the Committee reviews the requirements and ensures that they are actual needs rather than wants would the voters be assured that any proposal is reasonable. He indicated that a conference room in addition to the Great Hall, of 150 square feet or somewhat larger, could be justified, but that a separate conference room to be used for the 9 marriage licenses issued annually could not be. He noted that, while the BOS and the ZBA meetings generally have significant public attendance, other

committees, like the Heritage Commission and the Recreation Commission typically have only 1-2 people from the public attending, plus perhaps 5 members. These could be accommodated in the smaller conference room. He also noted that the net impact of restoring the Great Hall would only be 1300 square feet as the Court Room space would be freed up.

Member White indicated that future needs must be taken into account.

Member Paul indicated that pennies should not be pinched. A good job should be done.

Member Merritt asked whether Mr. Herlihy contemplated committee meetings occurring in the Great Hall. He responded yes. There's enough space in the Town with the Library and the Junior High School to accommodate all of the meetings.

Member Paul asked about the number of simultaneous meetings. Member and Town Administrator Magnant indicated that it is not unusual to have more than two meetings at once. He indicated that the Town might outgrow only two meeting spaces.

Chairman Paul stated that the operating assumption should be that there would be the Great Hall plus another conference room. Member Merritt indicated that the additional conference room must allow public attendance.

Member Goldman then asked about the process and milestones required to provide the necessary deliverables in the five remaining meetings.

Chairman Paul indicated that the pro and con analysis required by Article 27 had been done. Member White indicated that two figures for square footage requirements (with and without the Great Hall opened up) were needed. Arriving at these figures must be a priority. Mr. Boivin agreed.

Chairman Paul stated that he had a spreadsheet prepared with three columns, listed by department: existing space, AG recommendation, and Committee recommendation. The third column is currently blank. Mr. Boivin stated that they wanted to justify and test the figures.

Member Jenness asked whether the goal was to justify the difference between the requested square feet and the current square feet. Mr. Crawford responded that the current square feet should not be a baseline. Many of the offices currently located in the Great Hall are larger than they need to be. The AG Report acknowledged this, he said.

Mr. Klenke stated that this is an opportunity to get the town to a higher level of data access. The space needs and this issue can be addressed at the same time.

Member Merritt indicated that there are state requirements that originals be retained. Mr. Klenke indicated that the records could be stored elsewhere if digitized. That would make the offices much more efficient. They could even be 10 feet by 10 feet.

Mr. Boivin indicated that the space would still be needed somewhere if the records had to be stored. Mr. Crawford responded that a storage facility not having to meet the quality standards for location in the center of town would be less expensive. Mr. Boivin commented that there are ways to increase storage density. The floor loading requirements are high, though.

Whereupon the meeting adjourned at approximately 9:15 p.m.