

STOW TOWN HALL RESTORATION
Frequently Asked Questions
November 2021

How will the restored building be used and why do we even need it?

The Town Hall has been and will be used for a wide range of community events and its restoration will make it even more functional for local meetings, performances, clubs, receptions, parties, workshops, dance classes, and the like.

Why do we need another place for community events when we already have Pompo?

Pompo is frequently overbooked and does not have the character and charm of Town Hall, and private spaces at other local venues are not always available.

Why not just tear the building down and build a park or sell it as-is to a developer?

This is an important and visually prominent historic building in Stow that was the Town Hall from 1848 to 1989 and has unique qualities for a variety of community events.

Why not just keep the building as-is instead of spending money on improvements?

The facility is uninsulated, drafty, expensive to heat, has no air conditioning, and is worn down which severely limits interest in using it and restricts it from year-round use.

What will be done to make the building more comfortable, and will it be energy efficient?

The oil-fired hot air furnaces will be removed and a state-of-the-art electric air source heat pump system for heating, cooling and energy-recovery ventilation will be installed, making use of the reduced rates from the clean municipal electrical utility grid.

Why not just do minimal improvements to keep the building in reasonable condition?

If more than \$126,000 is spent on improvements over a three-year period, code requires the building to be made fully handicap accessible.

Why does the building need to be made handicap accessible? Isn't it already accessible?

While there are ramped entrances into both floor levels now, the building does not conform to current accessibility regulations as mandated by the building code.

Why does a historic building need to be handicap accessible? Aren't there variances available?

Yes, and while the project did receive several variances from the Architectural Access Board, a substantial amount of accessibility work is still required by code.

Why does there need to be an elevator between the two floors?

Since the two floors are part of the same building and contain a stairway between them, handicap access between floors is code mandated so that someone in a wheelchair does not have to go outside the building to go from one floor to the other.

What sort of improvements are proposed for the Great Hall and how will it affect its character?

The project will make the stage handicap accessible, integrate audiovisual systems, improve lighting for meetings and performances, improve room acoustics, restore windows, and relocate chair/table storage into a small adjacent room off the foyer. The room character will be restored, and the community quilt will retain its prominent place.

Why will the restrooms be downstairs when the main activity space is upstairs?

The upstairs currently has two restrooms that are inadequate to meet plumbing code, so expanded restrooms will be provided downstairs to allow room for a side lobby and catering pantry on the first floor adjacent to the main hall.

How will the cost of this restoration affect my taxes?

Funds from the Stow Community Preservation Committee are being requested for this project, and those funds are from taxes that are already collected annually by the town.

Are there grants available for funding this project instead of using our tax dollars?

There are some limited grants for historic restoration and accessibility improvements that are being considered and can be sought if the project receives town approval. If the CPC funds and successful grants are not adequate, override funds will be needed.

Why not phase the project over time to minimize cost and disruption?

Phasing a project over time increases the overall cost and extends the disruption to its use since it would likely be out of commission during each phase of the work. Also, the proposed work involves integrated improvements that are best done simultaneously.

Why spend money on this building since there is no parking for events?

There are a few parking spaces on Crescent Street, and more at the Town Building and former Fire Station. Safety improvements to existing crosswalks are recommended.

Will the restoration destroy the historic character of the building given the magnitude of work?

The work complies with the "Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties" and the Massachusetts Historical Commission reviewed the project and determined that there will be "no adverse effect" to the building's integrity.