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property.

To answer that question, the purchasers – using the name “Andover Community Space” – have held a series of informal open houses for the public and asked several local contractors to evaluate the soundness of the structure. Representatives of the New Hampshire Preservation Alliance, the New Hampshire Bureau of Historic Sites, and the Wilnot Community Association have also supported the effort with on-site visits.

An informal 30-minute tour of the building has been captured on video by Tina Cotton and narrated by Susan Chase and Jay Fitzpatrick. You can watch it anytime on the Town’s Web site at Andover.NH.us – roll over the words “Town Information,” then click the “Video Archive” link that pops up.

Comments from the Experts

“The New Hampshire Preservation Alliance congratulates the preservation-minded individuals who stepped up to save the historic Andover Town Hall from an uncertain future. Saving and reviving such community landmarks is central to the Alliance’s mission to preserve our state’s heritage and to stimulate local economies. The Alliance supports the Andover group’s efforts to return their historic Town Hall to a viable community use and will assist this endeavor as planning progresses.”

– Cristina Ashjian, Project Manager, New Hampshire Preservation Alliance

“It was exciting to meet a local group of townsfolk so concerned about the future aesthetic and sustainability of their town that they were willing to put up their own resources to save a valuable historic structure. Every city, town, and village in New Hampshire should be so lucky to have local residents with the foresight to protect local history and give that history a voice. Fortunately, the old Andover Town Hall retains much of the town’s past in its building fabric – a fabric that when restored will tell the stories of the town for years to come.”

– Ben Wilson, Director, New Hampshire Bureau of Historic Sites, Department of Resources and Economic Development

The feedback so far: There are lots of possible uses for this highly flexible space that appears to be in pretty good shape.

Potential community uses identified informally to date include space for health clinics; a commercial kitchen large enough to prepare group dinners; a community game room with a pool table; a place for teens to hang out; facilities for physical-fitness and dance programs; an adult activity center; a small theater; exhibit space for local artists and crafters; a small tearoom or coffeehouse; a practice room for lo-

cal musical groups; a recording studio; a media room where films, videos, and live TV programs could be shown; a lending library for tools; and more.

Coming up in the future: additional open houses; an outreach effort aimed at local clubs and organizations, youth of all ages, and families; conversations with municipal officials; visits to community centers in other communities; and more. Watch this space (and your e-mail inbox, and bulletin boards around town, and the Town Web site) for details. To communicate your thoughts about possible uses, and to get information directly, send an e-mail to AndoverCommunitySpace@gmail.com.

To help with additional information-gathering and – at a later date – with the gathering of funds for adapting the building to a new purpose, the Andover Community Space team is also looking for volunteers who can bring their time and talents to the project. To volunteer or to learn more, send an e-mail to the above address.

Area professionals who have donated their time to evaluate the structure and its contents have so far included builders Rich Burns, Rick Estes, Les Fenton, Bob Hurlbutt, Toby Locke, and Billy Sanborn; computer consultant Bob Norander; and Andover Fire Chief Rene Lefebvre. Concerns identified so far have included roof and insulation issues, compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, and a lack of kitchen facilities.

The team of purchasers included Deb Brower, Susan and Larry Chase, Pat Cutter, Gisela and Steve Darling, and Stacey and Eric Viandier. All except for Eric Viandier were present for the November closing in Concord. Their right to purchase the building was won at a public foreclosure auction held on the property on October 20. The property is currently assessed at \$365,000.

Now vacant, the old town hall has most recently housed a medical billing service and several physical-fitness and dance-instruction facilities. Though the main floor, once a single meeting room that also served as a basketball court, has been converted into offices and conference rooms, the original stage and dressing rooms are still in place. A second floor has been added.

The building and its half acre of property were sold to a private purchaser in 1963 after the construction of a public-school gym (now part of the Andover Elementary/Middle School) made the 1879 building obsolete. Previous occupants of the building have included a furniture-maker, a certified public accountant, and an attorney.

For more information on the building’s history, go to the “Andover’s Town Halls and Meetings” chapter of Ralph Chaffee’s collection of Andover-centric reminiscences entitled *Elder Moody’s Hat*, available from the Andover Historical Society.

To Be Raised by Taxes - 2016				
Department	2015	2016	Change	%
School	\$3,239,522	\$3,495,530	\$256,008	7.9%
Town	\$1,021,829	\$1,167,133	\$145,304	14.2%
Fire Departments	\$123,460	\$125,803	\$2,343	1.9%
County	\$709,154	\$686,800	-\$22,354	-3.2%
TOTAL	\$5,093,965	\$5,475,266	\$381,301	7.5%

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The 2016 annual School District Meeting voted a total appropriation of \$4,900,864, up from the previous year by \$126,399 (2.6%). The increase was driven by increased busing costs, a new teachers’ contract, and increased Special Education staff.

An operating budget of \$4,862,300 was approved. In addition, \$25,000 was added to the Special Education Trust Fund, bringing it to \$100,000 plus interest. This continued a plan of adding \$25,000 to this fund each year to provide for unanticipated expenses for Special Education that are impossible to predict or budget for.

Another \$10,000 was added to the High School Tuition Trust Fund, bringing it to \$60,000 plus interest. This fund provides a source of funding for unexpected high school enrollments.

Finally, \$3,564 was approved for salaries, part of implementing this year’s new teachers’ contract.

Offsetting these appropriations was an unexpended fund balance of \$333,367 at the end of the 2015-2016 school year, down 27.5% from the 2014-2015 school year. The 2014-2015 unexpended fund balance was unusually high, due to a “premium holiday” for health and workers compensation insurance and some savings in salaries and heating oil. The 2015-2016 figure is more typical (but still about double what the SAU would like to see unexpended at the end of a school year).

The State Education Grant this year is \$858,469, up about 3.4%. After accounting for other revenues, the amount to be raised by taxes for 2016 is \$3,495,530, up 7.9% over the previous year.

The School tax rate for 2016 becomes \$13.94 (\$2.33 for the State component and \$11.61 for the Town component). This is an increase of 7.3% over

the previous year.

Andover Town Taxes

The 2016 Andover Town Meeting voted to appropriate an operating budget of \$1,612,904, up from the previous year by \$134,256 or 9.1%. The meeting also approved \$30,000 to outfit a donated dump truck for Highway Department use. Replacement of the Town Hall roof (\$25,000) and acquiring a special-purpose forest fire truck (\$48,847) were also approved by the voters. Other warrant articles (including \$150,000 for road projects, which was intentionally omitted from the previous year’s budget) brought the total appropriation to \$1,999,727, up from the previous year by \$349,558 (21.2%).

The Select Board voted to use \$150,000 of accumulated fund surplus to offset 2016 taxes. After taking account of other revenues, the amount to be raised by taxes becomes \$1,167,133, up from last year by \$145,304 (14.2%).

The Town tax rate for 2016 is \$4.61, up 13.3% over the previous year.

Fire Department Taxes

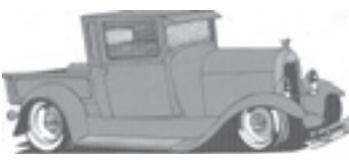
The total amount to be raised by taxes for the two Andover districts for 2016 is \$125,803, up less than 2% over the amount raised for 2015. The tax rates for 2016 are \$0.68 for Andover properties and \$0.37 for East Andover properties.

County Taxes

The bill to Andover from Merrimack County for our share of the county’s 2016 budget is \$686,800. This is down from 2015 by \$22,354 (-3.2%). The county tax rate for this year is \$2.71 (-3.9%).

As usual, this article wouldn’t have been possible without Ed Hiller’s invaluable insights and rigorous organizational skills that he provides so generously as a member of the Andover Budget Committee. Thanks, Ed!





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