

Andover Community Hub Initiates Community-Wide Campaign

Looking for new ideas, energy, and resources

Larry Chase
Andover Community Hub

Now that the Andover Community Hub is officially a non-profit organization and into its fourth year of existence as a community center, its board of directors is mounting its first community-wide campaign aimed at bringing new ideas, new energy, and new financial resources into its organizational structure.

As an advertisement elsewhere in the Beacon explains, the current eight-person board is looking to expand: especially to find new members to help shape the Hub's future. The board particularly hopes to find individuals with experience in (and enthusiasm for) addressing building needs, in identifying outreach opportunities for a variety of community segments, and in managing finances.

Board members are also searching for volunteers to serve on committees with responsibilities for identifying, developing, and maintaining new programs; for developing policies that will guide those activities; and for help in finding new sources of revenue to support them.

And it will be looking for "subject matter experts": individuals who will agree to offer advice and counsel, and hands-on help, on a project-by-project basis, such as structural and architectural issues, programming and event opportunities, social-media outreach, and material and financial donations.

Current Hub board members will be

reaching out personally to potential Hub supporters in the next few months. Area residents who would like to learn more about these opportunities may send an e-mail to TheAndoverHub@gmail.com. A board member will respond promptly, beginning with a big "Thank you!"

Current Hub board members are Deb Brower, Larry Chase, Susan Chase, Paul Currier, Pat Cutter, Gisela Darling, Steve Darling, and Grace Schust.

History of the Old Town Hall

The building now known as The Andover Hub was built in 1879 to serve as Andover's Town Hall. In that capacity it was used for generations of selectmen's meetings, town meetings, elections, graduations, dances, and basketball games.

When a gym was added to the Andover School in 1963, the town decided the old town hall was no longer needed, and the building was sold to a private owner.

Over the next 50 years, several owners used it as a chair factory, professional offices, and, most recently, a medical billing company, dividing up the first floor into a series of small offices in the process.

In 2016 the building was purchased at a foreclosure auction by a small group of local residents who renamed the building The Andover Hub and formed a board to maintain and manage it. Those owners then joined forces with the Andover Community Association in early 2019 to form the non-profit Andover Community Hub, which now owns the building. 

Opinion

Our Democratic and Economic Freedoms are Deeply Intertwined

Think about our common goals rationally and fairly

Ken Wells, State Representative

When I was a teenager during the Cold War, I was amused by a comic strip called *Spy vs. Spy*. Two trench-coated raven characters appeared only in silhouette, identical in every way yet polar opposites and mortal enemies. One was drawn black on white, and the other, white on black. They were adversaries engaged in an unending intrigue of cross, double-cross, and revenge. It was a struggle which clearly aspired to no higher purpose, and never referenced any actual events playing out in the real world.

As I see a similar cartoon playing out in our nation's partisan politics, I am not amused. There are grave problems before us today, as there were back during the Cold War. *Spy vs. Spy* was deliberately blind to the actual problems of the Cold War world, just to provide some dark humor as we faced an existential nuclear crisis. Today we face an existential climate emergency, and our Constitutional democracy is all but paralyzed by the greatest test of its checks and balances within living memory. Our democracy could become irreparably broken if we, as voters, allow ourselves to be so distracted and blinded by our current partisan *Spy vs. Spy* intrigue, that we do not pay attention to the erosion of our own power as informed, rational consumers and voters in this capitalist democracy. The only group in the country empowered by the Constitution to truly fix our damaged systems is YOU. Only we, the people can be trusted to use our dollars and our votes to properly restore what is wrong today. It's complicated, but here's what's happening:

Our democratic freedoms and our economic freedoms are deeply intertwined. New Hampshire citizens' participation and voting during Town Meeting might be as pure an example of democracy as you are likely to find in the United States. When we envision our purest economic freedom, we might imagine a rosy picture of mid-20th century free enterprise, featuring small business, laissez-faire capitalism, and corporations responsible to (and paying dividends to) their shareholders. But capitalism has undergone subtle changes in the 21st century, and "good old free enterprise" is suffering from a terrible parasite. And it's probably not what you think, or what they tell you on the news...

Nationally, our economy has moved away from being dominated by small-business free enterprise. Some would

have us believe that immigrants threaten our way of life, or that we are being driven toward "economic socialism", which the dictionary defines as a system in which the public collectively and equally owns the means of production. An astute observer will see that neither of those are true. The United States is certainly not moving toward "state socialism" either, in which the state owns the means of production, as in China where the government unequivocally owns all factories, news agencies, and power plants. In spite of much of the rhetoric you hear, clear evidence suggests we are headed toward a "plutocratic oligarchy", in which the very wealthiest essentially own the state, as well as everything in it. Today, the top 1 percent has more wealth than 90 percent of the American population combined. (If you would like to study well-documented evidence of this, you can examine an extensive Wikipedia entitled "Wealth Inequality in the United States" and follow the links back to the sources of the information presented there.)

In a recent radio interview I heard, Yancey Strickler and Andy Ballester, founders of the crowdfunding charity websites Kickstarter and GoFundMe, talked about the ongoing consolidation of our nation's financial wealth into the hands of a few. Strickler spoke about our "mullet economy" (named for the '80s hairdo) that's "all business out front", for 90 percent of us who are struggling to make it in this economy, "and a party out back" for the 1 percent belonging to the billionaire CEO class. They are buying out stockholders, riding high on the booming economy, skimming profits through outsized CEO compensation and influencing policymakers in government to make even further consolidations of wealth possible. We live in an age where "the super-rich think that the only purpose of money is to make more money," says Ballester, rather than to contribute to a "conscience economy", where money is spent to help people and the communities we live in. This is the parasite that draws dragging us down.

How did we get into this situation, and how do we get out of it?

In the century from the Civil War to the Cold War, monopolistic companies (19th century railroads were a famous example) cleared the table of their competitive opposition and gained sole control of entire markets. Antitrust laws came into being to curtail these "horizontal" monopolies that could win the game because they were the only player left on the entire tabletop. Many of the captains of these industries and their

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