

TOWN OF BRISTOL

Old Town Hall – Old Fire Department Study

Minutes

September 13, 2012

Committee members present: Hilda Bruno (Historical Society), Dave Carr (Budget Committee), Michael Capone (Town Administrator), Mark Chevalier (Contractors), Susan Duncan (Chair), Lucille Keegan (Energy Committee), Peter Vannah (Public) and Steven Yannuzzi (Fire Chief)

Members of the Committee gathered at 8:00 a.m. at the Old Town Hall for a tour of the facility.

The Old Town Hall – observations

The Old Town Hall has an occupancy permit because the Fire Chief and town officials have provided the required smoke detectors (battery operated), properly illuminated exit signs and now meets the minimum life-safety code requirements.

We began the tour of this building in the front area of the meeting hall and observed rust in one area of the edge of the tin ceiling (toward the road) and the beginning of other areas where the ceiling has been affected. However for the most part, the old tin ceiling is in good shape at this time.

In the past few years coverings were placed on the outside, bottoms to cover the ceiling vents because of an accumulation of dust, bird feathers and droppings. Committee members wondered if the architectural integrity of the ceiling as well as the overall appearance could be improved if the covers could be placed on the inside of the ceiling grates and could have the same effect. It was pointed out that these grates serve the purpose of the cold air return for the hot air furnace and are we impacting its efficiency by covering the grates. Perhaps we should just clean them instead?

The tour of the left side of the building (the addition facing downtown) showed in the outside rear corner where there had been significant water leakage from the ceiling. The water obviously ran down the wall and caused the floor to rot out underneath the old safe (which was subsequently moved to the lower floor of the Old Fire Station). Mark Chevalier supervised the repair of the roof and there is no indication that it is currently leaking. A large section of plywood was placed over the damaged floor and a trash can placed there in order to discourage anyone from standing in the area. This

area is directly beside the old vault which stored Town records. There are a few boxes of materials still inside the vault. To the right side of the vault is an old Crawford cook stove which probably has some antique value. It appears to be in good shape (considering). Also in this section of the building are a number of plastic storage tubs, all of the Metrocast equipment, and various other items. All of the windows (except one) are period but with no broken glass. These windows do not have exterior storm windows. There are a number of areas of this section where mold is clearly visible on the inside walls.

The tour of the stage area shows a large, beautiful old painting depicting Town Square (donated by Dave Williams of the former IPC). Unfortunately because a number of benches from the meeting area have been stacked in front of it, it is difficult to truly appreciate it. There is an old stage light panel (not connected to anything electrically) but with period hand-written labels for which lights they controlled. The stage, as with the prior area, has become a repository for a number of unneeded items.

Just below the stage (to the right-hand side of the building when facing the stage) there is a large, handicapped-accessible toilet. This bath facility is in very good shape.

Outside the ramp to the stage and toilet is the rear exit. While this previously had the handicapped ramp, the ramp was removed because it had become rotted. The metal outside door has some rusting in the lower left-hand side (when viewed from the outside) and is very difficult to open and shut.

In viewing the building from the outside, there is significant rot that has occurred to the sills during the years. There is a large section behind the door to the rear of the building where there is no longer any siding. Maintenance personnel covered the area in protective covering in an attempt to keep out the elements. In walking behind the Old Town Hall, it was easy to see areas where squirrels and other animals have access to the building. Also, when viewed from the outside, the largest "need" is the roof. The paint, while older, still appears to be in good condition. There is also a need to replace rotten timbers, especially in the rear and side of the building. The front windows could be easily improved to help the appearance of the building from the outside, though this is strictly cosmetic.

We viewed the old vault which was constructed of brick from the rear of the building. It would appear that this section has pulled away from the building a bit, perhaps caused by the former leak in the roof when the floor rotted.

We were able to determine that in a number of places along the lower edges of the building the wood is in particularly bad shape. I observed that Mark Chevalier was able to insert a nail into the wood with no apparent resistance.

We looked at the front storage area of the building. Hilda Bruno remarked that while it is strictly cosmetic, we should absolutely help the appearance of the building by taking the stored junk from in front of the windows and asked whether it would be permitted to paint the outside of the windows (black trim) and place matching curtains in the front windows.

There is an access space in the front storage area but we did not have a ladder in order to climb up and view the upstairs area. Mark Chevalier indicated that he has been up there in the past and that there is a front walkway area and some other areas where there is insulation. We were not able to view what the ceiling shape is from the inside of the building but may wish to do so.

Someone has stored (in the main section of the building) two extremely large outside road signs. These could present a danger should someone accidentally tip them over.

The front left-hand side of the building has two separate old toilet facilities (men and women). The urinal in the men's bathroom has a crack in it. Both of these facilities are quite dated but functional. The paint on the inside of the windows (for privacy) could be scraped off so that curtains could be hung. This would provide for a better look to the front of the building from the outside.

Michael Capone noted that the front door received a fresh coat of black paint in order to help the overall look. When viewed from the outside, the Old Town Hall roof is in desperate need of sealing and painting. We did not see evidence on this tour of fresh or current leaks though past leaks were obvious. Mark Chevalier indicated that he has regularly done some patch work on the areas around the two chimneys and that more attention is needed.

The tour of the basement provided access to the hot water heater, the blower as well as the furnace. There is an easily accessible section which houses these items and provides storage to a weed whacker and some other materials. A number of panel doors as well as a stainless steel sink are stored down there. No one seemed to know why these items were here. Lucille Keegan suggested that if no one needs them or the Town has no use, they should be taken over to the "dump" so that someone can use them.

The majority of the Old Town Hall basement is a dirt crawl space and not easily accessible.

A few years back moneys were budgeted and approved to paint this building's roof. We are unsure as to why the work was not done.

In discussions outside the building following the tour the following questions were raised by Dave Carr:

- What income, if any, is provided by the two buildings;
- What details do we have on the expenses incurred in operating these two buildings currently;

- What valuation does the Town currently have on the buildings.

It was agreed that Michael Capone would provide this information to all Committee members before our next meeting.

A discussion was also held regarding the Town's liability in having so much old lead paint in the building, whether we should be using the building at all, etc. It was felt that since the building is not used for housing pre-school or kindergarten classes but for one-time events where a parent or grandparent may bring a small child with them to vote or some similar event, the liability would not be the same. We were not certain whether we can scrape the old paint around the front windows and repaint them just to make the outside appearance better however the front door was repainted with no objections.

Mark Chevalier asked about the value of the buildings and noted that we should consider the cost of any proposed renovations and the end costs the Town would then have. He also asked if this Committee would be looking at all of the Town buildings and placing these two buildings within that priority. We explained that the charge of this committee is to review these two buildings, assess their current conditions and come back with any suggestions. While we all agree that there are specific needs in the town, we also acknowledge the part of the reason these buildings have fallen more into disrepair is because no one particular group is "in charge" and things have happened randomly, if at all.

The group disbanded and met at the Old Fire Station

Old Fire Station observations:

When viewed in total from the outside, the roof stands out as in the greatest need of attention. While the siding is dirty from road dirt, a good scrubbing would improve it tremendously. While the paint is weathered a bit, it still is in decent shape.

When standing above the addition in the rear, it is clearly visible how large water/rain events cause ponding around the addition. Attempts have been made in the past to channel the water away from the building and to run down the road into the drain. However the drain capacity would be easily overwhelmed in a large rainfall.

The Historical Society has done an excellent job upstairs in the facility. They have painted, organized and are regularly cleaning the building. The upstairs windows were replaced with vinyl windows which function well.

They have placed neat curtains on the windows so that it gives a warmer appearance. The Town has assisted the Historical Society by paying one-half of their liability insurance coverage cost. Otherwise the Society generates small revenues from dues and the sales of their calendars. It is quite obvious the benefits that the Town receives by having the Historical Society regularly using and tending to the upstairs of this building.

When entering the building upstairs, the scent of oil was readily noticed. The one upstairs area in dire need of attention is the corner that houses the bell tower. The exterior of the bell tower has old shingles that are in terrible shape. There appear to be areas that are leaking. The storage area in the rear of the building houses a toilet facility and sink as well as a number of volumes of old *Record Enterprise* newspapers.

The downstairs area can be accessed via back stairs or directly from the lower street level. There are two automatic "garage" doors (relatively new) as well as a single "regular" door.

Currently the area houses the emergency trailer which is shared by the Fire, Police and Emergency responders. As winter approaches the forestry truck, police motorcycle and other police bikes as well as the police speed sign will be added. There is a surprising amount of space in the lower area. The town has two old safes and a number of other items are stored there (i.e., the forest fire tanks, old records, gaming materials, etc.)

In viewing the brick wall which is below grade, it is obvious that water damage has occurred through the years. This appears to be water that leaks in during rain events. The seepage of water has caused some mold to grow.

A separate area was constructed in the extreme rear of the lower area when the EMTs used this as their office. As this is an added wall, it prevents air flow and circulation. Since this serves no current function, removal of this wall could possibly improve air circulation and assist in mold abatement. A dark enclosure built into the side of the wall in the very rear of the building shows clear evidence of water seeping into the area. There were some standing water puddles which would increase mold, especially if the area is continually dark.

In viewing the oil tank it appeared that it was leaking oil. Chief Yannuzzi immediately called the Department and asked them to please notify the oil company to have them check the leak. No one was certain why this tank had been filled since the heat in this building is not being used.

The main section of the Old Fire Station is a metal roof which is in bad need of sealing and painting. The area around the bell tower needs attention and the shingles are in particularly bad condition. The addition roof (rather flat section) appears to have been treated more recently. Michael Capone noted that he will ask one of the town employees to use the "rubber paint" and roll another coating on the flat section of the roof to seal it before winter.

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 a.m.

ATTACHMENTS: A number of digital pictures are available.

NEXT MEETING DATE: 6:00 p.m.
Thursday, September 26, 2012

REPORT DUE: Prior to 2013 Town Meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Duncan
for the Committee

sfd
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