

Bristol unveils plans for a renovated Police building and Historic Town hall-

Voters at last years town meeting had many a question about the proposed new police building project which involved the purchase of the Lake Street Auto site. Voters also expressed a general concern about the costs of a new building. Over the past year, the Bristol police building committee has been working on a new plan taking the voters concerns into consideration. The committee was extremely excited to unveil that plan formally at the November 29th Selectboard meeting. Board members unanimously endorsed bringing the plan forward to voters this year. Town Manager, Elizabeth Corrow, pointed out that the new plan will re-use/renovate two town buildings instead of building new as was proposed last year. The current town office building would be renovated for police department use and the Town's administrative services would be moved to a newly created lower level of the renovated historic town hall. The historic town hall was built in 1848 and is not currently used to its fullest potential due to maintenance issues as well as accessibility issues. Just one of the many things that make this new plan so attractive-we are able to meet the needs of the police department with this plan as well as save our historic town hall and put it to full use once again- all for the same or slightly more than it what it would have cost to build just a new police department at the Lake Street Auto site. Town Manager Corrow also points out that a newly renovated historic town hall would be a great anchor to the revitalization efforts of downtown Bristol. Just think, visitors doing business at the town offices would be within walking distance to businesses downtown...come get your vehicle registered and walk downtown for a cup of coffee and/or lunch. Town meeting, public hearings, and committee meetings could once again be held in the building without concern about handicap accessibility. On a much broader level, Paul Mirski, the towns architect for the project who comes with decades of experience preserving old buildings-said it best "when you lose one of these historic buildings it is like knocking the teeth out of the streetscape of the downtown area." "When they fall into disrepair and disuse it really takes something away from the community".

There was also a great deal of discussion both at the committee level and at the board meeting about whether or not retrofitting the current police building site would meet the needs of the police department. Bristol's Police Chief John Clark assured the board that he has no issue with a retrofit of the current building and he felt the current site was a good location for police services as it is centrally located and positioned well to answer calls for service. Chief Clark stated "I think that retrofitting the building would work well for a long time." "I feel we would have sufficient room to deal with what we have to deal with for the next 30 to 40 years."

The town has engaged the services of Bonnet Page and Stone as Construction managers for the project to provided a detailed list of costs and if approved at town meeting they will bid out every aspect of the project independently (right down to

electrical, plumbing, and site work) instead of a lump sum bid for the project to ensure that the town is getting the very best deal possible on every aspect of the project.

The Police building committee is currently working with Bonnet Page & Stone and Paul Mirski to refine costs estimates and come up with a guaranteed maximum price that can be presented at future meetings, public hearings, and ultimately at town meeting. The committee is working hard to prepare as much information as possible to share with the public so that voters can make an informed decision.

Please watch the town's website for future updates www.townofbristolnh.org and contact the town manager at 744-3354 with questions. There will be much more information forthcoming and plenty of opportunity for sharing information and taking input.

Submitted by Bristol's Police building committee 12/6/07