

Sterling 1835 Town Hall Long-Term Plan



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Prepared 2016 by Robert McKay Jones

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This document would not be the historical record were it not for Vern Gaw, Chair of the 1835 Town Hall Committee between 199 and 2015. The records that Vern maintained were extremely helpful in creating this Long-Term Plan.

Much of the background and building information contained here is the work of Lynne Spencer of Spencer & Vogt Group, 1 Thompson Square, Charlestown, MA 02129 as part of the 2012 Rehabilitation Study. Lynne is an architectural historian and leader in the preservation of historic landmarks in Massachusetts and consultant to the Massachusetts Historical Commission. Architectural requirements provided by Thomas Burgess, Architectural Designer as part of the 2012 Rehabilitation Study.

Use of This Document

This is intended to be a working document as well as an educational document for future generations and members of the 1835 Town Hall Committee. It is also a reference for projects past, present and future. Although the historical information may not change, new information will be added and plans will be modified.

Version integrity is suggested, that is, as this document is modified, the pages and sections should be categorized by year for historical accuracy.



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Mission

One hundred and eighty years after its dedication, the purpose and meaning of the Town Hall is still clear. It represented the forward thinking citizens of Sterling in the early 19th century. People whose names we are all familiar with; Kendall, Rugg, Conant, Burpee, Tuttle, Pratt, Sawyer and others. Today, it represents the historical and cultural landmark standing at the center of our town and a focal point of the Sterling Center Historic District registered with the United States Department of the Interior and the Massachusetts Historic Commission.

It shall be the duty of the Committee to make recommendations for the refurbishment, restoration, and maintenance of the 1835 Town Hall, and to oversee the use of the 1835 Town Hall as a Community Center for public open meeting-space and limited municipal offices. In that effort, the Committee seeks out and nominates responsible, talented and dedicated individuals that share a common purpose, preservation of the Town Hall in its original splendor.

Guiding Principles

The overriding principle observed in this document and in all planning, management, rehabilitation and use of the Sterling 1835 Town Hall is to provide and plan for ongoing maintenance, appropriate protection and continued utilization by the community as an ongoing testament to the history and heritage of Sterling and to insure the Town Hall remains a vibrant beacon overlooking our town common and center of our community for generations to come.

History

Sterling's second Town Hall was constructed in 1835 on the site of the original town hall (1800), which had fallen into disrepair and was relocated and remodeled as a residence. This classic Greek Revival building was designed by John Springer, a carpenter/builder born in Conway, New Hampshire who married Sterling resident Eliza Barnard. Springer was responsible for several fine Greek Revival buildings in Sterling, including the First Federated Church and the Holbrook and Sawyer Houses. The Doric columns at the portico of the Town Hall were built by local carpenter John Stevenson.

An extension was made adding two bays to the east end of the building in 1893. An article in the Worcester Daily Telegram reported that "the architecture was not changed... The interior was improved and frescoed; a gallery was built at the front end (2nd floor), and a furnace and other modern conveniences were added." In addition to serving as the seat of local government and the venue for town meetings, the town hall has historically hosted a variety of activities ranging from dinners, dancing classes and graduation ceremonies to musical performances and exhibitions of prizewinning produce.



The Greek Revival style was based on the architecture of classic Greek temples and was known as the “National Style” in America between 1830 and 1850 because of its nationwide predominance and popularity. Massachusetts architect-carpenter Benjamin Asher (1773–1845) is credited with disseminating the Greek Revival style through his influential house plan books.

Characteristic Greek Revival elements at the Old Town Hall include its front-gabled orientation; the full-height, full-width colonnaded porch, the wide band of trim below the cornice representing the classical entablature, and the pilasters at the building corners.

The Building

Exterior

The 1835 Town Hall Community Center is a rectangular, gable front building three bays wide and seven bays deep. The clapboard siding and all wood elements are painted white. The facade, which faces west across the town common, has a full-width, full-height portico with four fluted Doric columns supporting a deep entablature. “Sterling Town Hall” is lettered across the frieze. The single main entry has a transom and a single half-height sidelight (the matching sidelight was removed when the door was modified). A single rectangular window in the pediment gable replaced the original triangular louvered vent. This probably occurred in 1893 when the Assembly Room was expanded and the balcony added. Shutters have been removed from all elevations.

The portico has a slab concrete porch approached by granite steps. The windows throughout the building are original double-hung, 12-over-12 light sash at the first floor and Victorian era 2-over-2 light sash at the second floor. This change dated to the 1893 renovation, when New England thrift inspired the reuse of the 1835 12-over-12 windows while introducing the more “up-to-date” 2-over-2 windows in the expanded Assembly Room. The 1893 roof is light gray and variegated purple slate, which probably replaced original wood shingles.

The side elevations are symmetrical in original design, with 2-over-2 light sash on the second level and 12-over-12 light sash on the first level. The second level windows are flush with the cornice trim. The building rests on a rubble stone foundation faced with granite on the east elevation.

At the west elevation, two windows were replaced with egress doors at both levels where a fire escape was installed. The foundation on this side of the building is faced with brick. Note the increased building height gained due to the sloping site.

The south (rear) elevation, which is three bays wide, has a centered single entry with transom. The central window at the second floor, located behind the stage in the assembly room, was filled in. A concrete handicap access ramp with metal hand railings spans the width of the building.



Interior

The basement of the building is unfinished with spaces for storage and mechanicals.

The north end of the first floor contains the main entry and vestibule, a meeting room, two offices, and two rest rooms. These spaces were renovated around 1978. The south end contains a large meeting room. There is a dropped ceiling and carpeting throughout. Also part of the 1978 work was the removal of the historic staircase to the second floor. A new, narrower staircase was introduced along with a space for a future elevator, now used as storage.

The second floor is filled by the Assembly Room. It contains a wood stage at the east end and a balcony at the west end dating to the 1893 expansion of the building. The dropped ceiling obscures the balcony and the large attic space above. The floor is wood.

Background

Historical Summary

The “new” 1835 Town Hall became the center of the community where it hosted over a hundred Town Meetings and probably hundreds of community functions as well as many town fairs, dances and theatrical performances in the upstairs auditorium. As you can see by the amount of money spent and the fact that it still stands tall after all these years, it was built with a lot of thought, pride and workmanship. No expense was spared on the architectural design, granite foundation, slate roof, large supporting timbers, interior woodwork, hardwood maple floors in the upstairs auditorium, the stage and balcony, and dual wooden staircases to the auditorium.

It has been well maintained over the years, but has also undergone many changes. Obviously, there was no running water, electricity, sewer system or baseboard heating when it was built. All of these things have been added over the years without significant alterations to the building. During the 1970s, a major renovation took place to repair some structural problems, meet fire safety requirements, update bathrooms, replace the wooden staircase and install drop ceilings. At that time, the town offices were still located in this building and continued to be there until the early 1990s.

In 1998 the Historical Commission completed a study of building and in 2001 the 1835 Town Hall Committee was formed by the town to plan and coordinate maintenance and facilitate the use of the building. It was a slow process since there was much work to be done. Temporary walls were removed from both the first and second floors, open meeting space was created, floors were repaired and carpeted, broken windows and window panes were repaired, roof repairs were done, unwanted articles were removed and auctioned, the building was furnished by recycling items from the school and library renovations, walls were patched and painted by a prison pre-release program, and floors were cleaned and waxed. This work was done with a small annual maintenance budget, a lot of elbow grease by committee members, community volunteers and numerous requests to the boy scouts. After a



significant amount of work, the space was finally ready for use by any group or member of the community that needed it.

It is the goal and mission of the 1835 Town Hall Committee to continue to maintain and enhance the building while planning the restoration of original architectural details lost during previous renovations. Some of the original items are the wooden staircases, original ceilings on the both the first and second floors, and access to the second floor balcony. Universal accessibility to the second floor auditorium and stage is also priority as is the continued maintenance of the building.

In 2005 the town, aided by a grant from the state, commissioned an "Architectural/Structural Assessment and Feasibility Study for Universal Accessibility of the Sterling 1835 Town Hall". The study found that the building was structurally sound, needed some immediate maintenance and provided a plan for accessibility. The immediate maintenance included roof repairs, furnace and chimney repairs, painting of the exterior, replacing storm windows, repairs to the exterior plaster on the portico, and reglazing of the window panes. This work has been completed with the exception of the reglazing and the painting of one side of the building. One of the reasons for the study was to determine the best way to provide universal accessibility to the second floor. The study suggested an addition to the side of the building to house an elevator. The plan is to complete the painting on the right side of the building once the addition is complete.

Over the last few years, the building has provided a temporary home for a number of public services: EMS 2002-2003, Library 2003-2004, Fire Department 2004-2005 and most recently the DPW 2007-2008 while their facilities were being renovated. It is currently home to many of the town recreation programs (six weekly exercise programs are currently in session), as well as the Veterans Office, community and nonprofit functions, and can be rented for private functions.

It is used regularly by scouting groups, 4-H, town committees, guitar lessons, a children's music program and hosts various community clubs. Periodic events such as the Candidates Forum, cultural events, and informational presentations are also held here.

The 1835 Town Hall is open most days and many evenings.

Year by Year

2001

Creation of the 1835 Town Hall Committee

The 1835 Town Hall Committee was commissioned by the Board of Selectmen in order to find a solution to the buildings long-term use. At the May 2000 Town Meeting, the voters approved the expenditure of \$20,000 to be used for the study of the reutilization of the old town hall and may include design and architectural drawings.



Projects Completed:

- Bids and Estimates for emergency repairs
- Replace Ceiling tiles (Vern)
- Vote on Community Center
- New carpet Room 3
- Basement Doors, Carpet and Boiler Repairs
- Plan for Library Use
- More Window repairs
- Evaluate Piano; OK to tune later
- Front Sill Repairs reviewed and voted
- Engineering report floor strength, Paul DiSalvo

Report of the 1835 Town Hall Committee

After examining the condition of the Old Town Hall in some detail and considering possible short term and long term uses of the building consistent with its central location and historic nature, The Committee has the following recommendations for the physical care of this facility. The recommendations are separated into Immediate needs, Short term needs (next 5 years), and Long term needs (15 years and beyond).

The Committee has tried to be as inclusive as possible of all potential users of the facility, and in particular gave great thought to the possibility of exclusive use by the Council on Aging. It is our conclusion that, due to the unique requirements of the COA, the cost of adapting this centerpiece building to their needs would probably exceed the cost of building a new facility with equal facilities. Further, modifications required would do major harm to the historic nature of the building.

It is the opinion of the Committee that future work done on the Old Town Hall should be in the direction of restoration within the limitations of building requirements, rather than short term functional changes that destroy historic details as in the renovation 22 years ago.

Immediate needs

The following items are seen as a requirement to maintain the integrity of the building, now neglected for several years:

- **Second Phone Line** for fire alarms - strongly recommended by the Fire Department and the single most critical item to lessen the possibility of catastrophic loss.



- **North Front sill** repairs including Cornice molding damage - past leakage has caused damage to this sill, estimated at 2500 to 3000 dollars to repair a section about 6 feet in length.
- **Furnace repair and cleaning** - there have been several Fire Dept. calls in the past 2 years due to poor condition of the boilers. While they have now been cleaned and tuned, we must keep them in good condition with careful inspection and maintenance.
- **Ceiling tiles and carpeting** - large downstairs meeting room - The frequent use of this room, and the poor condition of carpets and ceilings requires a short-term sprucing up. Painting has been done already, but the carpets and ceiling tiles are in as-left condition and need help. We recommend a utility carpet throughout and about ten replacement ceiling tiles.
- **Cellar Doors** - the old large exterior cellar doors are rotting. Building security requires new doors be built up, preferably in a historically correct manner.
- **Roof** - to the best of our knowledge the roof has maintained its integrity, but there is some danger due to falling ice and snow. Ice barriers - to prevent snow and ice from falling and causing injury or damage - need repair or replacement. Condition of the slate roof must be determined by experienced professionals.
- **Windows** - Windows are in good condition but need recaulking. All broken glass has been repaired but window panes are too loose to safely clean, and account for considerable wasted heat.
- **Beam Reinforcement** - Prior engineering reports have pointed out two beams that need to be reinforced with steel plates and bolts. One is in the roof, about 40% from the front on the North side. The other is in the floor under the entrance to the upstairs auditorium.
- **Exterior Painting** - Paint is in rough shape and there are a few areas that need caulking and trim repair to keep the water out.
- **Cellar Cleanup** - The cellar is full of all sorts of items. Some are used regularly and some are simply junk. The overall impact is to create increased fire and injury hazard. We recommend working with the Fire Dept., EMS, Council on Aging, Recreation committee, and Town Clerk to determine what is important and what should be eliminated.

Short term needs (next 5 years)

Historic Structures Report - A Historic Structures report should be done by a knowledgeable professional to establish what remains of the original building and its various modifications. This report would point the way to integrating changes made in the past and now with present and future uses, and maintain as much as practical of the historic nature of the building. We have an excellent chance at getting Mass Historical Commission funding for such a report. We also must consider the ramifications of putting a permanent preservation restriction on this building.



Handicap Access - To fully utilize the upstairs auditorium of the building, and to comply with ADA requirements for construction in excess of \$_____, handicap access will be necessary. It is our suggestion that access be planned for all 3 floors so that the cellar can be utilized.

Additional Toilet Facilities - In order to use the Auditorium with its additional seating capacity, we will need to add toilets. Present requirements are understood to require one fixture for every 50 women and every 100 men, assuming a 50/50 mix of males and females. The present toilets will be insufficient, and we should consider whether to leave them as they are for handicapped use, or relocate all washroom facilities to the basement. The 1835 Town Hall is part of a sewage project, as its soil capacity is needed to make the expansion of the Fire Station a possibility. When a common septic system is in place, we should have more than adequate capacity for the continuation of use of the 1835 Town Hall facilities. Through the years, the existing system has served the full use of the building as well as a kitchen for the school lunch program of the Butterick School.

Fire Protection - The Fire Department has strongly recommended we provide for a sprinkler system as a high priority. Looking at the experiences of towns around us, we see losses of the town halls in Barre and Petersham, as well as the recent loss of the Inn in Paxton. Wish though we may, the possibility of fire is always with us, and we need to take the threat seriously.

Kitchen - One possible use of the space where the bathrooms now are would be a caterer's kitchen. We need to be able to serve refreshments and some level of food service. A small kitchen could also be planned elsewhere if we keep the bathrooms on the first floor.

Front Entryway - We still have the original front doors that were in the building. An effort should be made to incorporate them, after restoration, into a reproduction of the original entryway. The original entry, consistent with the period, comprised a stairway on each side, both up and down. Stairway trim originally included wide pine wainscoting applied horizontally and at an angle on the stairs. The original fan that was above the portico is also still in good shape. A number of examples of some of these features can be seen in buildings in this area, including the church across the street which also involved John Springer, designer and builder of this 1835 Town Hall, as chair of the building committee in 1842. The suggestion has been made by several architects that we should consider working to 1835 configurations in changes we make in the 1st floor, and 1890 configurations in changes we make in the upstairs. It is not expected that the building be restored in its entirety, but just that we work in the right direction.

Heating System - The furnaces are now about 25 and 15 years old, and may be less efficient than new units. It may also be necessary to provide makeup air to meet current public occupancy codes. We may also need to consider the incorporation of air conditioning. For these reasons we need to upgrade the heating system - with the emphasis on keeping it modest and consistent with the historical nature of the building.



Long term needs (15 years and beyond)

Nature of Use - Most of the upgrades and maintenance items will be necessary regardless of the specific uses of this building. As the years unfold there will probably be needs for space that the 1835 Town Hall can accommodate without major modifications beyond the 5 year list. The most critical attribute of the building is its unique historic design and its presence as a main feature that defines the center of our town.

Historic Management - In view of its unique nature, we need to assure that the 1835 Town Hall is managed by a group sensitive to history, architecture, and the methods used to build and maintain an old building. For a town growing and changing rapidly it may be low on the priority list of the Selectmen, who may not always have the expertise to maintain it properly. It is suggested that a committee to oversee this structure, and possibly other historic municipal structures, be permanently in place and staffed with people with specific interest in historic buildings. Such a committee could report to the selectmen and/or the Historical Commission.

2002

Report to Board of Selectmen

There are several items we would like to start discussing in regards to the old town hall and our responsibilities, particularly in light of an expected budget crunch.

We are discussing the inclusion of a feeder line to the new septage area behind the fire station. It is my anecdotal understanding that the limit on flow would amount to an occupancy of a maximum of 70. The upstairs hall has a capacity of far more than that. We are concerned that we are forever limiting the use of the hall as the design stands. Further, we are, as I understand, not using any of the existing capacity, which is an open question as to size. The reason is that we interpret the building as having been closed, hence requiring a Title V system to reopen. But nothing was changed, and as far as I know the water and facilities were on. What time elapsed, and what are the requirements for building use to be interpreted as discontinued? An opening discussion item is to consider whether the feed pipe should be adequate for larger occupancy, and whether we can ask the Engineering folks to examine the use with an eye to maintaining the buildings existing people capacity.

We have a price for repair of the front corner sill. We would like to determine if we should proceed with this repair.

We are again examining the longer term use of the building, and wish to get some direction regarding interviews with designers to set up handicapped access for the upstairs. We feel we should at least get estimates for the design work. If we delay, we may become involved in more expensive town projects and have difficulty getting the funds to upgrade access.



In terms of funding, we are depleting the original design article. Should we put forth an article to replenish that fund this year to get a designer going? We would like to be working in concert with the Select Board.

We would like to consider a mechanism for collecting donations or fees to defray the cost of maintenance. To this end we would like to consider a revolving account so that the money could be easily tracked.

Should we consider an article to provide maintenance funds on an ongoing basis? Our building deserves better than spotty care, and we should expect to spend perhaps \$5000 on an annual basis. We cannot really escape this in the long term

Long Term Use Goal:

The Committee has concluded that the best use of the 1835 Town Hall is as a Community Center. The old Town Hall, situated as it is on the common, establishes much of the character of the Town of Sterling, and is a part of our New England heritage. It is proposed that the upstairs hall be retained as a large meeting space, complete with stage, seating, and audio visual system. The downstairs would also be retained in a form similar to the present, with the large meeting room in the rear and smaller meeting and office spaces in the front part of the building. These spaces are expected to be used by different groups depending on need. For instance, we now house the Sterling EMS, and may, if feasible, temporarily house some of the functions of the library. When not in use for specific functions, the rooms may be made available for public meetings or possible locations for non-profit activities. A caterer's kitchen is needed for some functions. The cellar area, with its numerous support columns, is suggested as storage space, with secure storage closets built in between the supports to provide storage and work space for users such as Scouts, Legion, Coop groups, and other non-profits. This strategy is being used in town halls in Barre and Petersham.

It is recommended that we keep as many of the original architectural features of the building as feasible. In particular, we have the original front doors and fan from the front gable, both in good condition. The Old Town Hall Committee is not suggesting restoration to 1835 configuration, as the building was lengthened in 1893, and many features have been permanently lost. Some, however, are worth saving. Stairways should be restored to 1835 configurations traceable from remaining wall sections and other buildings by the same architect/builder (John M. Springer) with similar entries. This would free up some internal space now occupied by the sprawling 1973 stairways.

A handicapped access needs to be provided for the second floor. It has been suggested by two different design firms that locating an elevator and stair in the same location as the existing fire escape would accomplish this and allow two points of emergency egress at opposite ends of the building. It is recommended that this be a 3 story access so that groups can also reach the basement. We are told that surrounding towns have received grants from ADA for this type of



public access work, and think we have a good chance to defray a considerable part of the expense of the project.

Toilet facilities will have to be upgraded for future use. Present requirements are for one fixture for each 50 women, and one fixture for each 100 men. Based on preliminary area calculations, building capacity may be 400. This would, based on 50/50 men and women, require 2 men's' fixtures and 4 women's' fixtures. We have good handicapped bathrooms on the first floor, and do not contemplate removing them. However, we suggest that additional bathrooms be added in the front of the basement, in locations similar to earlier ones that have been removed. If we limit occupancy to 400, we would need to add 1 men's and 3 women's' fixtures. We also must resolve septic system capacity.

The process of reaching our long term use goals include:

- Historic structures report - presently being pursued by the Historical Commission - would detail exactly what parts of the building date to what period, and what modifications were made when. This will give us information for a designer to use in renovating and preserving the maximum of the historical features.
- Usage survey with timeline, again to help identify building features and document how this building has been used at different times.
- Use reimbursement proposals will explore methods for ongoing maintenance of the structure.
- A Use plan will define in detail what uses are anticipated, and will identify the Scope of Work we will require from designing architects.
- Designer interview and selection process will review proposals from several architects and make a final recommendation along with a cost projection.
- Funding phase will explore the availability of grant monies for historic municipal structures and propose an article for expenditures to bring to the Town Meeting.
- Design and bid process will engage the selected design firm to develop plans and contribute to the bidding process.
- Construction phase will be completed on receipt of Town Meeting approval.

2003

Projects Completed

- Library Move-in tasks
- Dehumidifier installed
- No painting per Exec Sec
- Roof Assessment
- Report to Selectmen interim tasks, long term goals
- Selectmen voted to Continue Committee
- Roof repairs \$1500.00
- Create Revolving account, set charges



- Fire dept. Use proposed, voted
- Replacement exterior molding ordered
- Upstairs hear repairs done

Report on interim actions and long term goals for the 1835 Town Hall

The 1835 Town Hall Committee has been working since February 2001 to accomplish the following goals:

1. Formulate long term use proposal
2. Determine interim potential uses
3. Carry out immediately needed repairs
4. Submit an action plan to accomplish the above.

In the ensuing two years the committee has met regularly and has accomplished these goals. The purpose of this report is to update the Selectmen on the status of these items and to assist in planning action leading to the realization of the long term goals.

2004

Projects Completed:

- Library moved out
 - Need to replace bubbler removed by Library
 - 2 Phone lines promised – Tim
 - large fire extinguisher missing upstairs and down
 - Committee voted permanent by selectmen (March)
 - Sewer pipe to FD tank? No money (Tim)
 - Initial donation schedule for use
 - Public availability announced
 - Memorial Day Open House
 - Painting specs and RFP
 - ADA research
 - Upstairs OK for use by private groups (Tim)
 - MPPF grant for Accessibility/structural/feasibility study Interview Preservation architects
 - Paint specifications, exterior
 - SMLD plans to remove pole, underground conduit
 - Street lighting types examined
 - Remove old wiring, cap oil filler pipes
-



- Request for qualifications (grant) published, T&G
- Grant proposals opened, selection made
- Study, price new clapboards vs painting

Report to the Board of Selectmen

The Old Town Hall Committee has asked me to report to you on the status of activities as the library moves back to the Conant Building. We expect to go ahead with preservation and use of the building as a community center, as planned.

We must install two phone lines to serve the fire alarm panel. I recall we agreed with the Selectmen to have one local-only phone jack installed in case of an emergency that requires a call out. Tim Bragan has agreed to get this done.

We have discussed the use of the two former EMS offices as temporary Fire Department offices during construction of the new fire station, and have voted in favor of that use.

The Grant from Mass Historical for a Historic Structures report is moving ahead. Deadline for MHC approval of a Request for Proposals is Feb. 27, and Tim Bragan is reviewing the draft, and may have added his comments by now. I am waiting for a copy and will be away between Feb. 11 and 25th, so time is tight.

As we accept the grant, we will be committed to care for the building for the 5-year duration of the Preservation Restriction, and permanently should grants be secured for handicapped access, sewerage improvements, and other work. At this time the Old Town Hall Committee is serving on an ad hoc basis, and we recommend it should be made permanent to assure the future continuity of care. We are not sure if recent members are sworn in or not.

I have attached a letter to the library directors regarding move-out, for your information. Things are going well, though they have their hands full with the new building. We expect one of the board to meet with us on Feb. 9th.

We are also requesting that a \$5000 maintenance and repair expense article be made a permanent line item in the budget, since a modest amount will continue to be needed to handle repairs. We expect to generate some income through rental, but doubt that will cover the expenses. We would be available to meet with the Selectmen around the end of the month to discuss this. We feel it is a small price for a major feature of the town center, as well as a good value for its utility as temporary facilities for organizations such as the Library and Fire Department.

We have had repairs done to the corner of the building, and purchased reproduction moldings to replace rotted pieces on the top of the same corner. Installation will wait for better weather! the next immediate need looks like painting, and we would like to see if the two years' maintenance money can be combined to accomplish this. Another possibility is the use of pre-release inmates to help. This, and Library traffic, are the reasons we have held off on painting.



I have had discussions with the Town Clerk about handling room use as the Library moves out. Discussions have also been held with Judy Janda about having recreation move in and handle room use, using the former Treasurer's office. We understand some other arrangements may be made, but are open to this possibility. In essence the large downstairs room is now available for community use and is expected to remain so.

Thanks for the Selectmen's' help and support in getting this far - we expect the pace to pick up this year.

2005

An extensive architectural conservation assessment was prepared by Reinhardt Associates, Inc. assessing the structure and feasibility for universal access. The study is in the digital archives of the 1835 Town Hall Committee.

Projects Completed

- Reinhardt contract signed, feasibility study
- Replaced rotted NE corner board (Vern)
- Committee meetings w/ Reinhardt, design options
- Review by committee, first draft
- Painting proposals reviewed
- Recommended rem old storms to paint; replace with new
- Storm window proposals reviewed
- Reinhardt final draft reviewed, October
- Voted Cornice molding replace, Daigle Construction
- Custom Cornice moldings ordered, Forester products
- Painting progress payment \$3000.00, more next Spring Possible Eagle Scout project, rem junk from cellar
- Cellar water issue; review Storm drain overflow with DPW

2006

Projects Completed

- Resolve price conflict re Lift for storms w/ Modern
- Request for Veterans' office
- Room use payments adjusted
- Review of Scrape/prime/pain progress
- Proposals for new furnaces – old often smoking badly
- Veterans office locks changed
- Resolve Fire Dept. Leftovers
- Painting Quotes, rear exterior
- Water damage to archived documents, cellar



- Accessibility evaluation required for block grant eligibility
- Portico light selected, approved
- Replaced N side Clapboards, 4 hours Vern
- Asbestos examination completed – Basement
- Furnace specs and quotes initiated
- Doorbell purchase and install
- Harrigan Article, Meetinghouse News
- Furnace Quotes in, chimney lining required
- Storms for rear; hold until furnaces, painting done
- Problems w/ furnace quote process, Maint. Budget
- snow & plowing damage, North side
- Eagle cellar project 90% complete – 24 truckloads of junk.
- Vern doing grant application for 100% design
- Detailed monthly Treasurer report required.
- 2 phone lines in, paid 2 yrs, not hooked to anything

2007

Projects Completed

- MPPF grant treasurer refuses to allow 75% required
- Article for 50%. Treasurer to contact MPPF.
- Curtains not ordered yet by Treasurer – paid by donations
- Mem day open house – plans, Hist photos, 2nd floor open
- Alarms – wireless link installed
- Need reprogram to cut off phones – FY08
- Show Mellen, Stirling paintings
- Furnace problem; relay replaced
- Auth \$2000 to scrape/paint rear, remove storms
- 5/1 Treas reports curtains ordered
- April 16 flooding 20” water from blocked sewer
- Pointed granite walls at storm drain, rear cellar window (vern)
- Flooding; Auth \$100 for storm backflow devices (vern fix)
- Voted OK DPW offices May to Sept.
- Found ADA, grant work has impact on 504 self evaluation
- Curtain material arrived for Sept work by Girl Scouts
- Roof options, examined metal imitation slate
- Investigated Possible funding; not now.
- Roof leaks repaired (Barnard)
- Plaster portico ceiling repair quote \$1500 Sesia



- New furnaces, two Buderus by John Van Hoof
- Plaster portico ceiling repair quote \$950 Rick Keller – accepted
- Emergency lights refurbished –Vern -\$394.47
- Committee meetings w/ Reinhardt, design options
- Review by committee, first draft

2008

Projects Completed

- Cable Committee meeting – want entire upstairs??
- Alarms reprogrammed, security by Barry Alarm
- DPW Room 1 heat NG. Wrong size circulator, Carpet & cabinets blocking heaters. Fixed, & Insulated pipes
- Curtain rods & shades falling apart. Replaced
- Work with Grinkis to finish Exterior rear painting
- Searched for feasibility Study copies – Where are they?
- Auditorium floor clean and wax (Beth)
- Cable Comm visit – want room 3, block access, lock up?
- \$900 for last oil fillup – town over budget.
- Air Conditioners – asked DPW help to install
- Room 3 carpet cleaned after DPW moved out
- Met w/Terri on ADA. No money.
- Beth – need more effort on accessibility
- Met with fin Com May 1; revolving fund??
- Replaced Alarm Batteries
- Flag down after July 4? Yes, no light.
- Broken key removed
- Letter grant Climate MHC not good – money
- Return \$26,750 to GF from last Grant Application
- Downstairs painting, repair has been 10 years.
- Furnace cleaning by Dave Hogan, Amer Climate Control

2009

Projects Completed

- No interest by Staff in ADA Grants? (several conversations with Terri)
 - Infrastructure grant; for Accessibility and Restoration
 - Room 2 painting
-



- Room 1 painting
- Discussed need, priced remaining storm windows
- Recreation move-in
- Water Heater Replacement, \$707.00
- Door locks and security additions
- Reviewed Preservation Restriction
- Cost & Budget discussions, Facilities Mgr
- Reviewed Intermediate and Long term goals
- Walkoff Mat curled and dangerous – 20 yrs old
- Project list review w/Facilities Mgr– substantial agreement
- Windows – research cost of Maintenance – past quotes Fire Escape issues – Standards not referenced re: painting
- Control of historical Architecture maintenance
- 4+ hour cleanup of plaster mess – volunteers
- Expenditures require prior approval
- Ceiling replacement not well done; paid after return to sand
- Accessibility signs done by DPW
- Paint new door – Vern
- Ron investigating Cellar Windows
- How Proceed with Accessibility – meet with BNUC
- 2 roof leaks – fix B4\$ winter
- Weatherstrip on new door incomplete
- Storm Windows: remove old, prime and paint mating surfaces before installing new storm windows
- Quote protective glass for paintings

Recreation Department Letter

From Judy Janda; Director

I am writing this letter on behalf of the Recreation Department in regards to the future of the 1835 Town Hall. There have been e-mails sent, comments in the media, and verbal conversations suggesting as to what actions should be taken for future use of the 1835. I would like to give a little history of the Recreation's use of this building, in hopes that it will be considered when the 1835 Building is discussed at the upcoming meeting.

The Recreation Department has utilized the space at the 1835 Building for Recreation programs and community activities or meetings, since the fall of 2001. Working closely with the 1835 Committee, I was given the responsibility to schedule all building use requests. This included programs such as 4-H and scout meetings, regional meetings for NARHA, rental space for guitar lessons, food co-op, life line screening, quilting group, music events, and programs offered through the Recreation Department. The 1835 Committee set the rates for the building use, and



I would deposit the checks received into the 1835 Restoration Fund. The Recreation Department charges the instructors \$5.00/pp for all participants in the program to be deposited into the 1835 Fund. To date there has been \$7,458.68 deposited for all building use.

I had been asked to move the Recreation Department to the 1835 Town Hall since 2006 and it finally came to fruition in February 2009. The Recreation Department spent over \$12,000.00 for phone and computer installations, electrical work, carpet, alarm system, carpeting, door locks, office supplies, and miscellaneous. The 1835 Committee also paid to have rooms painted, replace badly needed carpet in the hall, ceiling fixed on the second floor, and other required improvements. This was a worthwhile expense for the Recreation Department and the Community. It is easy access for residents signing up for programs or taking care of business at the Veteran's office, great location to hold meetings for the Women's club, Scouts, Little league Commission, space large enough to offer community events such as slide shows for the Open Space Committee, Republican Forum, Teen programs, fundraisers, and other Community events. As of this fall, the Recreation Department has close to 100 people participating in Recreation sponsored programs that are offered at the 1835 Town Hall.

It is the Recreation's Departments recommendations that the 1835 Town Hall remains a Community Building to be utilized as it is now. The building is used continuously for meetings of various organizations and committees, recreation activities, and programs that are offered through private groups. Financial investment to install some type of elevator to the second floor to meet ADA compliance, replacement of or repair windows and doors so they are energy efficient and historically attuned would be an asset to increase the building's use. It would allow us to utilize the space upstairs for more community oriented programs that would bring in additional revenue to assist in building maintenance cost.

On behalf of the Recreation Committee, I ask that you consider these facts and include the Recreation Department in the decision making process of any potential resolution regarding the future of the 1835 building. If this space becomes unavailable for Recreation programs, it will be a major disruption to the Recreation programs and a real disappointment to the Sterling Community. The Sterling Recreation Department has been in existence for many years and has proven to be an established department that is self-sufficient. The Recreation Department is dedicated to providing service to the whole Community that will enhance the quality of life for all residents.

2010

Projects Completed

- Repair 4 window sills



- Refinish Auditorium floor
- Check back door light – OK
- Measure cellar windows for replacement
- Oil tank removal AFTER Door, windows, roof
- Repaired leaks in roof – 56 tiles and bibbs
- Drafted Maintenance Protocol
- Toilet handle, ladies' room (Tom)
- Building needs pictures, spreadsheet
- Boiler room drain backflow preventer
- New upstairs bulbs, replacement
- Flag mount
- Rental Policy
- Removed/repaired back door, reinstalled, \$470.00

2011

Designated as a Community Center

ARTICLE 9. Designate 1835 Town Hall as Community Center

To see if the Town will vote to designate the 1835 Town Hall a community center, with open meeting space for use of Town Groups, with any income from such uses to be used to partially defray the cost of operation, or take any action in relation thereto.

Submitted by: 1835 Town Hall Committee

Recommendation: The Board of Selectmen will report at Town Meeting on this article.

Summary: In 2003, the Board of Selectmen designated the Old Town Hall as a Community Center. The designation has not been acknowledged by some groups. This article asks the voters of Sterling to confirm the designation of the building as a Community Center to be used primarily for meetings and cultural events.

MOTION MADE ON THE FLOOR: to designate the 1835 Town Hall a community center, with open meeting space for use of Town Groups.

MOTION CARRIED AS DETERMINED BY THE MODERATOR



2012

2012 Rehabilitation Study

Long Term Use

The committee has concluded that the best use of the 1835 town hall is as a community center. The old town hall, situated as it is on the common, establishes much of the character of the Town of Sterling center and is a vital part of our New England heritage. This use is consistent with the past 167 years' usage. We could not easily afford to replace the structure, and maintaining it brings great benefits at a very modest cost.

It is proposed that the upstairs hall be retained as a large meeting space, complete with stage, seating, and audio visual systems. This usage will require handicapped access, which will be a major item in bringing the building up to any current requirements. It is strongly suggested that a sprinkler system be considered throughout.

The downstairs would also be kept in a form similar to its present layout, with the large meeting room in the rear and two or three other meeting rooms toward the front. A small kitchen area is suggested. The stairs, installed in the mid-1970s, need attention, as they are deteriorating and provide poor access to the upstairs.

The cellar, with its numerous support columns, is recommended for some secure storage closets for user groups. Part of the cellar may remain as municipal storage. The cellar will need to be kept clean and surplus items should be kept to a minimum. The septic system needs to be tied in with new capacity built behind the Fire station.

It is recommended that we keep as many of the original architectural features of the building as feasible. In particular, we have the original front doors and fan from the front gable, both in good condition. The 1835 Town Hall Committee is not suggesting restoration to 1835 configuration, as the building was lengthened in 1893, and many features have been permanently lost. Some, however, are worth saving. Stairways should be restored to 1835 configurations traceable from remaining wall sections and other buildings by the same architect/builder (John M. Springer) with similar entries. This would free up some internal space now occupied by the sprawling 1970s stairway.

Long term use as a community center is consistent with the Town Hall's original purpose. Meeting space in the downtown area is at a premium, and existing buildings are often unable to accommodate all of the group meetings that need space.

Immediate needs

The committee has worked to resolve existing problems in a number of areas, and has brought the building to the point that it can be safely and comfortably used by the town's citizens as a community center. Action items have included:



- Roof has been checked and does not leak. Ice barriers - to prevent snow and ice from falling and causing injury or damage - need repair or replacement. Condition will be monitored.
- Cellar Cleanup - Cellar cleanup is ongoing.

Action plan for next 3 years

The stated intent of the Selectmen in forming this committee was to “study the reutilization of the old town hall, possibly including design and architectural drawings.” It is this phase into which we hope to move, having taken care of the most pressing problems. We are asking the selectmen for approval of the plan in general, recognizing that detail changes may need to be made with their approval. The process we propose to follow is outlined below:

Secure a Historic Structures Report - A Historic Structures report must be done by knowledgeable professionals to establish what remains of the original building and its various modifications. This report would point the way to integrating changes made in the past with present and future uses, and maintain as much of the historic nature of the building as practical. We have an excellent chance at getting Mass Historical Commission funding for such a report. Further grant availability for planning and restoration is strongly contingent on a Historic Structures Report. We also must consider the ramifications of putting a permanent preservation restriction on this building. The Historical Commission is drawing up an application for matching funds for a Historic Structures Report.

Secure Design help to upgrade the following features:

1. Handicap Access - To fully utilize the upstairs auditorium of the building, and to comply with ADA requirements for construction in excess of \$50,000, handicap access will be necessary. It is our suggestion that access be planned for all 3 floors so that the cellar can be utilized.
2. Toilet Facilities - In order to use the Auditorium with its additional seating capacity, we will need to add toilets. Present requirements are understood to require one fixture for every 50 women and every 100 men, assuming a 50/50 mix of males and females. The present toilets will be insufficient, and we should consider whether to leave them as they are for handicapped use, or relocate all washroom facilities to the basement. The 1835 Town Hall is part of a septage plan, as its soil capacity is needed to make the expansion of the Fire Station a possibility. When a common septic system is in place, we should have more than adequate capacity for the continuation of use of the 1835 Town Hall facilities.
3. Fire Protection - The Fire Department has strongly recommended we provide for a sprinkler system as a high priority. Looking at the experiences of towns around us, we see losses of the town halls in Barre and Petersham, as well as the recent loss of the Inn in Paxton. Wish though we may, the possibility of fire is always with us, and we need to take the threat seriously.
4. Kitchen - Some uses would require a caterer’s kitchen. We need to be able to serve refreshments and some level of food service.



5. Front Entryway - We still have the original front doors that were in the building. An effort should be made to incorporate them into a reproduction of the original entryway. The original entry, consistent with the period, comprised a stairway on each side, both up and down. Stairway trim originally included wide pine wainscoting applied horizontally and at an angle on the stairs. The original fan that was above the portico is also still in good shape. A number of examples of these features can be seen in buildings in this area, including the church across the street which also involved John Springer, designer and builder of this 1835 Town Hall, as chair of the building committee in 1842. The suggestion has been made by several architects that we should consider working to 1835 configurations in changes we make in the 1st floor, and 1890 configurations in changes we make in the upstairs. It is not expected that the building be restored in its entirety, but that we work in the right direction.

Apply for available grants, secure bids, secure funds, and contract for work to be done.

Constraints

Legal

For purposes of the building code, the Old Town Hall is categorized as a partially preserved building because it is listed on the State Inventory of Historic Places as a contributing building to the Sterling Center Historic District. There are generally few building code-mandated requirements for partially preserved buildings. They are exempted from energy code requirements for new buildings, including the stretch energy code, although the design for renovations seeks to improve the energy efficiency of the historic building envelope and systems.

Historical

Character defining features refer to the significant observable and experiential aspects of a building that define its architectural power and personality. They are critically important considerations whenever repairs or alterations are contemplated. Inappropriate changes to historic features can undermine the historical and architectural significance of the building, sometimes irreparably. Retaining a structure's integrity is essential to eligibility for National Register of Historic Places status and for preservation grants such as Save America's Treasures, the Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund, and Community Preservation Act funds.

This section² of the report describes how work performed on historic buildings should be approached in order to respect and preserve those elements that define their historic and architectural character. The character defining features of the Old Town Hall identified in this report should be retained and preserved when possible. Repairs, maintenance, and renovations at the Town Hall should be guided by the significance of the building and site as framed by the National Register of Historic

Places and their character defining features. The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties should be used as a guide. The Standards provide advice on the



preservation and protection of cultural resources and recognize four building treatments: Preservation, Rehabilitation, Restoration and Reconstruction.

The first three are relevant to this project and are defined below.

PRESERVATION is defined “as the act or process of applying measures necessary to sustain the existing form, integrity, and materials of an historic property. Work, including preliminary measures to protect and stabilize the property, generally focuses upon the ongoing maintenance and repair of historic materials rather than extensive replacement and new construction. New exterior additions are not within the scope of this treatment; however, the limited and sensitive upgrading of mechanical, electrical and plumbing systems and other code-required work to make properties functional is appropriate within a Preservation project.”

REHABILITATION is defined “as the act or process of making possible a compatible use for a property through repair, alterations, and additions while preserving those portions or features which convey its historical, cultural or architectural values.”

RESTORATION is defined “as the act or process of accurately depicting the form, features, and character of a property as it appeared at a particular period of time by means of the removal of features from other periods in its history and reconstruction of missing features from the restoration period. The limited and sensitive upgrading of mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems and other code-required work to make properties functional is appropriate within a restoration project.”

APPLICATION OF THE STANDARDS

Structural Systems: Minimal Intervention, Compatibility and Reversibility

Working with historic construction involves the careful balance of modern engineering principles and traditional construction methods to meet established preservation objectives. The principle of minimal intervention seeks to “do no harm” to the structure by overzealous efforts to upgrade structural systems to meet modern building code requirements. Stabilization and strengthening schemes should address life safety imperatives without compromising the original historic fabric by minimizing changes to the structure’s materials and appearance and retaining as much of the existing materials as possible.

Stabilization efforts must be physically and aesthetically compatible with the original building materials and design concept. New materials must be chosen for compatibility with existing materials to match physical and mechanical properties such as strength, stiffness, porosity, density, vapor transmission, thermal conductivity, etc. Materials compatibility will assure consistent performance and response to applied loads and environmental conditions.

When structural interventions are required to meet minimum life safety code requirements, they should be designed to be reversible. This means that they may be removed in the future without major compromise to the historic building fabric and do not interfere with or prevent future efforts to maintain the building.



Additions

Additions to a historic structure should be respectful and subordinate to the original building. Although the addition should possess similar mass, proportions and materials, and can feature complementary stylistic details, it should not replicate the original building.

Materials

When repairs are required, original building materials should be replaced in kind granite for granite, brick for brick, wood for wood, slate for slate. When traditional replacement materials are not available or are economically unfeasible, substitute materials that mimic the look, feel, and workability of original materials may be considered. Care should be taken when deciding to use a synthetic material, however, since modern products may interface poorly with traditional building materials, offer limited longevity versus traditional materials, and often exhibit color shifts and other deteriorative changes.

Wood Windows, Doors & Trim

Wood windows and doors are character defining features and essential contributing elements to a historic building's distinctive appearance. Repairing and weatherizing existing wood doors and windows is always the preferred approach for historic buildings and provides energy efficiency comparable to replacement elements.

When windows have exceeded their useful lives and retention is not practical or economically feasible, an approach that combines repairing old windows where possible and introducing new windows where necessary is recommended. Where original windows cannot be salvaged, historically appropriate, high quality wood windows with pane configurations matching the originals and true divided lights are acceptable.

Wood trim, both exterior and interior, should be similarly retained and preserved.

Masonry

Brick and stone elements should be replaced with matching material. For example, cast stone, which differs from natural stone in appearance, texture and workability, is not an appropriate substitute for natural material.

An appropriate mortar formula should be established and adopted for all repointing campaigns. Clear records of the mortar mix, proportions of tinting pigments and the application technique, including the final strike, should be documented in the building owner's maintenance records. Actual mortar samples should be retained with the records along with a sample panel on the building.

Slate Roofing

Modern roofing materials cannot rival the distinctive appearance, durability and longevity of slate. With careful maintenance, roofs constructed of particularly durable varieties of slate have life spans of more than a century. Like materials should be used whenever possible when repairs or replacement of slate roofs are required, and craftspeople skilled in the techniques needed to properly install historic slate roofs should be employed. The use of synthetic slate materials, which are aesthetically inferior and short-lived compared to true slate, is not recommended.



Paint Finishes

Original paint formulations and colors are character-defining elements that are often lost over time because the paint materials themselves are relatively short-lived. When repainting is necessary to preserve the integrity of the envelope, the colors chosen should be appropriate to the style and setting of the building. If the intent is to reproduce the original colors or those from a significant period in the building's history, they should be based on the results of a scientific paint analysis.

Traditional lead-based paints, which offer excellent longevity, durability and color stability, are no longer available in the United States. The highest quality latex-based paints available should be employed instead, after thorough surface preparation and priming. Permanent vinyl or ceramic liquid coating systems are damaging to wood siding and historically inappropriate.

Preservation Restriction

A 5-year preservation restriction held by the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) was placed on the 1835 Old Town Hall in 2005 as a requirement of grant funding. This means that all changes to the building exterior must be reviewed and approved by MHC. The process for project notification, review and approval is described on the MHC website at <http://www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc/mhcrevcom/revcomidx.htm>.

Preservation of the character defining features and architectural integrity of the building should be of paramount concern for the building's stewards.

Preservation of Exterior Character-Defining Features

Roofing

The original roof of the Town Hall was probably wood shingle, replaced at some point with more durable slate (a common practice for early public buildings). When next faced with the need for roof replacement, the building stewards may consider either wood shingle or slate as historically appropriate. Asphalt shingle roofing is an acceptable substitute for historic roofing material when an economical solution is desired. Simulated slate is not recommended as it is expensive and not longlived.

Wood Siding, Windows, Doors and Trim

All wood materials should be retained and maintained. Replacement wood shutters, appropriately sized and configured, should be installed in place of the aluminum shutters currently in storage. The original triangular louvered vent in the tympanum at the facade should be restored and reinstated. The original double-leafed front doors, now in storage, should be restored.

Masonry

The stone and brick foundation walls and granite steps should be retained and repaired as needed. An appropriate mortar formula should be developed and documented for use in future repointing campaigns.



Preservation of the Interior Plan & Character-Defining Features

The second floor (the Assembly Room) should retain its plan and original spatial dimensions along with its trim, wainscot and doors. The dropped ceiling should be removed and the balcony revealed as an historic artifact. The first floor has been significantly redesigned and most of its original finishes have been removed, so it can be freely reinterpreted. Existing wood elements should be retained and restored, including restoring the original configuration of the staircase in the northwest corner. The building interior and its constituent materials should be carefully documented, both photographically and with a written narrative, prior to any interventions.

Parking

There is limited parking in the center of Sterling which causes some difficulty in access and building utilization for all buildings in the center of Town including the Town Hall. The parking that is available along the sides of the Town Hall is not recommended during winter months when snow build up on the roof threatens parked cars.

Universal Access

The greatest challenge at the Old Town Hall is to render the building fully accessible as required by the Massachusetts Architectural Access Board. There are currently two entrances into the building, one at the front and one at the rear. The front entrance is inaccessible and the rear has been made accessible through the construction of a large concrete ramp. The only other doorway into Old Town Hall is an emergency exit located on a stair landing on the West side of the building. Currently there is no elevator in the building which prevents communication from the first to second floor. The basement level is also inaccessible; however, present use of this space as mechanical space allows it to be this way. The second floor assembly hall also has a balcony and raised stage which present further vertical access challenges.

The assembly hall is serviced by a single staircase at the northwest corner of the building and a steel fire escape at the west side of the building. The current building code no longer recognizes exterior fire escapes as an acceptable means of egress, although it does allow existing fire escapes to remain in use.

Exterior

- Reroof with slate or wood shingle as the preferred historic materials. Asphalt shingle or metal roofing would have no historic integrity but would be less costly.
 - Install rail type snow retention system along eaves above entries.
 - Install new supplemental truss framing and purlins below existing to strengthen roof framing. These would be visible in the Meeting Hall but would allow removal of the acoustical tile flat ceiling and revealing the historic ceiling height. The trusses would be encased to create architectural elements. The tie rods would remain, but new sag bars would be installed that would be more architectural.
 - Repair and reinstall the louvered vent at the pediment and the original double entry doors with sidelights. These actions will help restore the building's Greek Revival character.
-



- Repoint the granite steps and repair or replace cracks the concrete slab.
- Cut and repoint all foundation stones.
- Repoint the granite foundation.
- Constructing of a combination of a sloped walkway and ramp to provide access to the front entrance of the building. Also

Interior - Basement

- Replace damaged piers with hollow steel columns.
- Reinforce framing beams as required.
- Repoint foundation walls
- Upgrade the electrical service to support air conditioning and an elevator.
- Upgrade the fire alarm system and install a sprinkler system.
- Install a permanent dehumidifier.

Interior – First Floor

- Sister the joists as required with new framing.
- Remove dropped ceiling.
- Restore original staircase configuration and finishes.
- Replace restrooms with new, code complaint accessible facilities.

Interior Second Floor

- Remove dropped ceiling to create “cathedral” space.
- Refinish wood floor.
- Refresh paint finishes as required

End 2012 Rehabilitation Study

2012 ANNUAL REPORT

The 1835 Town Hall Committee is moving forward to the goal of accessibility and restoration to implement its use as a Community Center as voted at the 2011 Town Meeting. This past year we have been working with Menders, Torrey and Spencer architects to achieve the design and code objectives at the most reasonable price. Seven design schemes have been drafted and examined. The final choice puts an enclosed elevator and stairway generally in the location of the existing iron fire escape.

The 2012 Town meeting voted funds for the repair and restoration of the windows, including effective weather seals and restoration of the balances for ease of operation. This project has been advertised for bids and the successful bid came in at \$34,400.00.

A visible setback was a warning by a roofer, who did not get up on the roof, that tiles might fall from the roof. Maintenance had been performed in 2010 at a cost of about \$3600.00. Temporary barriers were place around the sides of the building. Closer investigation by a qualified slate roofer found no danger; no tiles have been observed on the ground. In response to the concerns another \$3500 was spent to inspect and repair all potential slate hazards. All



agree that the roof, now 120 years old, needs replacement or it will continue to need repairs. This replacement will be a part of the accessibility and restoration project.

The committee also investigated costs to connect the septage to the Sterling Fire Department as originally required for the permitting of the Fire Station. An article for \$87,700.00 was placed on the warrant for the November Special Town Meeting. The article was tabled by motion of the 1835 Town Hall Committee as it was felt it would be better to present the septic plan as a part of the accessibility and restoration project rather than asking the voters to fund it piecemeal.

In December the Committee completed arrangements for the Sheriff's Department Community Service crew to paint much of the interior of the hall. Work is to commence in January 2013 and should be done by the time of publication of the annual Report.

The Recreation Department and the Veterans' office are presently housed in the 1835 building; current records show more than 5500 individual uses annually. Two thirds of this use is for Recreation activities and one third is for other groups, clubs and functions. We are looking forward to the time when we can fully use the upstairs auditorium with access for all. We invite all residents to visit the building and encourage you to feel welcome to use this attractive and unique Sterling meeting space.

For the 1835 Town Hall Committee,
Vern Gaw

1835 Town Hall Maintenance Protocol

January 30, 2012

1. The mission of the 1835 Town Hall Committee is to refurbish, restore, preserve and protect Sterling's historic 1835 Town Hall and oversee its use as a community center for open public meeting space as originally intended.
 2. The Committee shall, during the course of their meetings, establish an annual maintenance schedule relative to the 1835 Town Hall.
 3. The following activities are to be conducted under the auspices of the town Facilities Maintenance Technician at his discretion with his funding.
 - Annual septic maintenance
 - Annual heating system tune-up
 - Annual alarm testing
 - Annual installation / removal of ac units
 - Annual building safety inspection (with Building Inspector)
 - Annual roof inspection (for insurance documentation purposes)
 - Monthly facility check
 - Monthly emergency lighting check
 4. The maintenance schedule shall attempt to identify annual maintenance requirements and anticipated costs.
-



5. The maintenance budget shall be spent on actual maintenance and preservation, under the control of the 1835 Town Hall Committee, with sensitivity to historical accuracy.
6. The Facilities Maintenance Technician shall be responsible for code compliance, with the advice and consent of the 1835 Town Hall Committee. He will provide a reasonable notice to the 1835 Committee of pending inspections. In the event of a code compliance issue, he shall notify the 1835 Committee in writing of the issue.
7. The 1835 Town Hall Committee will vote and sign appropriate warrants at their regular monthly meeting. The Committee Chairman shall be notified by e-mail when invoices are received at the Butterick Building.
8. Emergency work and repairs will be funded by the 1835 Town Hall Committee up to \$250.00 without prior approval. The Committee is to be promptly notified of all such work by phone, e-mail, or in person.
9. Any proposed non-code repairs shall require the advice and approval of the 1835 Town Hall Committee
10. Warrants against the maintenance account for any repairs, are to be issued for payment by the 1835 Committee.

Letter regarding Septic

July 18, 2012

Mr. Gaw,

I was able to pull the original design plan done in June of 2004, Title 5 was revised in April of 2006. So there are some significant changes to the regulations since this system was designed. However, since the soils were soil evaluated, hopefully most of the changes are process related.

Some information: The is located in a mapped Zone II, water supply protection area, which limits nitrogen applications. The whole leach field was designed for a maximum flow of 1,867 gallons per day without pre-treatment, 1952 gpd, with enhanced nitrogen removal. The Fire Station has a flow of 1,087 gallons per day. The reserve capacity was calculated as 260 people in a meeting space at 3 gpd/seat = 780 gpd.

Note 1835 capacity is 865 gpd with treatment, 775 gpd without. Should we just cut capacity slightly and forego the Nitrogen system? Have discussed with bill Murray. More to come.

The proposed nitrogen removal system was a micro-FAST 3.0 (FAST= Fixed Activated Sludge Treatment). The company still makes these units, but the performance criteria has changed. I am awaiting a response back from them currently.



Until I get a response back, I will not be able to give you timelines or costs. Naturally we are researching other treatment systems, but this one was selected as it is a drop-in to the original design.

In regard to pre-treatment only at the old town hall, that won't work, as the entire flow regime needs to have enhanced nitrogen removal, not just the flows from the town hall.

If you would like to visit the office this afternoon to look over the old plans and information, just give me a holler. I'll be here until 4: 30 PM, today.

Bill Murray

William E. Murray, ASLA, APA, CLARB

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2013

2013 Annual Report

The 1835 Town Hall Committee completed a number of improvements and repairs in 2013. Much of the contracting and work itself was handled by volunteers at no cost to the town. The availability of maintenance funding each year has made it possible to fund materials for the volunteers' work.

In January the Sheriff's department provided painters who painted most of the interior, with the town providing paint and tools. The work took 3 weeks from start to finish. While the first floor was in need of much touchup, the upstairs had not been painted for nearly 40 years.

Following the painting Troop 189 Boy Scouts helped clean up and moved furnishings back into place and the upstairs hardwood floors were waxed and buffed.

The committee has been working on final details from Menders Torrey and Spencer Architects, who have done an extensive design to provide full plans addressing the building's needs including accessibility and fire protection. The architects presented their report to the board of



Selectmen on July 17. Among critical factors are the strength of the roof structure and the condition of the roof.

Cindy Secord, Ken Stidsen, Beth Steurman and Paul Cormier resigned this year. We want to thank them publicly for their diligence and hard work in helping to bring the 1835 Town Hall to its far improved condition today and working through the myriad details of the architectural design. Jo-Ann Cummings,

Bob Mckay Jones and Phil Nash have joined to help round out the now 7-member committee, with one seat as yet unfilled.

A \$34,400.00 contract with Brian Patch of Plan B construction for window restoration and sealing was signed in January and a start date of April 1 was scheduled. Due to cold weather the start was moved ahead to June 1. The contractor got off to a slow start and by the October 15 deadline was not finished.

The windows were back in place by mid November, but without a correct deleading certification and without installation of balances, seals and delead woodwork. We are pressing for completion through the Town Administrator and pursuing what remedies are available to the town.

A \$20,000.00 contract for cellar masonry restoration and repair was awarded to Sterling masonry, with a start date of September 23 and completion required by November 22. New cellar windows were installed by a committee volunteer and masonry completed. We are happy to report that Joe Day and his crew did an excellent job and finished on time. The whole building is much tighter so we hope to save on heating costs.

In November work commenced on a rear door keypad lock and installation was completed in December, giving us much better control over access and eliminating a "boatload" of keys. During the installation it was observed the door closer had loosened up. A committee member repaired it at no cost.

The exterior skin of the 1st floor fire escape door had deteriorated badly and a waterproof plywood overlay has been installed at cost by a committee member.

Next year we plan to replace several nearly 40 year old carpets, paint the South side and take a hard look at roof repairs... and whatever else comes along!

Respectfully submitted,
Vernon Gaw, Chair

2014

2014 Annual Report

The 1835 Town Hall Committee continued work on window restoration after the initial contractor chosen by competitive bidding failed to fulfill the requirements. The remaining work, primarily seals and balances, was put out to bid in June and the successful bidder was Robert



Barwise. Mr. Barwise has done an excellent job of restoration including repairs to weights and access pockets. At the end of the year the windows were tight and manageable and the final cost was \$8293.00 less than the initial estimates.

Danielle Ray joined the 1835 Town Hall Committee in April, replacing Beth Stuerman, who has done huge amounts of work in the past few years. We give our deepest thanks to Beth for her many contributions. Danielle will be helping us with many projects and has brought us a Facebook presence. In addition Robert McKay Jones has organized an excellent booklet on the Historical evolution of 1835 Town Hall, which was built as a Community Center and has been voted to remain so.

The town meeting voted in May to make the 1835 Town Hall Committee a permanent advisory committee. The Board of Selectmen have pressed to have the town Maintenance Manager more involved and several second-half projects have benefited from his help. While previous Boards of selectmen have pressed the volunteers of the 1835 Town Hall Committee to complete projects, acting as advisory has allowed the committee to focus on Historical integrity of improvements.

Window air conditioning units have been an ongoing headache (backache) and it was suggested we purchase portable rollabout units that connect with 2 large hoses to the windows. The results have been excellent and problems with bird nests under the AC window units are eliminated. We have been required by DCR to replace toilets with low-flow units, which initially did not work well. After updating the pressure regulators for the building and replacing the toilets yet again (at vendor cost) all are working well.

New carpets were installed in May in room 1, the Recreation office and the Veteran's Agent office, replacing 30+ year old carpets.

Some critical clapboard replacement has been done preparatory to painting but time and height above the ground has made it difficult to complete repairs on a volunteer basis. We hope to secure help from the Sherriff's department to paint the south side, but lead tests have shown there is lead paint, and the sheriff's department is not an authorized Lead removal contractor. We are looking for ways to get the scraping and repairs done by a certified contractor.

The old slate roof (some parts as old as 125 years) has long needed replacement and the Board of Selectmen along with the Town Administrator, Maintenance technician and 1835 Town Hall Committee have worked together to find a solution. A major problem has been a series of structural weaknesses over the years as well as snow slides and ice dams. Spencer Vogt architects and Structures North engineers prepared a plan of action in the 2012-2013 Rehabilitation study. We have been working to find a solution for the roof and roof structure within the financial scope of the Town Budget and hope to be able to proceed with this critical need in FY2016.

This report would not be complete without our thanks to all the Town staff for their help and especially our janitor, Paul, for his unstinting work in keeping the 1835 clean and accessible.



Respectfully Submitted,
Vernon Gaw, Chair

Report to The Board of Selectmen

Date: October 16, 2014

To: The Board of Selectmen, Town of Sterling

From: The 1835 Town Hall Committee

Subject: Historical Review of Town Hall and the 1835 Town Hall Committee

There are two ways to view the 1835 Town Hall, the first is as a mere building. The second is as the historical and cultural landmark standing at the center of our town for near on two centuries. It has been the view of the 1835 Town Hall Committee and was the view of the Selectmen that empowered the Committee that our Town Hall is a testament to our history and heritage and should continue to be a useful and vibrant beacon overlooking our town common and our community.

That said, in order to properly discuss the 1835 Town Hall and the Committee charged with its care, it is important to fully understand the history of the Town Hall, its usage over the past half century and the effectiveness of the volunteers that support the 1835 Town Hall Committee.

Through the 1970's, 80's and 90's, the Town Hall was used for town offices, selectmen's office and meeting rooms. It has gone through periods of extensive modifications over the years to suit that purpose. The addition of dropped ceilings, partitions and fluorescent lighting; the replacement of bathrooms and stairway; and an improved heating system were all required. In 1997, the Butterick School, replaced by the Houghton – Chocksett School, was repurposed and became the Town Municipal building. As such, the Town offices relocated from the Town Hall to the Butterick Municipal Building leaving the old Town Hall without a tenant and for a moment, without a purpose.

The condition of the old Town Hall was disheveled. Carpeting was missing, windows broken, paint was chipping, ceiling tiles missing and trash abounding. The Town had to do something to save the old Town Hall. Recognizing the urgency of the problem, the Selectmen commissioned the Old Town Hall Committee to find a solution. The Sterling Historical Commission along with the newly formed committee conducted a study to determine the buildings long-term use. In 2001, the 1835 Town Hall Committee was formed by the Town to plan and coordinate maintenance and facilitate the use of the building.

A huge undertaking ensued. Twenty six truckloads of rubbish were removed, temporary walls were taken down from both the first and second floors, open meeting space was created on both levels, floors were repaired and carpeted, broken windows and window panes were repaired, roof repairs were done, unwanted articles were removed and auctioned, the building



was furnished by recycling items from the school and library renovations, walls were patched and painted, and tile and wooden floors were cleaned and waxed. This work was done with a small annual maintenance budget, a lot of elbow grease by committee members, community volunteers and frequent requests to the boy scouts and girl scouts. After a significant amount of work, the space was finally ready for use by any group or member of the community that needed it.

In 2005 the town, aided by a grant from the state, commissioned an "Architectural/Structural Assessment and Feasibility Study for Universal Accessibility of the Sterling 1835 Town Hall". The study found that the building was structurally sound, needed some immediate maintenance and provided a plan for accessibility. The immediate maintenance included roof repairs, furnace and chimney repairs, painting of the exterior, replacing storm windows, repairs to the exterior plaster on the portico, and reglazing of the window panes. This work has been completed with the exception of the painting of one side of the building. One of the reasons for the study was to determine the best way to provide universal accessibility to the second floor. The study suggested an addition to the side of the building to house an elevator. The plan is to complete the painting on the right side of the building once the addition is complete.

Over the last few years, the building has provided a temporary home for a number of public services: EMS 2002-2003, Library 2003-2004, Fire Department 2004-2005 and the DPW 2007-2008 while their facilities were being renovated. It is currently home to the town recreation department, as well as the Veterans Office. Community and nonprofit functions are held here and it is often rented for private functions.

It is used regularly by scouting groups, 4-H, town committees, guitar lessons, a children's music program and hosts various community clubs. Periodic events such as the Candidates Forum, cultural events, and informational presentations are also held here.

In 2012, a detailed rehabilitation, preservation and restoration plan was prepared which protected the original significance of the structure and comply with the preservation restriction placed on the old Town Hall by the Massachusetts Historical Commission in 2005. It also included the addition of an elevator to provide universal access, kitchen to support meetings, dinners, and social events, new compliant bathrooms, installation of a much needed sprinkler system, removal of 2nd floor dropped ceiling returning the cathedral space to the great hall and much more.

This plan was presented to the Board of Selectmen by the Committee in a presentation July 2013. The Board of Selectman decided to table the proposal lacking a plan and associated cost to tie in the Town Hall septic into the Fire Station septic as was originally planned.

The 1835 Town Hall Committee continues to maintain and preserve the space for use by the community and it is currently researching ways to obtain the funds needed for the accessibility renovations, building restorations and roof reinforcement in conjunction with opening up the great hall ceiling. It is researching grant opportunities along with creating a non-profit entity to



promote and secure donations. We have created a web site (www.sterling1835townhall.org) to support these efforts and provide information about the Town Hall, its history and usability.

The mission of the 1835 Town Hall Committee remains the same; to refurbish, restore and maintain Sterling's prominent 1835 Town Hall and oversee its use as a community center for open public meeting space as originally intended.

Respectfully Submitted,

1825 Town Hall Committee

Vernon Gaw, Chair
Joanne Drown
Ronald Pichierri
Robert McKay Jones
Danielle Ray
Phil Nash

2015

Annual Report 2015

It was a year of transition for the 1835 Town Hall Committee. Vern Gaw resigned from the Committee mid-year and was succeeded by Robert McKay Jones as Chair. The Committee is extremely indebted to Vern for his persistence and dedication for more than a dozen years helping nurture the Town Hall back to life with purpose and beauty insuring it will continue to stand proudly at the center of our common and community for many years to come. Vern was instrumental in accomplishing great things and will continue to be a valued resource as we continue to maintain and care for the building.

This has also been a year of progress. David Gibbs and Rob Barwise have joined the committee providing a high level of expertise on historical, architectural and structural aspects of the Town Hall. The Committee now has an enviable base of knowledge and experience providing insight and guidance.

A three-member Building Sub-Committee and a two-member Historical Review Sub-Committee were established to foster productive working sessions to research, evaluate and discuss restoration alternatives and provide the Committee with considered recommendations. Number one on the list of projects to be undertaken is the restoration of the roof structure and sheathing and opening up of the great hall.

The Committee is working very closely with the Town Facilities Maintenance Technician, Tom Rutherford, for the general care and maintenance of the Town Hall. The Committee thanks Tom



for his enthusiasm and interest in keeping the Town Hall safe and in good condition. We have had several productive meetings and have agreed on specific actions.

Sean Hamilton and the Sterling Municipal Light Department removed the unsightly telephone pole that has been at the side of the Town Hall for many years. Sean was able to organize a team of people including Town employees and outside companies to finally rid us of this eyesore. The Light Department is also working to replace the old florescent lighting with new efficient and attractive LED lighting on the first floor of the Town Hall. The Committee is very grateful for their support.

The Town Hall painting project was completed with the south side exterior wall scraped and painted. The Committee wishes to thanks the Sheriff's Department for their assistance. We continue to have the exterior in our sites and have made plans to repair, clean and paint the Doric columns and entry portico.

The Sterling Historical Commission and the 1835 Town Hall Committee procured and proudly mounted a beautiful plaque for the Town Hall commemorating:

**This property has been placed on the
National Register of Historic Places by the United States Department of the Interior
Site of the First Town House in Worcester County 1800
The Original Town House was moved and this building erected in 1835**

The Committee is grateful to Kristin Deitel and the Recreation Department for being great day-to-day stewards of the Town Hall. They schedule all meetings, events and reservations and organize all of the varied building uses. This past holiday season, the Town Hall was adorned with charming decorations and holiday music welcoming all visitors and passersby's from the portico of the Town Hall.

The Committee is excited about the prospects for progress in the coming year and thank the people of the Town of Sterling and the Board of Selectmen for their ongoing support of this beautiful and historic landmark.

Respectfully Submitted,
Robert McKay Jones, Chair



Community

A plan for the Town Hall cannot be conceived without understanding the sense of community that the building represents and holds for the inhabitants of Sterling, Massachusetts. The Town you live in molds your sense of place. It grounds you. It fills you with something difficult to describe, something no one can ever take away. A reverence, a respect. It is home. The Sterling Town Hall is at the center of our community and has been for nearly two centuries. It is a monument to that sense of community.

There are sociological and psychological explanations for people to feel a sense of community. It has been the basis for civilization for thousands of years. A sense of community provides participants personal feelings of belonging and value to others. There are some basic truths that support that sense of community¹.

Membership: a sense of belonging, personal relatedness, investment of the self, feeling the right to belong, being a part of the community, boundaries including identifying people who belong and people who don't belong, emotional safety (through belonging), feelings of acceptance, willingness to sacrifice for the group, identification with the group, sharing common symbols, and personal investment.

Influence: mattering, individual members making a difference to the group and the group having an influence on its members, conformity, members having a say in what happens in the group, consensual validation, closeness.

Integration & Fulfillment of Needs: feeling that members' needs will be met by resources of the group and through membership, reinforcement, rewarding to members, status of membership, group success, group and individual competence, "person-environment fit," serve individual's needs by belonging, shared values, members are able and willing to help one another and receive help in return.

Shared Emotional Connection: the commitment and belief that the community has (and will continue to share) a history, common places, shared events, time together, and similar experiences; positive experiences among group members; relationships and bonds between members; completed tasks; shared importance of events/tasks; investment (time, money, intimacy); emotional risk between members; honors, rewards and humiliation by the community have an impact on members; spiritual bonds.

¹Dr. Jenny Fremlin <http://www.senseofcommunityresearch.org/research/updates/identifying-concepts-that-build-a-sense-of-community>



Needs Assessment

Goals

Programs

Funding

Management

Action Plan



Appendices

Drawing of original staircase (credit: Vern Gaw)

