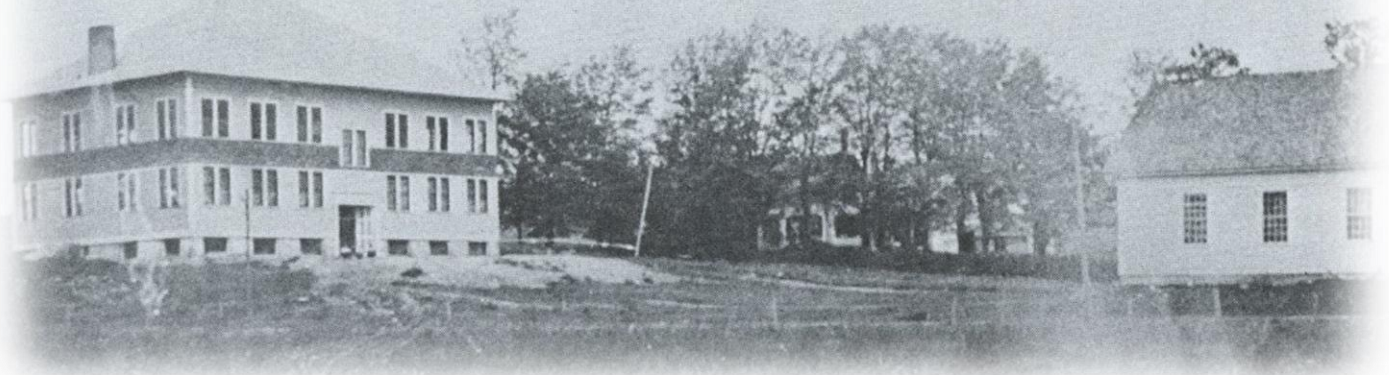


Greensboro Grange Building Greensboro, Vermont

Initial Building Assessment and Overview of Potential Uses



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Introduction

The purpose of this initial Building Assessment and Overview of Potential Uses, authorized by the Greensboro Selectboard in May 2024, is to evaluate the existing so-called Greensboro Grange building as a first step towards determining the potential of converting the existing historic building into the new facility for the Town's municipal offices, as well as examining potential uses of the property. At this time the building is used seasonally for occasional community group gatherings and annual community art exhibition purposes.

Property Location and Description

The property in question is owned by the Town of Greensboro, Vermont; and is located on the westerly side of Craftsbury Road; Tax Map 23, Lot 74; in the "(Greensboro Village) Village District" zoning district. The E911 address of the property is 9 Craftsbury Road.

There is on file in the Town Clerk's office a survey map of the property, prepared by Muirux Surveys, Inc., for the Town of Greensboro, Vermont, dated April 8, 2015. The lot area is 0.196 acres. The deed for the property is filed in Book 49, Page 443 of the Town of Greensboro land records. The lot borders on Craftsbury Road, on its easterly border, and Church Lane on its southerly border. Craftsbury Road is a public highway that is 3-rods wide (approximately 49-feet). Church Lane is a private way, not a town owned or otherwise controlled public access way, that is 36-feet wide and owned by the property located at 114 Church Lane. On the westerly and northerly sides of the property the lot also borders the property at 114 Church Lane. For all intents and purposes, the Town's "Grange Lot" is surrounded on three sides by the single lot property located at 114 Church Lane. It appears that in 1912 when the Lot was created for the Grange, it was an out-parcel from the land at 114 Church Lane.

The property is rectangular in shape with a slight taper along Craftsbury Road. Since the lot configuration has an almost north-south orientation, like Craftsbury Road, for purposes of this discussion, the front of the lot, and the building on the lot, will be considered to be easterly facing. The dimensions of the lot are: 71.5-feet along the Craftsbury Road front easterly boundary; 139-feet plus or minus along the Church Lane southerly side boundary; 67-feet along the westerly rear boundary; and 114.91-feet along the northerly side boundary. The lot contains 0.196-acres.

Although no soil sampling has been done by this writer or others, by visual observation it appears that there are noticeable wetland conditions at the rear westerly and northerly sides of the lot, adjacent to the existing building. These wetland conditions appear to extend for a considerable distance onto the adjacent property at 114 Church Lane.

Property History

According to information contained in *The History of Greensboro; The First Two Hundred Years*, published in 1990 by the Greensboro Historical Society, as well as in the Town's land records, we know the following about the Grange property.

The Caspian Lake Grange #282 was first organized in 1876, five years after the Grange movement was first organized statewide in Vermont. About 1910 Grange member Myron Kinney offered to create a building lot for the Caspian Lake Grange so that it could have a facility of its own. After a year or two of discussion about holding dances, or not, on the proposed property, November 20, 1912, the Caspian Lake Grange acquired the present vacant lot from Myron Kinney. March 4, 1913, the Grange purchased from the Town of Greensboro, for \$310, the so-called "Old Town House", located on the adjacent easterly side of Craftsbury Road, at its intersection with Barton Road. At that time, the former Town House building was moved across the road and became the new home for the Caspian Lake Grange.

Through much of the twentieth century the Grange movement thrived in Vermont, and in Greensboro, to the point where a second grange, the Greensboro Valley Grange, was organized in Greensboro Bend, in the 1910's. It is well documented that through many years and decades the Caspian Lake Grange was a center point of civic activity in Greensboro, and the home to other community civic organizations in town.

By the end of the Twentieth Century the Grange movement in Vermont, and in much of the nation, had declined to the point of being almost nonexistent. Therefore, June 28, 2012, ownership of the property was transferred to the Town of Greensboro, and the Caspian Lake Grange, as an organization, ceased to exist.

Building Description

The present former grange hall building is of wood frame construction, single-story with a rectangular configuration, with overall exterior dimensions of 30'-6" X 55'-2". Across the front of the building is a covered open porch with overall dimensions of 8'-0" X 30'-6". The gross square foot "footprint" area of the building main building and front porch is 1937 gross square feet. The front porch alone is about 245 square feet of footprint area. There is a full lower level under the entire main building that is accessed by an interior stair. A simple gable roof, with the ridge running in the east/west direction, of about 10/12 pitch, covers the main building. The front porch has a very low hipped roof across its entire length.

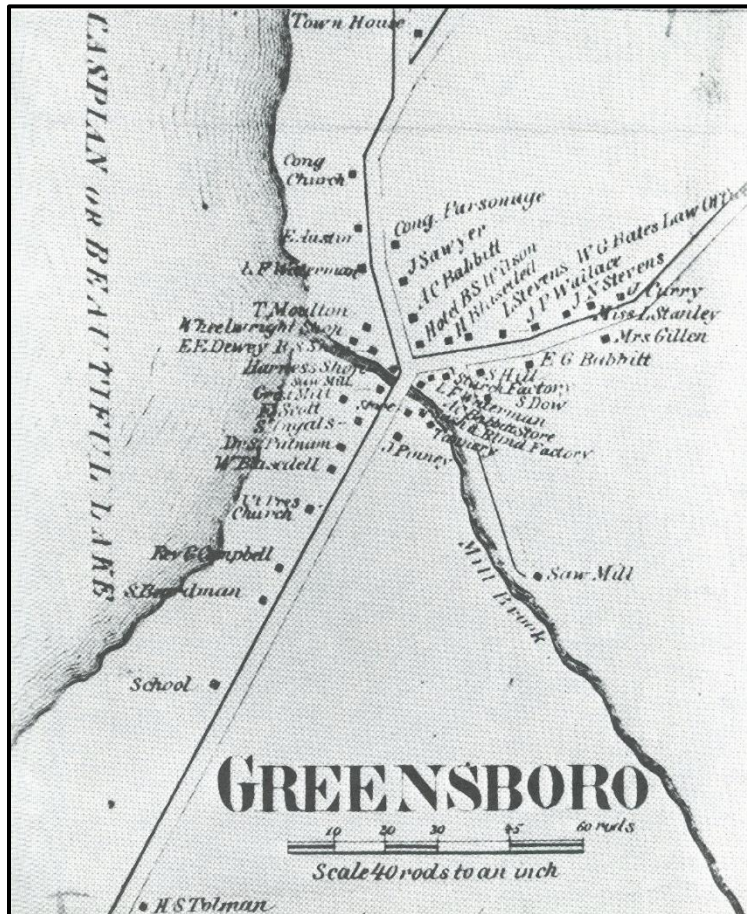


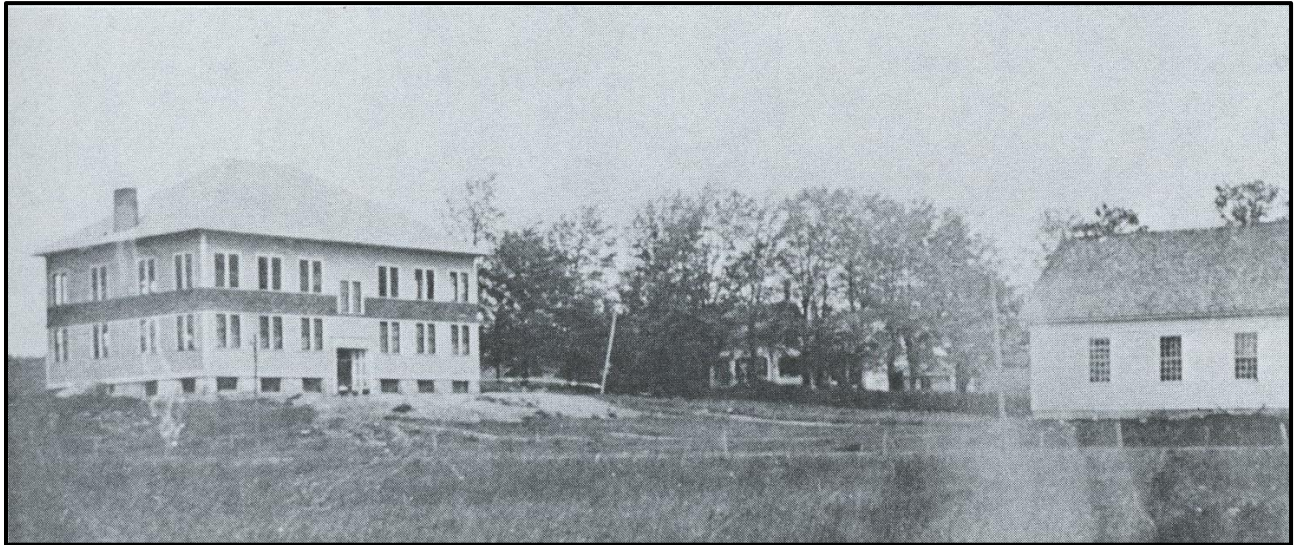
The easterly front of the building and the covered entry porch.

As noted above, the lot is less than a quarter of an acre in size, and the present building well occupies the majority of the area of the lot. In fact, along the southerly side of the property that borders Church Lane, the building is set back only about 12-feet from the edge of the property.

As mentioned above, the main building was originally located across Craftsbury Road and was Greensboro's "Town House" - the Town's primary meeting place where, among other events, Greensboro's annual town meeting was held every year. This writer has not been able to determine when exactly the Town House was first erected; however, it is clearly indicated and called out as such on the 1859 edition of Walling's Village Map of Greensboro, as well as Beer's 1878 map. As shown on both maps the building was originally located at the intersection of the two roads, as discussed above. On page 139 of the 1990 History of Greensboro book is a photograph of the new school building, erected in 1912 and opened the following year (still extant), and it shows a portion of the Town House prior to it being moved across the road to become the new grange facility.

**Walling's village map of Greensboro, Vermont. 1859.
Note the Town House location at the very top of the map.**





The new school is to the left and the Town House to the right, early 1913. Carefull examination of the photograph shows that the Town House has been temporarily lifted in preperation for being moved across the road.

Based upon this information, and the exterior architecture that is still evident with the present building, we can reasonably surmise the following.

The proportions, original exterior trim and window sash all suggest that this is a structure probably erected circa 1820 to 1840. Although the writer is not able to see any of the floor, exterior wall, or roof framing, the absence of interior corner posts, as well as the exterior wall thickness, indicate that this is not a heavy timber mortise and tenon structure, as was typical in the Colonial era and in the several decades that followed. When first constructed the first-floor area was an open assembly hall, and little else, with probably no other interior partitioning. The ceiling height is approximately 11'-6". In all probability, the original building, at its original location, did not have a basement level, but instead just a rough shallow crawl space under the entire floor area. Currently, there is a row of support columns that run east/west in the center of the lower level of the building. Most certainly, when the building was at its original setting, there were simple stone, rough laid piers within the crawl space at this center location, to provide support for the floor framing. Therefore, it's probable that the building is framed with a combination of sawn heavy timber framing and vertical wall stud studs, with timber framed roof trusses that clear span the entire 30-foot width of the building. Architectural historians often refer to this type and period of wood frame construction as "braced-frame construction". Furthermore, the exterior trim and proportions, that appears original to the building when it was first constructed, is of the pre-American civil war Greek Revival period of vernacular architecture that was very popular in Vermont during that period. Also, the building still retains its original 12-over-12 window sash, with 9" X 11 ½ "glass size, that most certainly is of this period.

It is clear that when the building was moved in 1913 and became the Grange hall, certain additions and alterations were made at that time to the building. Most notably was the addition of the covered front entry porch with its classical columns, and the creation of the lower-level floor area.

At the easterly end of the building, on the first floor, within the first 15 or so interior feet of the building, a new entry hall, stair to the lower level, a toilet room, and an anteroom room were constructed. Also the original windows openings within this front area of the building were made smaller and fit with new double hung sash with a 2-over-1 pattern. In the lower level of the building fixed two-lite single unit window sash was fitted that matches the upper pieces of sash on the main floor.

Within the main hall of the facility new vertical wood wainscotting, the top aligned with the window stools, was added. The interior doors and woodwork are also of this early twentieth century period. The current brick masonry chimney appears to be also of this same time period.

Overall, the historic integrity of the building is well intact and has not been altered or otherwise compromised. It could be said that the building “remains frozen in time”. The architectural character speaks of two distinct periods: First, the period when Greek Revival architecture was so prevalent in Vermont, before the American civil war; and second, the post-Victorian era when architectural tastes were becoming simpler again and more direct. From an architectural historian’s point of view, given what history is known about the facility, this is an interesting and important building that historically and architecturally remains largely intact and unaltered. It is an important piece of local and Vermont history



The southerly side of the building and Church Lane.



The easterly side and westerly backside of the building. Note the wide corner boards, the pronounced eave and gable rake trim and cornice returns, and the applied entablature trim beneath the eaves, and wide rake trim boards, all suggestive of Greek Revival architecture with a common Vermont vernacular flavor.

Building Condition

The building remains in use on a limited seasonal basis, and under these circumstances, there is nothing that this writer noted that presents an immediate hazard to the public's continued, although limited, seasonal use of the building as it presently exists. And assuming that it is not left to deteriorate due to future lack of a basic level of maintenance, the building and present use is, within reason, potentially "Grandfathered", to use a term. With that said, the Town has possible liability exposure due to the fact that the main floor of the building is not handicapped accessible thirty-four years after the passage of ADA legislation. More will be said about this below.

Assuming that the Town of Greensboro continues to own the property, and regardless of what future use might be made of the premises, there are certain present conditions that, as a minimum, should be addressed, as follows:

1. It is critically important that the entire building be temporarily lifted and new poured in place concrete foundations be installed at least on three (3) sides of the building (west, north, and east sides). This work should also include installing new, proper, subsurface foundation drainage, new interior column footings, and a new interior floor slab with proper new under slab materials and a vapor barrier. This is very important no matter what the future uses of the building might be. The present floor slab in the lower level has heaved and settled and is of no use to the building; and foundations appear to be in very poor condition on the west (rear), north (side), and east (front) sides of the building. This work will also require some amount of framing and carpentry replacement and repair. This work should be prepared by a Vermont licensed architect.
2. An architect licensed in the State of Vermont needs to prepare a plan that deals with the matter of providing proper handicapped access into the upper floor level of the building. Then a plan needs to be prepared for raising the necessary funds within the town budget, or by grants, to implement such work. It is important to keep in mind that not only is this a “public” building, as per the terms of the State of Vermont’s building codes are concerned, but it is also a building owned by the public. The ADA act became law in July 1990 – thirty-four years ago – and it is expected that public buildings, privately or publicly owned, become compliant. There might be grant funding for this planning work. In the meantime, there continues to be chance of legal exposure to the Town of Greensboro concerning this matter.
3. Where the existing toilet room is located on the first floor, with some minor modifications to existing adjacent walls, an ADA compliant unisex toilet room could be made. This work should be combined with other ADA related work outlined above. .
4. As unattractive as the front entrance step area of the existing building might appear, the step tread and riser dimensions are compliant with current building code standards, as are the existing handrails. At some point replacing the front steps and handrails with something more attractive and inviting appearance would be an improvement.

5. It is obvious that the existing metal roof has considerable age to it, although that might not be an issue in and of itself. The writer recommends that a qualified individual or company inspect the roof on both the main building and the porch, and points of flashing such as the masonry chimney and the point where the porch roof intersects the front gable wall. Any necessary repairs should be made.
6. As noted above, the brick masonry chimney appears to be original to the 1913 period of when the building was moved and remodeled. Looking from the ground it is obvious that the brick work is in need of repointing. A closer inspection might determine that the portion of the chimney above the roof needs to be taken down and rebuilt in kind. Were this to be the case, it is important that the overall design of the replacement chimney be replicated the existing and use as much of the existing brick as possible. If new brick is required, then it should match the existing as closely as possible.
7. As noted above, the window sash in the building is original; however, it is very much in need of attention. The large sash on the first floor is original to the initial Town House, and the sash on the front area and in the lower level is original to the 1913 move and renovations. Historic window sash repair and restoration is specialized work that should only be undertaken by qualified individuals or companies that specialize in such work.

Overall the condition of the historic building is fair, but it needs serious attention, as outlined above, no matter what the contemplated future uses of the property might be. It is this writer's strong opinion that the Town of Greensboro needs to start planning, in a capital budget, for the necessary and important work that this historic building is needing and deserving of. As a minimum, this will preserve the building and halt its deterioration. And, as importantly, will lessen the liability to the town concerning ADA compliance and accessibility.

Potential Future Uses of the Building

This writer first proposed to the Selectboard to undertake this initial study and prepare a report because of talk in town that the existing Grange building might someday become the Town's administrative town offices. As someone who has, over the course of many years, been involved in such work of historic building preservation, restoration, adaptive reuse, and municipal government, I thought that my perspective and background might be of value to the citizens of Greensboro as matters of potentially what to do with the historic property become discussed and considered. I will break this section of the report into two (2) subsections: land and site infrastructure considerations; and building code and other related considerations.

Land and Site Infrastructure Considerations

As previously noted above, the existing building presently occupies a 0.19-acre (8,270 square feet) parcel of land. This is less than ¼-acre. On three sides the land parcel is surrounded by a single private landowner. And on the remaining front side of the property is a major town owned highway. Furthermore, the land on the southerly side of the parcel is the private driveway access to the adjacent property. On the south side of the lot, the existing building is setback about 12-feet from Church Lane; and on the north side about 20-feet. In the front and rear the setbacks are similar. Therefore, any additional land to be used for building expansion or vehicular parking could only come from the adjacent parcel on the westerly or northerly sides of the lot (114 Church Lane). However, that adjacent area of land appears to be wetland that drains into Lake Caspian, and to use it for building expansion or parking would require some serious amount of draining and filling. This in turn would trigger a permitting process that could be costly and problematic. Furthermore, this situation presents serious obstacles to providing the building with a compliant, modern, on-site septic disposal system. It should be noted that the building does presently have a domestic water supply although this writer knows nothing about it. .

Building Code and Other Considerations

In the State of Vermont there are state-wide building codes that are administered by the Vermont State Fire Marshal's office, Division of Fire Safety. These codes concern all so-called "Public" buildings, that is buildings that are used by the public, be that privately or publicly owned. These codes are not applicable to one- and two-family residences. They are as follows:

- **Vermont 2012 Fire & Building Safety Code; 2015 Edition; including:**
 - *International Building Code, 2015 Edition (IBC) with Vermont amendments.*
 - *International Existing Building Code, 2015 edition (EIBC) with Vermont amendments.*
 - *NFPA 101 Life Safety Code, 2015 Edition with Vermont amendments.*
 - *NFPA 1 Fire Code, 2015 Edition with Vermont amendments.*
 - *NFPA 914, Code for the Protection of Historic Structures, 2010 Edition.*
 - *ASCE 7: Minimum Design Loads for Buildings and Other Structures, 2010 Edition.*
- **Vermont Plumbing Code Rules 2021; including:**
 - *International Plumbing Code, 2021 edition with Vermont amendments.*
- **Vermont Electrical Safety Rules 2020 Edition; including:**
 - *NFPA National Electrical Code, 2020 Edition with Vermont amendments.*
- **2020 Vermont Commercial Energy Code Book.**
- **2012 Vermont Access Rules (ADA); 2012 Edition.**

All of these codes have, to some degree, ramifications for this building were the use to change, were the building to be altered, or were the building to be expanded. Turning the building into municipal town offices is clearly a change of use from a long time established existing **Assembly Use** to a new **Business**

Use, or if the existing assembly use were to change to a new assembly use. Therefore, within reason, applicable sections of the list of codes above would come into play.

The Question of Sprinklers

Often, because of cost and logistics, when considering matters such as this, the question of automatic sprinklers becomes a topic of concern. The need for the installation of an automatic sprinkler system is a function of building use, building construction type, building gross floor area, and the number of stories. For the sake of this discussion, we will assume two (2) uses for the building, as per the International Building Code (IBC): The existing building “A-3 Assembly Use” (exhibition and dance hall, community use); and “B Business Use” (civic administration).

1. General Height and Area Limitation; IBC Table 504.3; *Allowable Building Height in Feet Above Grade Plane*; NS (not sprinklered); combustible construction Type VB:
 - a. A3 Assembly Use = 40-feet.
 - b. B Business Use = 40-feet.
2. General Height and Area Limitation; IBC Table 504.4; *Allowable Number Stories Above Grade Plane*; NS (not sprinklered); combustible construction Type VB:
 - a. A3 Assembly Use = 1 story.
 - b. B Business Use = 2 stories.
3. General Height and Area Limitation; IBC Table 504.4; *Allowable Area Factor in Square Feet*; NS (not sprinklered); combustible construction Type VB:
 - a. A3 Assembly Use = 6,000 s/f.
 - b. B Business Use = 9,000 s/f.

Consulting the NFPA 101 Life Safety Code, Chapter 13 *Existing Assembly Occupancies*, the question of sprinklers becomes somewhat more nuanced. Section 13.3.5 *Extinguishing Requirements* states that if the occupant load on the main level, based upon net floor area, exceeds 100 persons then the premises requires to be protected with the installation of an automatic sprinkler system. As per IBC Table 1004.5 *Maximum Floor Area Allowances per Occupant*, the following factors are stated:

- Assembly: without fixed seats, concentrated = one person per 7 net square feet.
 - At 1,200 net square feet in the main hall area = 172 persons.
- Assembly: exhibit gallery and museum = one person per 30 net square feet.
 - At 1,200 net square feet in the main hall area = 40 persons.
- Assembly: unconcentrated tables and chairs: = one person per 15 net square feet.
 - At 1,200 net square feet in the main hall area = 80 persons.

The above suggests that assembly use of the present Grange building for dance or other gathering purposes by kept at no more than 100 persons; and this should be posted by the Greensboro Fire Department at the front door of the premises.

As to NFPA and the matter of a business use, Chapter 38 *New Business Occupancies* does not require an automatic Sprinkler system be installed within the building premises.

In summary, concerning the matter of sprinklers, the existing building can continue to be used for assembly purposes, as long as the number of occupants does not exceed 100 persons. And were the building to become Greensboro's town offices, or some other business use, public or private, there is no building code requirement that the building be equipped with an automatic sprinkler system.

A Minor Scope of Work on the Building

The suggested work outlined above on pages 9 and 10 in this report does not expose the existing building to the full scope of applicable building codes and compliance with same. This is because these items are considered by the International Existing Building Code (IEBC) to be repairs to the building, as per EIBC *Chapter 4 Repairs*. New foundations would require that that work be designed as per the applicable requirements of IBC Chapter 16 *Structural Design*.

A major Scope of Work on the Building

As noted above, putting the town offices in the existing building is clearly considered by the State building code as a Change of Use. Simply stated, this would require that completely new mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems (MEP) be installed throughout the building, as well as the building being insulated to meet current code standards, including careful study of existing windows and doors. And the entire building would need to be brought into compliance with applicable ADA standards.

The most significant, and potentially impacting to the building, would be the requirement that a detailed structural evaluation be done of the full existing building. At this time, to this writer, it is doubtful that the existing building would meet current day structural code requirements. This does not mean that the existing building is a danger to the public, but it does mean that probably serious structural reinforcement would need to be designed and implemented to the building's structure.

In addition to the land / site related issues, as discussed above, the realities of remaking this existing building into municipal offices for the Town of Greensboro are multiple. First is the matter of space needs and related necessary building floor area.

For the building to serve the needs of the town administration for the coming one-hundred years, experience has shown this writer that at least 2,500 gross square feet of building area will be required, as follows:

- Town clerk, treasurer, and tax collector space.
- Land records space.
- Land use and related office space.
- Men's and women's toilet room space.
- Selectboard meeting room space.

- Janitor / maintenance/cleaning supplies space.
- Storage space.
- Accessible front entrance and vestibule space.

The floor area of the existing building, less the historic covered front porch, is 1,692 square feet. This means that the existing lower-level area of the building would need to be an integral of such building reuse. And in all probability, at the northeasterly corner of the existing building a moderately sized new addition would need to be constructed to provide space for a proper entrance into the building, a fire rated egress stair that connects both floor levels, and a vertical three-stop lift to address accessibility issues that connects the front grade level with the main and lower floor levels.

As to the possible cost of the above scope of work, including both minor and major work, less site considerations like septic, parking, and utilities, assume the following:

- Not including the present front porch, the existing two-level building shell equals a total of 3,384 gross square feet.
- The existing front porch is 245 gross square feet.
- A new “accessibility and egress” addition that is 300 gross square feet.

Taking these three points of work and applying a probable cost per square foot dollar multiplier, we find the following:

- Renovation and repairs to the existing building, assuming the existing building shell is worth \$50 per square foot:
 - **3,384 s/f X \$400 per square foot = \$1.35 million.**
- Repair and restoration of the existing front porch area:
 - **245 s/f X \$200 per square feet = \$50,000.**
- Construction of the new accessibility and egress addition:
 - **300 s/f X \$500 per square foot = \$150,000.**
- Total estimated probable building project cost, less any site considerations, architectural or engineering fees, or budget contingency:
 - **\$1,550,000.**

Conclusions

At this time, to this writer, it appears that realistically there are two potential uses of the property, one far more ambitious than the other.

Continuing to use the building as it presently exists with repairs and some amount of restoration and stabilization work.

The existing building is at a point where it is needing attention so as to preserve it for future generations, and to lessen any liability for the Town of Greensboro. This work as outlined above does not require that there be any land or site changes. At this time it appears that this work could cost **\$400,000**.

Implement a plan to make the existing building into suitable space for the town offices.

Were this option to become reality, as discussed above, with the need of additional land and associated permitting, this work, when completed, could cost **\$2,000,000**.

Regardless of what the Town might decide to do with the building, it would be important for the Town of Greensboro to have the building listed on the **National Register of Historic Places**. Clearly the building is eligible. There is no drawback to doing this, and it potentially makes the building eligible for potential grant funding for ADA and preservation improvements like window restoration. And promptly include the building in any town capital improvement planning.

End of Report.

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Architect

July 15, 2024