



CLARK & GREEN ARCHITECTURE DESIGN
113 Bridge Street
Great Barrington MA 01230-1338
P(413)528-5180 F(413)528-6420

BROOKFIELD TOWN HALL BARRIER REMOVAL - FEASIBILITY STUDY

Notes from Meeting of May 11, 2009 Brookfield Town Hall Barrier Removal Committee (THBRC)

Held at Brookfield Town Hall, Meeting Room, 6:00-8:30 p.m.

In attendance: Peter O'Connell, Donna Neylon, Sheila Frangiamore, Barbara Clancy, Donald Faugno, Dave Holdcraft, Bill Pratt, THBRC; Bill Scanlan, Community Planning Services (grant writer); Bill Simpson (briefly), Brookfield Cultural Council; Steve McAlister, C&G.

The following is Steve McAlister's attempt to order and categorize the topics of the meeting, based on a review of Clark & Green's work since the April 28th meeting.

1. Primary objective of the meeting:

To review the rough area requirements for town hall, police station and library, to determine which uses can be accommodated within the building, and whether the requirements of the program can be successfully adapted to the various floor levels, considering such things as easy access and structural floor loading. A major issue appears to be whether the 4100 gross-square-foot (gsf) auditorium/stage/balcony will continue as such, or be partly or totally converted to other uses, because it affects what other uses can be accommodated in the building at its present size.

2. Programming:

The programming work to date was reviewed and discussed at length.

The rough program area requirements by major category are:

Town Hall/COA use, assuming the auditorium area remains as such:	15,400 gsf
Police Station (originally assumed at about 7500 gsf):	4,500 gsf
Library:	9,200 gsf

The Town Hall/COA requirements without the auditorium area would be: 11,600 gsf

The original assumption of the police station program at 7500 gsf was based on the floor plan in the 2009 police station feasibility study, but the committee indicated that the police chief believes the current needs of the department could be accommodated in about 4500 gsf, by eliminating certain ideal program elements, such things as holding cells. So the 4500 gsf figure has been tentatively adopted for purposes of this feasibility study.

The building has a footprint area of 5400 gsf, and gross floor areas (not counting the thick exterior wall but counting everything else) as follows:

Basement:	4,800 gsf
First Floor:	4,800 gsf
Second Floor:	4,800 gsf
Balcony:	1,300 gsf
Third Floor:	1,900 gsf
TOTAL	17,600 gsf

The total floor area available if the 4100 sf auditorium/stage/balcony is retained would be $(17,600 - 4,100) = 13,500$ gsf. The program requirement for the Town Hall/COA, not counting the auditorium/stage/balcony, is $(15,700 - 4,100) = 11,600$. Therefore the area available in the building is about 1900 gsf more than the rough program requirement for Town Hall/COA, so the Town Hall/COA should be able to be accommodated, with inadequate space for anything else. The auditorium would also serve as a meeting space.

If the auditorium/stage/balcony were used as town hall space, then the additional space required for Town Hall/COA functions would be $(11,600 - 4100)$, or 7,500 gsf. This could be accommodated on the first, third, balcony, and the balance of the second floors, with a combined area of $(4800 + 1900 + 1300 + (4800 - 4100)) = 8,700$ gsf. This exceeds the required program area by roughly 1200 gsf, although that figure would shrink by several hundred square feet for a small or medium-sized meeting space to replace the auditorium as a meeting space. Also, the actual layout will probably reduce the excess space further, primarily because the theoretical program must fit into an existing configuration of bearing walls, stairs, etc. A few hundred square feet of excess space could serve as expansion space, or perhaps for the records of officials such as tree warden.

3. Tentative Conclusions of Programming to Date:

If the auditorium is kept, the rest of the building should be entirely devoted to Town Hall/COA. If the auditorium/stage/balcony area is converted to town hall use, most of the 4800 gsf basement would be available for another use, and the primary candidate would be the police station. It is also clear that the library program of 9200 gsf cannot be accommodated in the building without displacing almost all the town hall, since it would probably require two full floors as a minimum. The future use of the auditorium/stage/balcony area is again a crucial question.

4. Practicalities of Possible Conversion of Auditorium to Town Office Use:

Steve presented a rough concept for how the auditorium might be used as office space, by building a "box-within-a-box" approximately 11' high in the 24' high space, and surrounded on all sides by a wide corridor which would preserve the historic arched windows and other features. The construction of these partitions and ceilings would not add a great deal of weight to the structure, and the live load for office use is significantly lower than that for an auditorium with no fixed seating, so it may tentatively be assumed that the existing floor structure could carry the office/meeting area live loads.

He also mentioned that it could be useful to use the ceiling of the "box" as another open office floor, but since this introduces an entire floor into the building, it would require a thorough structural study and reinforcing of the existing building, possibly all the way to the foundations. Also, the height and area requirements of the building code are such that

the entire 4-story (5 level) building would have to be entirely restricted to town offices with no single meeting area for more than 49 people. Providing access to such a floor is extremely difficult (if not impossible), because of the probable need for either another elevator stop, or creating some sort of access ramp system in the balcony to bridge over to the open floor. Altogether, this appears an impractical idea.

5. Site Planning Issues:

The aerial-based preliminary site analysis provided by Lenard Engineering indicates a relatively gentle, continuous slope from the western part of the site down to Prouty Street, across the adjoining lots under separate ownership. The area required for a new septic system serving the fire station/EMS, the town hall, and one or two other functions would be in the range of 7500-10,000 sf, or up to about twice the footprint area of the town hall. The septic system could be located under parking, if properly engineered, but at a higher cost than a typical system. It appears initially that if the Prouty Street land were acquired, the site would probably support septic, access and parking for the fire station/EMS, the town hall, and perhaps one other facility. This will require further study. The committee is interested in whether soils borings and percolation testing should be conducted for the site to further determine its capacities. Following the meeting, Lenard Engineering made the suggestion that 2 or 3 test pits be dug, using the DPW, and perc test and soils observations be conducted, either as an additional service by Lenard or by the Board of Health, at least for perc testing.

6. Functions, Financing and Phasing:

Donna Neylon spoke briefly of the need to consider how proposed types of improvements, such as energy improvements, barrier removal or a senior center, might be viewed in the light of grant funding, so that various categories of work might be grant-funded in tandem or through phasing. Some of the funding limitations were also discussed, such as the necessity to restrict the use of a grant-funded senior center to primarily senior center use for a minimum of 5 years. Bill Scanlan addressed some of the energy programs and consulting available through the local utilities, and funding sources for green technology and energy conservation. Clark & Green will follow up for further detail.

7. Possibility of a Major Addition to the Town Hall:

The possibility of a large addition to the town hall building was discussed, as a means of accommodating on the site as many functions as possible of the overall program (Town Hall/COA, police, library). Steve explained that a possibly important consideration might be the seismic requirements invoked for the existing building when an addition is overly tied to such a building, as opposed to being seismically separated. However, the degree of renovation within the existing building may trigger some level of seismic work as well, although perhaps not much.

Another consideration is that the historic character of the existing building could be compromised by a parallel addition that blocks up windows. Some preliminary investigation of the possibility of a seismically detached addition has been done by Clark & Green, but the difficulty lies in finding a suitable zone or area for connecting the addition so that a single elevator can serve all levels without triggering too much renovation in the

existing building, just to make it work. A major addition also could negatively affect the parking and grading on the site, which is driven primarily by the fire station's apparatus access requirements and by the need for an accessible route into the town hall for the disabled.

It is not yet clear whether a major addition would confer significant benefits over a separate building on site, so this will be investigated further.

8. Possible locations for Elevator Shaft, Required Stairs:

Clark & Green has preliminarily studied possible alternative locations for the elevator and exit stairs, and will provide the documentation of these alternatives. It appears that the bell tower is a very favorable location for the elevator, because it is close to the original main street entry, and runs through all levels of the building. The required 12' override above the elevator's highest landing tends to favor locations under the roof ridge or in the tower, because a location under a low roof will require a penthouse to penetrate the roof and alter the historic lines of the building in an awkward manner. It would be difficult to locate an exterior tower so that it a) serves all levels, b) is near a main entry, and c) does not destroy the building's finer features, such as the grand staircase.

New stairs will be required from west end of the basement, and from the third floor and balcony, if the elevator is placed in the tower, because the tower stair is the only access to the third floor and the balcony level. One possibility for the new stair is to run it from the third floor to the balcony, and then to the second floor landing of the grand staircase. Another flight would connect the main floor to the basement, under the grand staircase. Other reasonable options will be documented.

9. Other Items Discussed:

Other items discussed included the need for determining whether installing an elevator in the tower would affect the historic clockwork, and investigation into various approaches to significantly improving the building's energy conservation. Some additional visuals on the "box-within-a-box" idea were also requested.

The Next Meeting:

The next meeting is scheduled for **Wednesday, June 3, at 6:00 p.m.**, with new business at 6:15 or so, at the Town Hall. The primary agenda/action items for Clark & Green will be:

- **SITE ISSUES:** Bring the site planning information closer to the architectural in terms of informational development.
- **PLANNING ISSUES:** Develop program further by review with the town hall staff and others, create conceptual floor plan layouts including elevator/stair options.
- **ENERGY ISSUES:** Develop "quantified generalities" on various possible improvements, along with comparative costs. For example, generalize that "insulating the roof will be maybe twice as effective as insulating a wall, at a lower slightly cost" (which may or may not be true)- sufficient information to begin to define directions.