

Municipal Building Committee Report

The Town of Monkton realized in 2006 the need for new Town Offices and purchased 5 acres of land adjacent to the Friends Methodist Church. The Municipal Building Committee has been working for over 2 years to realize the vision of a new town office, library and community space. Our focus has been on engaging the community to ensure that the design will reflect the preferences of Monkton residents. We have sent out a town wide survey, hosted an Open House at Town Hall and Russell Memorial Library, and held several public meetings.



View of Proposed Town Offices and Library

The Building Committee distilled the community's comments into a list of Design Principles which are as follows:

- Minimize costs and impact on taxes
- Preserve historic character
- Take advantage of the views to the west
- Keep the design simple yet inspirational
- Maximize use of space
- Build spaces that can be used for multiple purposes and at different times of the day and week
- Energy efficient design and construction-ability to install solar energy in the future
- Ensure ample storage space
- Outdoor terrace or porch to extend the community space
- Leave room for expansion in the years to come

Rather than ask a design-build firm to create a finished design, we elected to hire an architectural firm to work with the town on designing a building to fit these criteria. Of all the firms we interviewed, Bellwether Architects best understood the project and the need for community involvement. Bellwether has led two well attended community outreach meetings to receive more detailed feedback regarding the building's design.

The resultant design incorporates Town Offices, Library and shared community space in a multi-level building that is compatible with the historic character of the Monkton village center. The two-level design, where the lower level is slight buried in the hill, takes advantage of the amazing views to the South and West and saves construction and operating costs. On the upper level, the Town Hall

includes expanded work and storage space, offices for conducting private business, increased vault space and a small conference room. The building as a whole will be energy efficient and use cold climate heat pumps for both heating and cooling. The roof will be compatible with solar panels although no panels are included in the current budget.

The community room is also on the upper level. The community room seats 48 people and looks directly West over Monkton Pond and the Adirondacks. This space is available even when the Town Offices and Library are closed. The community space is one of several shared spaces in this design and how it is used depends on the user. To Town committees it is a meeting space, to the library it is large program space, to the community at large it could host weekly films, talks, or classes. It could even be rented for private events to the extent that it didn't interfere with other uses.

The lower level is home to the expanded Library, mechanical room and additional records storage. There is also the potential to incorporate expansion and this option is being considered. The Library shares the views to the West and is accessed via stair, elevator and directly from the outdoor patio. The new library can accommodate a growing collection of library materials. The library will also have space for patrons to browse, work and read while simultaneously allowing staff a space to work. The collections will be easy to navigate ensuring full access to everyone.



Floor Plans of Lower and Upper Levels (Monkton Ridge Road is on right)

Building new Town Offices and a Library is a significant undertaking. Initial funding for the project will come from the Municipal Building Fund, the Library Capital Campaign and a bond from the Vermont Bond Bank. The Municipal Building Fund is a 'savings account' that the voters established to save towards this project over the past 3 years. There is currently \$100,000 in this fund. The Library Capital Campaign is a way for people interested in this project to directly donate to it. The bulk of the monies will come from a 20 year bond with a 2.5% interest rate from the Vermont Bond Bank. This bond will be written for \$1,700,000.

Monkton is in a good financial position to take on the new long term bond debt. In 2020 we will pay off the 2018 Western Star Dump Truck and in 2021, the first year of principal payments on the bond,

we will have paid off the last capital building project, the Fire Station addition. In addition, the plan is to sell/lease the existing Town Office and Library. Not only will this help pay for the new building, but it could provide inexpensive office space for businesses looking to move to Monkton. There is also the possibility of grant funding. And since we will no longer be 'saving' for the new building via payments to the Municipal Building Fund, there will be more tax revenue available to pay down the bond. While all of these initiatives will reduce the overall impact, the majority of the monies to service the loan will come from an increase in Municipal property taxes.

Estimating the exact impact on property taxes is difficult, but considering only the bond payment itself in 2021, the payment will be \$117,970. This would increase the tax rate by 4.6 cents on the dollar resulting in an increase of \$46 for every \$100,000 of assessed value. Given the average assessed property/home value of \$260,000 in Monkton, this would result in an average increase of \$119 in property taxes. How much of this you would actually pay depends on the amount of property tax adjustment you receive from the State which is dependent on household income. Seventy percent of Monkton residents receive a property tax adjustment.

However, we have been putting \$40,000 a year into the Municipal Building Fund that would no longer be needed and we will have paid off the Fire Station addition which was another \$15,600 a year. The net result could be a tax increase as low as 2.4 cents on the tax dollar resulting in an increase of \$24 for every \$100,000 of assessed value or an average increase of \$62 in property taxes.

There is a final public meeting prior to the bond vote in which the design and a detailed budget will be presented for feedback and recommendations from the public. This meeting will be held at the Monkton Central School on Tuesday night February 11th at 7:00 p.m.

Community engagement continues when we get to the building process. During our public outreach meetings, several people mentioned that we could build this building ourselves. While we're not sure that is possible, we are in the process of hiring a Construction Manager who will oversee the project and hire subcontractors. By utilizing a Construction Manager more of the local tradespeople will have a chance to bid on portions of the project. There will also be opportunities for volunteers to step in, especially in landscaping and outside areas.

For more detailed information, please go to our webpage at **monktonvt.com/building**. The Building Committee has generated an extensive Frequently Ask Questions (FAQ) which can be found there as well.

Contact the Municipal building Committee at: **building@monktonvt.com**

Committee members: Heather Bessette, Will Bown, Melanie Cote, Peter Norris, Stephen Pilcher, Deb Rickner, Peter Straube, Jere Urban.