

# memo

To: Board of Selectmen  
From: 2022 Whipple Hall Project Committee  
Date: September 28, 2023  
Re: Final Project Report

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## PROJECT SUMMARY

While the project is not quite complete at this point, and outstanding radiators will be installed in November, the committee felt it appropriate to provide a final report on the 2023 Whipple Hall Project.

Overall, we are happy to report that this has been a successful project, accomplishing the goals set forth by the selectmen, and completed within the allotted budget. The hall is now in use and user groups seem happy with the way the project turned out.

The goal set for the project was to upgrade Whipple Hall for the purpose of meetings. Architect Dennis Mires was retained in 2021, charged with generating enough information to get us to the 2022 town meeting warrant, and additional funding was approved at the 2023 town meeting due to price inflation and some changes in scope. Architect Frank Anzalone was retained to complete the design and to provide contract observation services; North Branch Construction provided construction management services. Numerous members of the town staff provided assistance throughout the project.

The scope of the project ultimately included insulating the hall, installing ceiling acoustic panels, upgrading the heating system (primarily to reduce noise), providing air conditioning, completing sprinklers in the Whipple and Buker attics, improving lighting, painting, adding floor outlets, and floor refinishing. Some limited foundation and roof repairs were completed, and compliant catwalks were provided in the attic for maintenance access. An expansion of the dispatch center, funded by other sources, was completed by North Branch, and tracked as an addition to the project.

The audio-visual system, acoustic panels on the walls, and window shades had been installed prior to this project proceeding. New chairs had been purchased.

As with any project, numerous lessons were learned, which may be helpful for future project teams to understand. We will address issues specific to a given project, town issues related to overall project management, and other town issues that inform project needs. Among these are:

## PROJECT SPECIFIC MANAGEMENT

1. There is a need, to every extent possible, to understand the complete scope of a project at the outset including the preferred sequencing of the work; otherwise, work completed out of sequence often

results in re-work and additional (unnecessary) costs. Dennis Mires was hired to provide enough design to estimate pricing for the warrant, however, owner costs and project management overhead were not well understood. Two examples illustrating this point are:

- a. An overall view of the project would have provided an understanding of the excessive cost of installing, then removing, then reinstalling the A/V equipment.
  - b. Wi-Fi work that had been incomplete from the A/V installation was added to this project after the budget was established.
2. Costs are established at multiple points through the life of the project, including: estimates to get to the warrant; cost of contractors with additional costs that are the responsibility of the owner, and; the final project cost. We learned that an initial lack of understanding of owner responsibilities, and the vagaries of sudden inflation and scope increases, left us with the need to return to the town for additional funding. "Not to exceed" cost estimates from the construction manager were only estimates until the contract was actually awarded. This leaves the need for significant contingency amounts to be included in the estimates. While the overall budget was sufficient, the construction manager's contingency budget was sufficient, but insufficient for the town responsibilities. It was only that the construction manager's responsibility went relatively smoothly that their contingency was used only in part.
  3. There was a lack of understanding that the scope and resulting budget numbers developed for each of the warrant articles were based on preliminary, not final, design decisions. This resulted in the early purchase of the A/V system without complete review as to needs, and the complete redesign of the heating and cooling system at increased cost. Assigning end-to-end project ownership and understanding the project design phases is critical to effective and efficient project (and related budget) planning and execution.
  4. While not a major issue, a better understanding as to whether completion dates desired by the town were critical, and if not, the notification lead time needed for meeting postings, would have helped inform design changes and supply chain decisions that resulted in a delay in having a fully operating heating system.

#### TOWN PROCESS FOR PROJECT MANAGEMENT

5. A template setting forth the line of approvals for invoice payment should be established and tailored for specific future projects. While all parties worked well together to keep the funds flowing, a clear line of approval would reduce the current back and forth process for getting a party paid. We recommend that the standard approaches set forth by the American Institute of Architects be used, that payment requests flow as recommended, and that representatives be named specifically for a given project as indicated by the AIA process.

#### OTHER TOWN ISSUES

6. Notwithstanding the Whipple infrastructure project a few years ago, the early installation of some upgrades in the assembly hall, and the present project, Whipple Hall has still not been fully renovated. Significant additional work was identified during the project, involving the roof and gutter system, attic ventilation, and the exterior walls. The detailed investigation of the roof recommended by Dennis Mires in 2014 has yet to be completed, nor has his survey been updated. Storm windows should be investigated, as the current arrangement effectively prohibits cleaning the windows. Decisions as to the long term use of the basement have not been finalized. While investing in balcony seating and

upgraded railings were deemed not necessary at this time, this work might be performed in the future if the additional seating is found useful. Roof and cupola repairs made during the project are to be considered temporary patches, and gutter work was deferred. It is clear that another project needs to be developed to correct immediate and longer term needs for the overall building. Going forward, it is recommended that a full scope of both day to day maintenance, as well as capital replacement or upgrade needs, for each town building be developed prior to commencing a further project; and with that information, the Town should develop a phased approach for all town building needs.

7. One issue that may be unique to Whipple is the lack of a “building owner”. While various town departments are involved with the management of other buildings, each has a single department who is the primary user. Responsibility for Whipple daily operations should be clearly identified with a single point of accountability.
8. As a run up to a potential need for an electrical shutdown, we became aware that the dispatch center has no alternate “hot” location. In order to provide for a range of future scenarios, the need for an alternate dispatch location should be reviewed by the appropriate parties. Further, in hindsight, the need for a building shutdown should have been identified early on as a critical issue, given the public safety function in the building.
9. Built into the overall project budget is an owner contingency, which is to account for issues identified during the course of the project, not otherwise covered by the contract. A more detailed discussion prior to setting the warrant amount would have resulted in a larger owner contingency, or would have resulted in some items being included within the budget. Among the issues that came up after the budget was set were the installation of wi-fi, removal and reinstallation of the A/V equipment, reworking the hatch to the attic, access to the mechanical spaces, and repairing chandeliers. Ultimately, these were covered within the overall project budget due to the fortunate, unspent contingency by North Branch.
10. Design professionals are critical to the process, both in setting forth the technical requirements, checking the progress of the work, and in assisting the owner in project management. In the future, design professionals should be retained during initial study phases, and continue through to completion. Specific responsibilities and expectations should be developed at the beginning of the project, and people held to them. Again, the AIA has a comprehensive package of documents for design professional involvement.
11. The town does not have explicit procedures for the retention and future access of electronic and hard copy documents related to construction, operating and maintenance. Formal procedures should be developed, with documents related to both construction and ongoing maintenance, filed by building and project, and kept up to date as things change. Access should be arranged so that all members of project teams know what is available from the past to minimize duplicating work. Hard copies for project or field personnel should be duplicated and stored electronically to account for the possible loss of the paper files. Responsibility for document management should be clearly established, with appropriate authorization.
12. Lastly, we understand that this project was put to the front of the list of town needs due to overcrowding at the Syd Crook Room, overlaid by Covid concerns. This being said, insofar as possible going forward, given competing demands, project prioritization should be considered within the context of all demands on town needs and resources.

