

Preliminary floor plans for Town Hall and Houghton Building renovation
July 9, 2008
Background

In the spring of 2008, the town contracted with architect Kaffee Kang to develop preliminary floor plans that would allow all municipal employees to be housed in either the Town Hall or the Houghton Building after the police move to the Public Safety Center.

Employees filled out a questionnaire (copy attached) to describe their space requirements and Ms. Kang combined the results in a Space Program (copy attached). She then prepared floor plans to meet the space program with an emphasis on minimizing costs to the town. The preliminary floor plans are also attached.

Employees reviewed the plans at a meeting on the morning of July 9 and the selectmen discussed the plans with Ms. Kang at the selectmen's meeting on July 9. Ms. Kang provided the selectmen with a list of other town hall renovations that she has been involved with (also attached) and noted that the combined square footage of the town hall and Houghton Building (8700 square feet) is in line with what other towns Bolton's size have available. Ms Kang also explained to the selectmen that an elevator would be needed if employees were housed on two floors of the same building or if the public would need to use two floors during the same period of the day. However, separating the daytime employee uses and the nighttime public uses would allow the current configurations to meet Massachusetts access codes.

Based in part on input from the town, Ms. Kang proposed to locate the land use-related offices (planner, Board of Health, and Building Inspector) on the first floor of the Houghton Building and the municipal or finance-related offices (Town Administrator, Town Clerk, Assessors, Treasurer, Tax Collector, Accountant) on the second floor of the Town Hall. In her proposal, the first floor of the Town Hall would have one meeting room, the long anticipated vault for safe storage of town records, and other storage. The second floor of the Houghton Building would have two small staff meeting rooms and storage. While she did not provide detailed cost estimates, Ms. Kang estimated that the kind of renovation represented by her plans would cost about \$150 to \$175 per square foot.

At their meeting, the employees said they would prefer to be located in the same building to make work interactions with each other easier. They said that the vault would be used every day for some records but not others and there was agreement that perhaps two smaller vaults located in different places might make the floor plans more flexible. However, Ms. Kang explained to the selectmen that the masonry construction lined with special fireproof panels does not lend itself to multiple smaller vaults. Both employees and the selectmen were favorable toward an idea of building a vault structure onto the side or back of the town hall if there were room.

The historical nature of both buildings was noted during the discussions and as proposed the preliminary plans do not affect the exterior of either building. The employees, the selectmen, and Advisory Committee members in attendance had numerous small suggestions about tweaks or changes to the offices and conference rooms in the preliminary plans. All of these would be considered in any future revisions to the plans.

The town is interested in comments and concerns from the public and various town boards concerning these preliminary plans. In a few weeks, the selectmen will discuss the plans again and determine a future direction. It was noted at the meetings that because of the on going major projects at the library and public safety center, it was unlikely a major renovation would be undertaken soon, but it was also understood by all that some changes at the town hall may be needed in the near future to accommodate the accountant, treasurer, and building inspector who now work at Emerson School. In any case, a town meeting vote would be required for engineering and renovation funding.

Please provide any comments to Linda Day at the Town Hall 978-779-2297 or secretary@townofbolton.com.