

Preservation Guidelines for Needed Work

Overall Approach to Treatment

Although the New Durham Meeting House was constructed in 1770, its present manifestation reflects the last of three major renovations, all of which dramatically altered its appearance: in 1792, galleries and an exterior porch were added; in 1838, the building was “cut down” to a single story; and in 1847 or 1848 much of the interior was finished off. Today, with the exception of the frame and most of the wainscot, the surviving historic fabric dates from this last period. Thus, it is the strong recommendation of the consultants that any future work, whether it be exterior or interior, preserve the building to the 1838 -1847/1848 era.

Accordingly, we recommend that the work program follow *The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Preservation* as outlined below. In essence, protection, maintenance and repair of historic fabric is emphasized, while replacement is minimized. If it becomes necessary to replace a material, it should be replaced with like materials.

Work Phases

Phase 1:

- **Remove** the trees on the easterly side of the building (toward the town pound) and the southerly side (toward the woods) to allow for increased air-flow and sunlight. This is necessary to help dry out the building and correct the current mildew situation.
- **Provide** ADA access with a removable ramp at the front entrance.

At the moment, there are no other structural issues that pose an immediate threat to the building. However, this will change. A primary concern is the risk of further deflection in any of the roof framing components due to their weakened state and potential snow loads. Measurements should be taken three times: in the fall, in the winter when there is a snow load, and in the spring. With a load of snow on the roof, the wood framing system will flex to some degree, but it should then return to its pre-load fall condition. Over time, however, sagging of the timbers can lead to breaks. Monitoring the situation is critical and included under the regular maintenance schedule outlined below.

ESTIMATED COST: \$6,300

TIME PERIOD: As soon as possible

Phase 2:

Due to the scope of the work, Phase 2 needs to be completed as a whole. When undertaking these major exterior repairs, approach the building as a complete restoration project, following the *Secretary of the Interior’s Guidelines for Preserving Historic Buildings*.

Exterior repairs need to precede any interior work.

Phase 2 work should include roof repairs and new roof finish, as well as new windows, doors, clapboards, trim, etc. This work should be based on historical documentary and physical evidence. It should not include electrical or any interior work at this time. The entire process

should be documented with drawings, photography and video.

ESTIMATED COST: \$139,500 (with 10% contingency)

TIME PERIOD: When any major repairs are next needed on the building

Specific work items are as follows, though not necessarily in this sequence, as site conditions or unknown building situations may require a different order of work and/or additional steps.

- **Document** any/all important drawings/writing on the existing interior plaster. (Even though the work in this phase is limited to the exterior, the interior plaster may inadvertently be disturbed. Thus it is important that this documentation occur first.)
- **Develop** a stabilization plan for the plaster based on a careful evaluation of the existing conditions by a preservation contractor with experience with historic plaster prior to the onset of any exterior work. (This process may require the removal of sections of plaster that could either be re-installed at a later date or be used as framed wall sections for display. This would particularly apply to the drawings/writing on the plaster, which are high significance to the history of the building.)
- **Remove** trim/siding/windows (holes will be filled-in temporarily).

NB: Take advantage of the time when the sheathing under the clapboards is exposed; it provides the only opportune time to define more precisely the actual location of the porch(es) and the approximate size of the pulpit window, as well as any other historic features. For example, paint samples taken from the sheathing could help create a more accurate color history of the building. ***Thus, we highly recommend that the project manager and/or town historian, using this Building Assessment, analyze and document all of the sheathing at this time.***

- **Jack up** the building
- **Repair or replace** sills where needed.
- **Add** additional stone work to the foundation as needed to fill in the voids.
- **Remove** the jacks.
- **Open up** the roof system for appropriate repair/replacement where required. This would include plate damage. This would also include engineering fees for the roof truss systems.
- **Close** the roof back in.
- **Prepare and install** appropriate trim and corner boards (brushed or sanded, back-primed and painted).

- **Install** a new 35-year architectural asphalt roof with ice and water shield. Historically, the roof would have had wood shingles. However, wood shingles will cost more and have a shorter life span.
- **Prepare and install** newly-made windows and sash that replicate the ca. 1792 window sash found on site and use old glass. Install new door frames and doors that match those in historic photographs.
- **Install** quarter-sawn spruce clapboards (brushed or sanded, back-primed and painted before installation).
- **Paint** a second coat over the whole exterior.
- **Clean up** site.

Phase 3:

Phase 3 includes renovating the interior with insulation, new plaster and finish floor and outfitting the building with electricity. As with Phase 2, the work needs to be completed as a whole. The entire process should be documented with drawings, photography and video.

ESTIMATED COST: \$120,800 (with 10% contingency)

TIME PERIOD: Following, or in concert with, Phase 2

Specific work items are as follows, though not necessarily in this sequence, as site conditions or unknown building situations may require a different order of work and/or additional steps.

- **Document** the interior.
- **Remove** all non historic material. **Transfer** all historical material to storage.
- **Cover** existing historical trim, etc., to help prevent damage.
- **Remove** the remaining ceiling plaster and lath.
- **Repair and/or remove** damaged wall plaster and/or lath. This is a section-by-section process—some sections may require removal of just the plaster, others both plaster and lath. In some sections, the plaster may be stabilized and retained.
- **Install** an electrical panel and wiring for the building. (This would also be a good time to explore the possibility of relocating the electric lines across the road. It is not unusual to have a power company help financially in a building project of this importance.)
- **Install** new lath ceiling.
- **Insulate** the sidewalls. (Regardless of whether or not the building is to be heated at this time, this would be the best and most economical opportunity to install insulation.)

- **Install** a vapor barrier in all sections where plaster has been removed. This may be a combination of 6 mil. plastic and/or vapor barrier paint, taking into consideration areas of plaster that may or may not be left intact.
- **Repair and/or replace** the interior trim with “like materials” where required.
- **Install** lath in areas of the sidewall that have been removed.
- **Plaster** the ceiling.
- **Plaster or repair** the sidewalls based on the outcome of the analysis undertaken in Phase 2. (In the smaller rooms and vestibule, this should be done in concert with the ceiling plastering, as there is no trim in those areas.)
- **Install** a new finish floor.
- **Insulate** the area above the new ceiling.
- **Paint** areas where required.
- **Clean up.**

Total Project Cost

Phase #1, #2 and #3 are estimated at: \$266,600 (with 10% contingency, *but excluding* water, septic, plumbing and heating) or \$317,000 (with 10% contingency *and including* water, septic, plumbing, heating and electrical included within an addition or an outbuilding)

NB: If water and a bathroom are added, it would be less obtrusive and more economical to keep them out of the existing building. Instead, a separate building or an addition could house a bathroom and small kitchen. This outbuilding/addition could be constructed at the same time or at a later date, although it would be optimal to plan for it as part of Phase 3. The best location for the outbuilding/addition is off the rear (southwest) of the Meeting House.

On-going Schedule of Maintenance

Whether or not a major restoration occurs, responsible monitoring and on-going maintenance are always needed to ensure that small problems do not become large ones. The following serves as a guide:

- The building needs to be monitored/checked at least twice a year to make sure that the building envelope remains weather-tight (i.e. roof, windows, doors, siding) and that the structural issues described under Phase 1 do not get worse.
- In the summer, the building needs to be adequately ventilated, using seasonally secured window louvers and leaving screened gaps in the foundation.

Potential Future Uses

Since 1987, the New Durham Meeting House has been in town ownership. After a major renovation effort that was largely completed in 2000, the building has been used for occasional special events, such as a Halloween haunted house, arts & crafts fair, historical performances inside and along a walking trail, Christmas caroling, a few weddings, and at least one memorial service. The good stewardship of the townspeople has paid off, ensuring that the building is stabilized and able to be used at some level.

A town-appointed committee oversees day-to-day management of the Meeting House—an excellent arrangement as long as it remains active. The committee recognizes that people must be engaged in how the building is used and sustained—develop a sense of ownership—for its future to be viable. To that end, it has recommended that future uses involve the community, be family-oriented and have some tie to local history. Ideas include picnics, Easter egg hunts, musical or theatrical events, re-enactments, and either temporary or permanent exhibits or displays of artifacts. All of these are very appropriate.

Ultimately, the building's future use will depend in large part on whether an outbuilding or addition with modern conveniences (water, septic, heat and a small kitchen for at least heating up meals, etc.) is added, and whether the interior of the building is heated. If it is to be used for historical artifacts, a climate control system should be installed in at that section of the building (at a minimum).