

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

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General

Q. Why aren't there any pictures of what the proposed buildings will look like?

Architectural renderings of proposed buildings are not generated until the design phase. We are still in the Needs Assessment, Programming, and Facilities Planning stage of the process.

Q. Why didn't you look at Mechanic's Hall?

The Facilities Steering Committee (FSC) was formed in response to the unanimous vote of an article passed at the May 9, 2017 Annual Town Meeting, where voters approved a planning effort to "conduct a buildings study for the functions of Bagg Hall, the Public Safety Complex, Town Hall Annex, and Princeton Center". Mechanics Hall was not included because it was not being used for town functions or by town-affiliated organizations.

Q. Did you assume the Town's population would grow significantly?

While the FSC anticipates some future population growth, it was not considered to be significant.

When considering the size of the Public Safety Complex, JWA's proposal includes consideration for future expansion should additional apparatus bays be needed.

Q. How far into the future did department heads look when assembling their requirements?

The interview and questionnaire process conducted for programming with department heads did address anticipated future changes to a given department; such as, increase in number of employees, storage needs and hours of operation. While department heads and the Town Administrator were not given a specific number of years to look ahead, it was assumed that with respect to storage, needs will likely decrease over time as the State allows more records to be maintained electronically which is not currently the case. Including meeting rooms of different sizes was a critical component design proposals, ensuring a degree of flexibility as the town's needs continue to change.

Q. Are there any grants available?

There are grants available from Massachusetts Historic Commission for historic building preservation. These sources of funding are generally for specific improvements. In fact, the town received a grant in 2002 for \$45,000 for exterior building repairs.

Q. Why can't the State pay for this?

Sometimes the State does provide grants for municipal capital projects. There is a bill making its way through the State Legislature now. We will monitor the progress of the bill and work with our local representatives to ensure we would be eligible for state assistance and subsequently pursue any funding should the bill make it to the Governor's desk and get signed.

Q. Shouldn't we wait until we have the money to pay for it?

If we wait until we have the money, the cost of the projects will have increased significantly. Construction costs for municipal buildings increase on average 8% per year. So, the longer we wait or extend the construction phase, the higher the cost.

Q. Were Princeton town function needs and facilities compared to other towns of similar size?

Yes, JWA compared the needs and square footage of the proposed Princeton Public Safety building to those of recently built public safety buildings in Sunderland, Hadley, and Paxton. The comparison can be found in the JWA Report on page 5 of Section 4.4 Space Needs Analysis.

Town function needs were based on interviews and input from department heads. JWA, who has considerable experience in design and construction of town hall facilities, confirmed that the needs outlined by the department heads were consistent with other towns of our size (Brimfield, Wendell, Whately).

Q. Why do municipal buildings like public safety buildings and community centers cost so much?

There are state laws governing procurement for construction contracts and projects, such as prevailing wage and Owner's Project Manager (OPM) requirement, that add cost to municipal capital projects.

Q. Was construction of a Community Center at the Princeton Center School site considered?

Yes, the construction of a stand-alone community center was considered by the FSC and JWA and it was determined that such a facility would create egress issues for a co-located public safety building. In addition, it would also be creating another building that the town would need to maintain.

Q. Did you involve the Energy Advisory Committee?

The FSC has encouraged the EAC to become involved during the architect selection and building design process.

Q. Where did the town functional requirements come from?

The functional requirements were solicited from department heads and the Town Administrator. The FSC and their Board of Selectmen (BOS) and Advisory Committee (AC) liaisons reviewed the requirements. In addition, public comment during the requirements phase brought to light community space needs that went beyond the functional needs of town departments.

Q. Has the Town considered renting space?

The Town is exploring options to lease additional space for Council on Aging.

Q. Where can I get more information?

There are presentations, videos, and reports on the FSC page:
http://town.princeton.ma.us/Pages/PrincetonMA_BComm/facilitiessteer.

Q. Who can I contact if I have more questions?

You can email the FSC at princetonfsc@gmail.com. You can also attend our weekly meetings that are posted on the town calendar.

Public Safety

Q. Can we skip the public safety stabilization if we vote to design and build a new public safety building?

Yes – if the public safety building is prioritized, many of these costs can be avoided. It is still necessary to support the overloaded truss – particularly in the winter months. But the additional upgrades would not be necessary if the building only needs to last 2 more years.

Q. Why do we need 2 fire stations?

To provide the best coverage of the large size and challenging topography of Princeton, it is advantageous to have a fire station in the center of town and one in East Princeton. Chief Bennett believes it is a benefit to the town to have the 2 stations at different elevations and locations allowing the department to minimize response times.

Q. Why can't we just enlarge Station 2?

See previous question. In addition, response times for other emergency services (ambulance, police) to the center and western regions of town would be negatively impacted.

There is limited space at the Station 2 site for adding additional drive-through bays. We would also need to accommodate the police station at a site with limited space.

Q. Why do we need a bunk room?

A bunk room is needed to accommodate emergency personnel should there be a multiple day emergency, for example a blizzard or ice storm.

Q. Why is the Center School site a good place for Public Safety?

It is near the geographic center of town and therefore would easily service the center and western sections of town. The site is accessible and large enough to co-locate police and fire to facilitate space-sharing where appropriate, to allow for needed drive-through bays, and to provide for future expansion should it be needed.

Q. Did you look at other sites (DPW site?) for Public Safety?

Yes, the FSC considered other sites such as the DPW site, other town-owned land, and other parcels but decided that the advantages of having the Public Safety facility located in the center of town rendered any other sites unacceptable.

Q. What if we need more apparatus bays?

The Princeton Center School site provides sufficient space for future additions to currently proposed Public Safety building.

Q. Why can't we just repair the existing public safety building?

JWA concluded that the current facility lacks critical spaces for safe operation by both the fire and police. They cited this as a "major concern."

In addition, JWA found a number of issues with the building (listed below) that led them to conclude that "the building is not worth saving."

- Roof sags over garages due to truss overstress (URGENT)
- Severe chloride related damage within concrete vault space below police garage bay – threatens radio equipment.
- Asphalt roof is in poor shape (< 5 years)
- Ingress of water at the rear
- All mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems are at the end of their useful life
- Wood clapboards, soffits and fascia are in poor shape
- Fire equipment barely fits (by inches) – damaging vehicles, the building, and restricts future vehicle size

Q. What is a gear/decontamination room?

It is a segregated space for cleaning and decontaminating gear when returning from a fire. Fire fighters are frequently exposed to a host of hazardous chemical agents when fighting fires. Standard guidelines cite a number of recommendations for limiting exposure - one of which is a segregated space for cleaning and decontamination.

Q. How long will this new station meet the Town's needs?

The new Public Safety building should meet Town needs for the foreseeable future. Princeton's population grew a modest 1.8% from 2000 to 2010. It is anticipated that this growth rate will continue. Should the need arise to expand the Public Safety facility, there is sufficient area to do so at the Princeton Center School site.

Q. If space in the public safety buildings is so tight, why is one bay used for fitness equipment?

The far western bay of the existing fire station is located too close to the edge of the hillside. It is not safe for vehicles to access the bay. Partly because the truck bay is located on the opposite end of the building from the offices, a fitness room was deemed the best use.

Q. What will happen if we don't vote the funds to stabilize Public Safety?

There is a risk that the building will need to be closed because of the condition of the building.

Bagg Hall

Q. Why do we need an addition if we have done the stabilization?

The addition adds much needed meeting space, ADA-compliant bathrooms, a larger vault meeting current fire codes, and space for Council On Aging and Parks & Recreation offices. It also adds space for community functions and provides ADA-compliant access to the second floor with additional meeting and community space, which already exists, but cannot currently be used due to lack of handicap accessibility and poor condition.

Q. What will happen if we don't vote the funds to stabilize Bagg Hall?

The building will continue to deteriorate and the cost to repair it will escalate exponentially.

Q. Can we skip stabilization of Bagg Hall if we vote to design and build an addition on Bagg Hall?

Most of the work that would be done as part of stabilization will still need to be done, in addition to any renovation work. Stabilization work, and the addition, would all be completed at once, if this option is approved by the town. If renovation is to begin farther down the road - in the next several years – it will be slightly less expensive because some of the work would have been done as part of the earlier stabilization.

Q. Will the Princeton Arts Society and the Princeton Historical Society have space in the addition?

The Arts and Historical Society are 2 community-based groups that would benefit from the shared community space in the proposed new addition. Since these two groups are not town sponsored, they will not have dedicated space in Bagg Hall. Other groups, such as the library, would benefit as well.

With respect to the Art Society and the Historical Society, a suggestion has been made that the town provide display space in the building addition that can be shared by these and other groups. This will be considered during the design phase.

Q. Will the town rent space in the Bagg Hall addition to individuals/groups?

It is outside the purview of the FSC to set policies such as these.

Q. Is the addition being done because we are increasing our Town Hall staff?

The Town Administrator and her department heads were interviewed by JWA to determine their current and future needs. No significant increase in staff was mentioned during that process. Their current spaces are undersized and there is a real lack of meeting space.

Q. Who can use the community space in the addition?

It is outside the purview of the FSC to set policies such as these. It is our hope that many town groups will be able to benefit from the additional community space.

Q. Who will schedule the use of the community space in the addition?

It is outside the purview of the FSC to set policies such as these.

Q. Why can't I see pictures of what Bagg Hall will look like with the addition?

Architectural renderings of proposed buildings are not generated until the design phase. We are still in the Needs Assessment, Programming, and Facilities Planning stage of the process.

Q. Why does one of the plans have a driveway and parking lot behind the Library?

One of the proposals in the JWA report covers the situation where an addition on Bagg Hall is done before building a new Public Safety building and the existing Public Safety building will need to remain in place and functioning. Because of this and other site constraints (mostly topography), JWA believes that there will need to be one-way traffic along the east side of Bagg Hall and that traffic will need a new way out. Also, the addition will create a parking shortage and one way to alleviate that is to provide parking along the new exit driveway. *Because of these challenges and the fact that a Bagg Hall addition would be very constrained on the site if the existing Public Safety building remains in place, the FSC is not recommending this option be pursued.*

Q. Did you consider using Bagg Hall for something besides the Town Hall?

We did discuss this. Per JWA, the Town Hall functions fit pretty nicely in Bagg Hall. Also, the building is of significant architectural significance and adds to the beauty of the town center. Given the cost of a new building, it didn't make sense to the FSC to move Town Hall and use Bagg Hall for something else.

Princeton Center School

Q. Have we thought about selling it to a developer?

If we were to sell Princeton Center to a developer, we would most likely need to pay for asbestos and lead removal. In addition, we would need to then buy an equally well-suited parcel of land. We looked at parcels that might be obtainable in the area of interest and didn't see anything as well suited to the town's needs.

Q. Have we thought about using it for housing?

See the above answer.

Q. Does the town have the right to take it down?

Nobody has been able to show us any deed restrictions on the property. This should be reviewed by the Town's legal counsel before any final decision is made on whether to raze the entire building or to just raze part of it.

Q. Will there still be access to the playing fields behind the school?

Though the Facilities Steering Committee and JWA believe that safe access to the fields can be provided, this is an area of further study during the building design process. This is an issue of interest and concern to our Fire Chief.

Town Hall Annex

Q. Have we considered using it instead of an addition on Bagg Hall?

The FSC asked JWA to look into this. It is JWA's informed opinion that the amount of work needed to bring the Annex up to the level it would need to be at to serve the town for 20+ more years would be quite cost prohibitive and wouldn't result in a space that would accommodate town functions and have the added benefit of much-desired community space, as would a Bagg Hall renovation/addition. The Town has "made due" with this former garage out of a real need for communal space.

Q. Could we use it as a Community Center?

See the above answer.

Q. What will happen if we don't vote the funds to fix the Annex?

The building needs to be preserved and used for at least 5 years during design and construction of the Bagg Hall renovation/addition. Some of the issues that need to be addressed include:

- Water infiltration
- Electric and HVAC upgrades
- Fire alarm, life safety items, and security upgrades
- Other code issues