

**Email Message from Alan McClennen
(Chair of the Old Fire House Renovation Committee) to Fritz Luft– July 24, 2022**

Allen's message provided in response to an inquiry that Fritz had about the estimated cost of renovating the Old Fire House as an example of what renovations cost vs. cost of new construction:

Fritz,

Sorry for the delay. Summer events have gotten ahead of my responsibilities. Hopefully, this email will be helpful to your deliberations and discussions about building renovations.

During the last forty years I have been involved in the renovation/conversion of numerous buildings. In most cases the buildings were rehabilitated because they had some historic value. Their ages ranged from 1816 in Newburyport to the Old Firehouse dating from 1926. I have also moved buildings in toto or by flaking and reassembling the structure on a new location prior to its restoration.

Prior to being elected to the Orleans Select Board in 2013, I was responsible for three restoration projects in Chatham. The Marconi Maritime Center, the Railroad Station Museum and the Godfrey Windmill. The Marconi project is the most relevant to your question because it amounted to a gut rehab of four buildings from 1914 and their conversion, in most part, to new uses.

What I have learned is that the success of any project of this type requires careful and detailed work at the front end. You really have to know the "bones" of the building before you make a decision to rehab/convert. This is particularly important when you are dealing with buildings that are publicly owned as the bidding and construction requirements are carefully controlled by state law and "mistakes" and "surprises" during the reconstruction phase are very costly.

In the case of 44 Main Street, the idea of restoring the first fire station in Orleans started in 2011 when the Orleans Community Partnership (OCP) began to use the building and realized its potential. From 1926 to 1967 44 Main Street was the fire station and, for a short time, the home of the police department. Following the construction of the new joint fire/police station at Eldredge Parkway in 1967 the Old Firehouse was used for storage and other "homeless" town programs.

In 2013 the OCP received a CPC grant to study the feasibility of restoring the Old Firehouse. This work led to detailed studies of the condition of the building, its remaining historic conditions and proposals for restoration. Interestingly, the first architect pointed out that the CDP building program was too large for the existing building and recommended it be replaced with a new structure. That option was not accepted due to the understanding of certain deed restrictions at the time. Also, the historic restoration of the building was CPC eligible and a new structure was not.

Several years later, the Town decided to do a "peer" review of the previous work. That study focused on the building renovation issues and determined that the building could be restored under the Secretary of the Interior's standards for historic structures and therefore would be eligible for CPC funding. A preliminary cost estimate was prepared as part of that study.

In the fall of 2020 the Select Board created the Community Building Renovation Task Force which I chaired. Due to COVID restrictions, work didn't really get going until the spring of 2021. The Town selected ICON Architecture to undertake a feasibility study to evaluate all previous work to decide if the restoration was feasible. ICON did show that restoration was possible and had Miyakoda Consulting prepare a detailed 16 page estimate which projected a construction cost of \$1,875,998 as of September 2022, which was the projected start date. This estimate did not include design fees, interest and owner's project administration some of which had already been appropriated. We decided to use a \$2.0 million dollar estimate for the CPC grant application.

As you know, the CPC ultimately voted 5-4 not to fund the project so we never went out to bid to test the estimate. We did track the July estimate and felt it was still appropriate as we finalized the 100% design documents in March 2022. Of course, with the public bidding process in Massachusetts and the current supply chain issues you won't know the final project cost until the bids are opened and the contract is signed.

Now, let me respond directly to your comments/questions.

1. The \$2.0 million request was for the total restoration project.
2. I wouldn't use the 2017 proposal for any estimates. As stated above, I would use the Miyakoda estimate. It provided 16 pages of detailed costs related to what was actually going to be built. In addition, I would be careful in using this project as a guide to costs of restoration. It is small, we have to comply with historic preservation standards and we started out with a 1926 unheated garage that was built prior to any code requirements . There were three "volunteer" additions and no plans have ever been found for any of the work.
3. Teen Hangout Room. The projected teen hangout room is not proposed to be in the conference room. It would be the larger space just east of the kitchen and to the rear of the main room. We actually created expanded space for their program by installing a stairway to the basement from this area so they could have additional dedicated space for storage. As we prepared the plans for the building we believe we accommodated the needs of the existing tenants along with the organizations that use the building for meetings and other events. In addition, the Select Board voted that they would decide what tenants would ultimately be in the building. Therefore, please understand that our task force has accommodated the needs of the existing tenants but, if and when the building is renovated, the Select Board, as the owners of the building, will decide how it is to be used.

I hope this helps and, again, sorry for the delay.

Alan

