

GHS building committee makes design changes

By **CHRIS SHORES**
Recorder Staff

GREENFIELD — The latest design estimate of the Greenfield High School building project came in \$1 million over budget, forcing the building committee to vote on several cost-saving design adjustments Tuesday night.

Tuesday's vote was a normal part of the design process, said owner's project manager Jim Byrne.

As the building's design continues to be developed and more detail is added, construction cost estimates will fluctuate. Adjustments to the design need to be made accordingly, he said.

But to ensure that a project never strays too far from plan, the Massachusetts School Building Authority asks for regular updates during the design phase and checks for a balanced budget. Byrne told the committee he was submitting one to MSBA this week, since the project's design is now 30 percent complete.

Many of the changes approved Tuesday by the committee have aesthetic implications rather than functional.

For example, the committee saved \$256,000 by electing to use a slightly larger size brick. It saved \$55,000 by voting to use a comparable, but

slightly less expensive, material on the roof membrane. And it saved another \$55,000 by eliminating aluminum window trim.

But the committee debated at length about whether to use a vinyl composition tile flooring, instead of linoleum. School officials said they thought linoleum was worth its estimated \$352,000 cost because they said floor maintenance is continually the single most expensive and time-consuming item for the maintenance crew each summer.

And they expressed concern over proposed 10 percent reductions to the auditorium's theatrical rigging,

sound and lighting systems. Some members argued that there is not enough information in the design of the auditorium to make informed decisions about cuts.

But both Byrne and lead architect Lee Dore repeatedly told committee members throughout the 2½-hour meeting that there will be plenty of opportunities between now and design completion in March to add some of those items back into the project.

And there still may be a chance to purchase additional energy-efficiency measures, such as increasing the roof's thermal resistance or adding automatic lighting sensors.

Design revisions can

be made until March, and as more detail is added to designs, more information on the precise costs of items will also be made available, they said.

"This is pretty standard," said Dore, who told the committee that he has worked on an MSBA project that was \$9 million over budget at this phase.

"Each step of the way, it's a check and balance to make sure we don't open up on bid day (for subcontractor jobs), and say we're \$1 million over," he said.

Committee member Kenneth Black tried to ease the concerns of his peers.

"Design is an iterative process, it involves stepping forward and backward," he said. "We're not leaving this topic tonight, we're reserving the right to change our mind in the future. ... These other items that are floating around are going to (eventually) be nailed down."

Dore said that the committee will go through a similar exercise in a month after new construction manager Shawmut analyzes the design. Then the committee will repeat the process when design is 60 percent completed, and then again as design nears completion in March.

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IN THE FOG



A foggy reflection on Papoose Lake in Heath on Wednesday.

Recorder/Paul Franz

AG OKs Whately's choice for painter

Town Hall work to begin next week

By **KATHLEEN MCKIERNAN**
Recorder Staff

WHATELY — Attorney General Martha Coakley's office has ruled in favor of Whately's choice of a Pittsfield company to paint three sides of the Town Hall.

In a five-page decision, the Fair Labor Division of the Attorney General's Office denied the protest of Cameron Painting of Amherst, which argued the town acted arbitrarily when it accepted Gentlemen Painting of Amherst for the Town Hall painting project.

"I find that the town's decision to accept Gentlemen's bid was not arbitrary. The protest is therefore denied," Assistant Attorney General Deborah A. Anderson wrote in the case summary.

The town will now move forward, Town Administrator Lynn Sibley said. Gentlemen Painting will start painting the front, north and south sides of the historic Town Hall next week and complete the \$27,360 estimated job by the end of November.

On Aug. 30, the town went out to bid and four contractors responded. When it submitted the third lowest bid and was not selected for the project, Cameron Painting filed a protest.

Gentlemen Painting offered the cheapest bid, \$27,360 for the base bid and \$3,700 for the alternate price. Evergreen Construction Corp. of Springfield had the second lowest bid at \$49,054, but neglected to include a price for the alternate. Cameron Painting offered \$49,060 and \$7,460 for the alternate price. Northeast Painting Associates of Northampton had the highest bid of \$53,240 and \$16,840 for the alternate price.

At a Sept. 25 hearing, Cameron Painting argued Gentlemen Painting did not meet the bid specifications' requirement of seven years of satisfactory performance because of a project it did for the town of Longmeadow.

Both the town and Cameron contacted Longmeadow's facility director, Adrian Phaneuf, for a reference, but they reported conflicting reviews.

The Attorney General's Office, however, found Phaneuf would hire Gentlemen again.

"My conversation with Mr. Phaneuf indicated a satisfactory reference for Gentlemen," Anderson wrote. "I therefore find that Gentlemen has the necessary satisfactory experience."

In addition, Cameron also questioned whether Gentlemen will pay the prevailing wage on the project.

Gentlemen countered that it would and it seeks to keep crews working rather than laying off workers. Cameron estimated 45 man-days at \$451 per day for a total of \$20,295. Gentlemen bid \$21,360 for labor and Cameron bid \$38,600 for labor.

Again, the Attorney General's Office ruled against Cameron's claim, stating there is no evidence that Gentlemen would not pay the prevailing wage on the project.

The paint job precedes the town hall renovation. The back side of the town hall is excluded from the painting project and will be saved for the renovation. Residents will be able to weigh in on the future of their town hall within the next two years.

The town will pay for the paint job through Community Preservation funds. At last annual town meeting, residents approved \$55,000 to be used for community preservation.

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Montague board: Time running out for Cumberland Farms deal this year

May ask town for more money to stabilize building for winter

By **CHRIS CURTIS**
Recorder Staff

TURNERS FALLS — The town may be asked to spend money on the dilapidated former Cumberland Farms building after all.

Town Meeting members in May approved \$32,000 in spending to clean and repair the Avenue A building, with the understanding that it was a safety net for a deal in the works with a local nonprofit to take the building in exchange for doing the work ordered by the building inspector at no cost to taxpayers.

Montague Community Cable Inc., the parent company of Montague Community Television,

proposed to take the building as studio and office space for MCTV and fellow nonprofits Turners Falls RiverCulture and the Montague Business Association.

MCCI board member Kristi Bodin said Tuesday the group is running out of time to reach a deal to begin work this year.

"We're considering some very drastic requests to the (Board of Selectmen) at this point," Bodin said.

At least, Bodin said the board will probably ask the Board of Selectmen to spend some of the \$32,000 to stabilize the building before winter.

Bodin said after the meeting the roof is not likely to survive the

winter and the loss of the roof may mean the loss of the building.

"We can't do work unless we own the building," Bodin said. "It's really getting down to the wire."

The Economic Development and Industrial Corp., a quasi-town body designed to handle real estate without the usual restrictions on municipalities, this year gained title to the property and in August agreed to sell it to MCCI, with the details to be negotiated.

At Tuesday's meeting, the EDIC board discussed concerns raised by member Roy Rosenblatt over the board's authority to transfer the property.

Citing passages in state law and the town's 1999 economic development plan, Rosenblatt said the body can only operate in areas zoned industrial, transfer properties for industrial use, and requires an active economic development plan, all of which he said could be

challenges.

Member Donald Valley agreed there is a conflict in the laws and regulations but said it should not prevent the board from moving ahead.

"I see a conflict, but I see a comfort zone for me," Valley said.

Valley said he would be more concerned about the legal footing if he felt there was likely to be any concern the board was engaged in shady dealings.

The board voted unanimously to request an opinion from the town lawyer through the Board of Selectmen, before going into closed session to discuss the sale.

Bodin said MCCI had hoped to start work in September and move in by October or November.

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'Solarize' house part of Montague green homes tour

By **CHRIS CURTIS**
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MONTAGUE — This year's regional Green Buildings Open House features three Montague homes, one showcasing work done through the Solarize Montague program.

The Solarize program is a state-backed alternative-energy initiative seeking to promote solar electricity in participating communities through a volunteer effort to bundle buyers for a single solar installer, lowering prices through bulk purchase and cutting advertising costs.

Sally Pick, a member of the Montague Energy Committee and Solarize Montague coordinator, said the program has so far garnered 18 signed contracts for the installer, NorthEast Solar Design.

Installation began at the end of September, and two are complete, Pick said, with work progressing on her own 25 Union St. home Tuesday.

Pick was among the first to sign on to the program, with the Board of Selectmen's approval that doing so did not constitute a conflict of interest.

Pick has participated in and helped to orga-

■ In Montague Center, Sally Picks' home will be open from 1 to 3 p.m., Cindy Tarail and Mark Lattanzi's 24 Center St. home will be open 10 a.m. to noon for a look at a deep energy retrofit, and 6 Main St. will showcase a geothermal heating system and other improvements.

nize the green open houses in past years, and hopes her 1856 home, with extensive building envelope work, solar hot water and solar electricity will demonstrate the possibilities for retrofitting historic homes.

"I feel really passionate about doing what I can as a homeowner to lessen my impact on climate change and one of the ways of leveraging what I do in my home to have a greater impact is to open it up to other people," Pick said.

With the deadline to sign contracts Oct. 31, those signed so far put pricing for the solar pro-

gram in the third of five discount tiers, lowering the base price 5 percent.

More information on Solarize is available online at SolarizeMass.com/Montague, or at the Ask Solarize sessions, the next to be held Oct. 16 at 6:30 p.m. in the Turners Falls safety complex.

The self-guided green building tours are sponsored by the Northeast Sustainable Energy Association with hundreds participating across the Northeast, locally including Greenfield, Deerfield, Colrain, Wendell, Northfield, Whately, Ashfield and Warwick.

In Montague Center, Picks' home will be open from 1 to 3 p.m., Cindy Tarail and Mark Lattanzi's 24 Center St. home will be open 10 a.m. to noon for a look at a deep energy retrofit, and 6 Main St. will showcase a geothermal heating system and other improvements.

Pick notes her street may be being paved Saturday, and recommends parking near the post office on Main Street.

Go to energysage.com/projects/nesea-gboh to find tour sites, hours and to sign up for visits.

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