



# The Concerned Taxpayers of Bow

**WE URGE YOU TO VOTE YES ON ARTICLE 30 AND NO ON ARTICLES 3 AND 4**

**TOWN MEETING – MARCH 11, 2015**

For a third year in a row, the multi-million dollar public safety building is up for a vote. Last year the proposed project for \$6,796,000 was rejected by a vote of 425 no to 257 yes.

### Warrant Article 3

Article 3 is a proposal to construct a \$5,030,000 public safety building with \$5 million to be bonded and \$30,000 raised from taxes. At the current borrowing rate of 4.5%, the 20 year bond interest will add almost \$2.5 million to the project, and bring the overall cost to approximately \$7.5 million.

### Warrant Article 4

Article 4 seeks \$35,000 to develop the design for the public safety building which is to range in size from 20,000 to 25,000 SF.

### Warrant Article 5

Article 5 seeks \$25,000 to hire architectural, engineering and/or consulting firms to determine the cost to renovate the existing building or to construct a new community center.

The Capital Improvement Plan from 2013 called for \$4 million to build a new community building after the existing building is leveled. Again, bond interest at 4.5% for 20 years

adds millions to that number. This means that the town is asking the taxpayers to spend a total of over \$9 million, plus millions of dollars in interest, to replace the current community building and fire station.

### Warrant Article 30

The Concerned Taxpayers of Bow have gained enough signatures to place Article 30 before the Town Meeting. It reads as follows:

30. (By Petition) To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$550,000 to implement recommendations provided to the town to bring the fire and community building into conformity with correction of electrical deficiencies, asbestos removal and other fire safety corrections as set forth in the reports by Enviro Vantage, Cummings Associates, and Yeaton Associates, Inc. notwithstanding the decision of the building inspector on February 25, 2014, to require earthquake and other catastrophic standards to be imposed to an existing building. Source of funds shall be 1) the withdrawal of \$350,000 from otherwise unappropriated funds, 2) the withdrawal of \$100,000 from the Municipal Buildings and Grounds Capital Reserve Funds and the remainder raised by taxes. (Majority vote required).

### Purpose of Warrant Article 30

Article 30 would fully fund the corrections to the building that the Fire Marshal recommended. The \$550,000 would be used as follows:

Asbestos: The town received an estimate from EnviroVantage on January 15, 2015. The cost would be **\$4,500** to survey and **\$59,500** to remove the asbestos (Attachment A).

Electrical: The town received an estimate to bring the entire fire station/community building into compliance with the electrical code. The estimate ranged from **\$175,000** to **\$225,000** (Attachment B).

Fire and Life Safety Upgrades: The town received an estimate from Cummings Associates on March 11, 2014 to address the fire and life safety upgrades for the fire station/community center and to fix the stove for **\$177,500** (Attachment C).

### Estimates -Maximum Cost to Fix:

Asbestos Survey	\$4,500
Asbestos Removal	\$59,500
Electrical	\$225,000
Fire/Life Safety	\$177,500
Contingency	\$83,500
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$550,000</b>

## Funding for Article 30

Article 30 only requires a majority vote because it is not a bond issue. The source of funding for the \$550,000 is \$350,000 from the cushion of excess unspent funds maintained by the town\*, \$100,000 from money maintained in Municipal Buildings and Grounds Capital Reserve Funds, and the rest, if needed, raised by taxes.

*\* The State recommends that towns maintain a 5% cushion in their budgets for unexpected expenses. Taking \$350,000 from this account will still leave the town with a cushion in excess of 5%.*



## Police Station Needs

There have been concerns raised about whether the police station needs a sally port (or garage). Assuming that a sally port is necessary, according to an estimate from Cobb Hill Construction, Inc. on September 14, 2004, an addition could be added to the side of the existing building for one sally port for the cost of \$200,000 to \$220,000. (Attachment D). This estimate shows that renovations could be conducted without the need to expend millions on an entirely new police station. The cost for a sally port and other repairs could be presented at future town meetings.

## Rising Tax Rates -The Last Seven Years

From 2008 until 2013, the total tax rate in Bow has risen an astounding 33.9% from \$22.53 to \$30.19.

Although in 2014 we saw a slight reduction in the tax rate to \$29.14, this was solely because the assessed values of residential properties increased by 3-4%, condominiums by 13% and commercial properties by 16%. Those property owners with increased assessments are now paying more in taxes.

Overall, Bow continues to have high taxes compared to the rest of the State. According to the New Hampshire Department of Revenue Administration, Bow's full value tax rate in 2013 ranked 206 out of 227 municipalities which means that Bow's tax burden is **in the top 10%** of New Hampshire's municipalities.

Bow's taxpayers were promised that we would be paying lower taxes after the school bond was paid. Now our town officials are advocating that we should continue paying some of the highest taxes in the State by taking out a new bond for the construction of a multi-million dollar public safety building. Rather than continuing to pay high taxes, we should be finding ways to reduce our tax burden.

## More Spending On The Way

We shouldn't assume that the requests for high-dollar projects will end if Warrant Article 3 is approved. The town's Capital Improvement Plan calls for other expensive projects in the near future that will increase our tax burden. These proposals include the renovations to the elementary school and constructing a community center (Attachment E).



### FAST FACTS

33.9%

The percentage that Bow's tax rate increased between 2008 until 2013.

206 of 227

The ranking of Bow in 2013 based on its tax rate.

\$2.38 Million

The amount of interest on a \$5 million bond at 4.5% for 20 years.



## Essential Facility Designation -What It Really Requires

Many of us have asked why we cannot make renovations to our police and fire stations, rather than constructing a new facility with a multi-million dollar price tag.

The response from the town has been that the cost of renovations will be cost prohibitive because the fire and police stations have been deemed "essential facilities" under the International Building Code (2009 Edition), and the foundation and walls need to be reconstructed to withstand hurricanes and natural disasters.

The building has been there for 58 years, and has withstood several storms of the century and this winter. Moreover, the following additional information should be considered:

### A. The Designation of An "Essential Facility" Is Not Required

The determination of whether a building should be designated an "essential facility" is not automatic – a town's building official has discretion. Significantly, in February 25, 2014, the town's Code Enforcement Officer/Building Inspector chose to determine the facilities should be designated "essential facilities."

### B. Renovations Can Be Made To Existing Facilities

Thousands of police and fire stations throughout New Hampshire and the country were built before the 2009 International Building Code was adopted. There is no requirement for these existing facilities to be torn down and reconstructed whenever any renovations are needed. Such a standard would bankrupt many municipalities and would be absurd to apply to preexisting buildings.

Rather, assuming an existing police or fire station is designated as an "essential facility," the 2009 International Existing Building Code requires those existing facilities to meet the requirements only for certain alterations.

There are three types of alterations addressed in the 2009 International Existing Building Code (IEBC). Here is a very simple explanation of the various alterations:

Level 1 Alteration – Removal and replacement of existing features, elements, equipment or features that serve the same purpose. A Level 1 alteration can be made so long as it does not make the building less safe than its existing condition. IEBC 403, 601.

*Example:* Replacing asbestos panels with sheetrock as called for in Warrant Article 30 is an example.

Level 2 Alteration – Reconfiguration of spaces, doors and windows added or eliminated and/or new equipment or systems are introduced. A Level 2 alteration can be made so long as the new construction components comply with the new code requirements, and does not increase gravity or lateral loads beyond a certain amount. IEBC 404, 701.

*Example:* Replacing a window with a door, subdividing a room, realigning a room or adding an air conditioning system.

Level 3 Alteration – Work area exceeds 50% of the aggregate area of the building or involves "substantial structural alterations" involving 30% of the total floor and roof area. These types of alterations must comply with the International Building Code for wind loading and seismic forces. IEBC 405, 807.4.2.

### C. Summing it Up

The remodeling of the fire/community building based on the Fire Marshal's report does not involve altering the vertical load components like beams or columns.

There are many types of renovations which can be made to the fire station and police station that will not require upgrades to meet the wind and seismic requirements for essential facilities in the International Building Code.

### Who We Are

The Concerned Taxpayers of Bow is a non-partisan group of local residents who strive to bring Bow residents together in the spirit of the neighbor-helping-neighbor tradition that has made Bow a great place to live. This includes a neighborly tradition that ensures that people can afford to stay in their homes because a taxpayer friendly solution is achieved.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information, please visit our website at [www.bowtaxpayers.org](http://www.bowtaxpayers.org)