

Grafton Town House Restoration Update

Project Status

This is a collaborative initiative being undertaken by Apple Tree Arts and the Town of Grafton to fully restore the Grafton Town House and to create within its walls a performance arts center. The project is led by Apple Tree Arts, a Grafton-based non-profit music and theater arts school, in collaboration with the Town under the auspices of the Grafton Town House Oversight Committee. In exchange for its efforts, Apple Tree Arts is being provided a long-term and below-market value lease of the building's second and third floors, which includes a 200-seat Great Hall.

The initial phase of this initiative, which was completed in 2009, involved restoration of the building's original tin roof and chimneys, as well as its 16 dormers, copper gutters and elaborate cornice molding. Phase 2 entailed the restoration of the building's three badly deteriorated fire escapes and is now substantially complete. Phase 3 of the project is focused on providing handicap accessibility to the building.

This latest phase of the project is necessary since ADA-compliance is



required by Massachusetts law once the cost for restoration exceeds 30% of the building's value. While this threshold has not yet been crossed, it soon will as these restoration efforts move forward. This then is a proactive effort to make the building accessible now in order that all citizens regardless of physical challenges will be able to enjoy and benefit from this historic and cultural resource.

Approvals from the Grafton Historic District Commission, Massachusetts Historical Commission and the Massachusetts Architectural Access Board, which were necessary to move forward with the project, have all been obtained. Survey work has been completed by the Town in



order to address roadway impacts that will be created when the front of the building is pushed out in order to incorporate a ramp. The project is currently out to bid for general contractor and sub-contractor services and it is anticipated that construction will commence in May of 2011.

Project Benefits

The Town of Grafton is fortunate to have within its boundaries many historic assets. Most notable among these is our Town Common, which represents a pristine example of 19th century New England. The Town House is the largest and arguably the most prominent building within the Grafton Common landscape. It is a contributing property to the Grafton Common Historic District and, as such, is included on the State and National Register of Historic Places.

Over the years, the Town House has served as Grafton's Town Hall, Public Library, Post Office, School and District Court, as well as providing the base of operations for many retail and business



Project Benefits (continued)

establishments. The building's Great Hall, with its magnificent two-story barrel-vaulted and wood-beamed ceiling, has in the past provided the venue for countless town meetings, high school graduations, proms, theater events and even basketball games in more recent years.

In 2007, the Town House was determined to require approximately \$2.6M of restoration work and was in immediate peril due to the failure of its roof. A clear directive was put forth at that time by virtue of a unanimous town meeting vote to preserve the Town House. Preservation of this architecturally significant building will help maintain the integrity and character of the Grafton Common Historic District, which is the Town's greatest asset. Development of the Town



House as a performance arts center will further enhance the cultural resources available within Grafton and the greater Blackstone Valley and thereby improve the quality of life of its citizens. The tourism that will be generated will also benefit local businesses. Finally, by raising the funds needed to restore the building through public and private grants and donations, Apple Tree Arts' efforts to restore this priceless town asset can be achieved without impact to the tax rate of Grafton's citizenry.

Project Funding

Much groundwork has been accomplished since 2007 through the collaborative efforts of the town and Apple Tree Arts. This includes formation of The Grafton Town House Oversight Committee and generation of over \$840K earmarked for this restoration effort. Funds to date

have been raised via three State grants provided by the Massachusetts Historical Commission, as well as through Community Preservation Act funding that is, in part, set aside by the town for historic preservation. In addition, budgeted town funds that were set aside in 2006 to partially fund the restoration of the roof were leveraged, as were monies that were generated through lease proceeds of the Town House itself.

Given the scope of this project and limited Town resources, additional outside funding is needed to realize the vision of a fully restored Town House and to see its resurgence as a performance arts center. Apple Tree Arts continues to seek funding via State and Federal grants, as well as private foundations and donors. A consultant has been hired to assist Apple Tree Arts in the preparation for a major capital campaign, which it is set to begin in earnest in 2012.

