

## Existing Community Facilities

Over the previous fifty years, the Town of Cornish has preserved and protected its historic and natural resources. The Town has a number of structures on the National Historic Register, and most of the buildings are protected, supported, and used by the townspeople of Cornish. The Town acquired the Grange hall, once a Methodist Church, for its Town Office Building in 1993 to serve as municipal offices. The Town Hall, once a Perfectionist Meeting house, has become the Town's meeting area for large groups. Other buildings under the Town's ownership are the Highway Garage, the Meetinghouse, Trinity Church, the Hearse House, two fire stations and a police station, several cemetery buildings, a one-room school house, the George H. Stowell Free Library, the Old Selectmen's Office/Cornish History Center, four covered bridges, the CREA Barn, and the Cornish Elementary School.

The Town of Cornish offers several of its municipal buildings for use by the public for community gatherings, meetings, and events. These buildings include the Cornish Town Offices, the Cornish Town Hall, Trinity Church, and the Cornish Meeting House. The CREA property and the Town Forest are also available for public use. Additionally, the Cornish Elementary School offers space to the community. Of the municipal and school district buildings available for public use, the Cornish Town Offices, Cornish Town Hall, and Cornish Elementary School are handicapped accessible and will be the focus of this report

### *Cornish Town Hall*

The Cornish Town Hall sits on a 0.520 acre parcel at 294 Town House Road and is adjacent to the Cornish Fairgrounds and the Cornish Elementary School. This property is located in the Village Zoning District. The 3,303 square foot building includes a large open gathering space, kitchen, stage, and two bathrooms. The Town Hall also offers an upright piano that is in good condition. Folding tables and chairs, owned by the Cornish Fire Department, are available for use by renters of the Town Hall. The Town Hall offers ample parking, and renters often coordinate with the Cornish Fair Association to use the fairgrounds for additional parking and/or event space. The Town Hall is the only municipally owned building where alcohol may be served. Although the maximum occupancy of the Town Hall is 462, the Fire Department has limited events at the Town Hall to 125 people.

The Town Hall is available at a fee of \$100 for Cornish residents and \$175 for non-residents. An additional security deposit of \$200 is required. If alcohol will be served at an event, a \$300 security deposit is required.<sup>1</sup> Renters must complete and sign a rental agreement. The following organizations<sup>2</sup> are exempt by the Select Board from paying rental fees for use of the Town Hall:

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<sup>1</sup> *Cornish Town Hall Rental Agreement*, Cornish Town Office

<sup>2</sup> *Organizations Exempt from Paying Rental Fees for Use of Town Hall*, Cornish Town Office

Cornish Fair Association  
Scouts  
4-H Clubs  
United Church of Cornish  
Cornish Fire Department

Blow-Me-Down Snow Riders  
Cornish Garden Club  
Antique Tractor Club  
Cornish School  
Cornish Rescue Squad

Other organizations may approach the Select Board to request exemption from rental fees. Over the years, the Town Hall has seen weddings, baby showers, birthday parties, anniversaries, and celebrations of life. The elementary school has used both the Little Town Hall and the Town Hall for its wreath fundraiser. 4-H has also used the building. The Cornish Fair Art Show is housed in the Town Hall, and the Fair Association uses the Little Town Hall for agricultural displays. In addition, the Town Hall serves as the site of the weekly Willing Hands Food Pantry and the monthly senior luncheon. The Town Hall also serves as the Town's polling place. Local government hearings which anticipate large audiences and public forums have also been held in the Town Hall.

The Office of the Select Board handles the Town Hall rental schedule and processes rental fees. The revenue generated by the Town Hall averages around \$1,500 per year and serves as a tax rate offset. While the Town Hall experiences quite a bit of usage, there is no waiting list; the availability of the building appears to meet the needs of the community.

The Town Hall water service comes from the Cornish Elementary School well. At the time of this writing, the water is not potable. The Cornish Elementary School has contracted with Monadnock Environmental Consultants to resolve the water issues. Remediation of the water supply will be funded with state grants. Included in the remediation plan will be the continuation of water service to the Town Hall. A recommendation from Monadnock Environmental is expected within the next week. Remediation of the water supply problems is a high priority for the School District and the Town, and although the grant application process must be seen through, it is expected that the water problem will be resolved in the coming year.

The blower of the heating system in the Town Hall is loud and a replacement should be considered. Use of a sound system mitigates the heating system noise. The Town Hall does not include a cooling system.

#### *Cornish Town Offices Meeting Room*

The Cornish Town Offices are located at 488 Town House Road on a 1.7 acre parcel in the Rural Zoning District. The Town also owns an adjacent .64 acre parcel of open land. The building houses the offices of the Select Board, Town Clerk, and Tax Collector. The Town Office is the repository for the records of the Town. Land use boards, commissions, and committees also use this space for meetings. The upstairs floor of the Town Offices serves as a meeting room and is accessible by two staircases and a lift. This room includes one of the two restrooms in the Town Offices and a small stage with a piano in need of some attention. The meeting room is 2,160 square feet and has a maximum occupancy of 204. There is no existing lower recommended capacity from the Fire Department; however, based on past experience, meetings of 60 may be

seated comfortably in the upstairs room. The building offers two accessible parking spaces and off-street parking for at least 20 cars.

The upstairs room of the Town Offices is controlled by a separate thermostat which operates the forced hot water heating system. There is currently no cooling system in the Town Offices. The upstairs meeting room includes an older ceiling ventilation unit that likely exchanges a high volume of air; however, at its highest speed, the fan creates ambient noise. Running the fan on low or using a sound system mitigates the problem. At some point in the future, the Town may need to consider a new HVAC system.

The ability to lock the interior doors to the first-floor municipal offices allows for after-hours use of the upstairs meeting room. Use of the meeting room is on a first-come, first-serve basis and is scheduled by the office of the Select Board. No fees are charged for use of the Town Office meeting room.

### *Cornish Elementary School*

The Cornish Elementary School regulates building rental through School Board policy KF-R. Many organizations have used the gym, the library, or the cafeteria. Athletic fields and classrooms may also be rented. The Cornish Annual Meeting and School District Meeting are held in the Cornish Elementary School gymnasium. The maximum occupancy of the gymnasium is 692. Organizations seeking to use the Cornish School facilities must file an application with the principal. Depending on the type of organization, rental fees range from \$0/no charge to \$100.<sup>3</sup> After hours, the school historically has been available to local boards and organizations. The gym, the cafeteria, and many classrooms are used each summer by the Cornish Fair Association for various exhibits and events. Due to security concerns of the day, the school typically does not allow public use of the building during the school day.

At the time of this writing the Cornish Elementary School water supply is not potable. A description of remediation can be found under the Town Hall section. The school's long range facilities plan includes replacement of the roof, HVAC upgrades, windows, siding, and improvements to the front entrance and grounds.<sup>4</sup> Although school building aid and grants are available, these upgrades and repairs are likely to present a significant cost to the taxpayer.

### Future Community Facilities

Today's libraries are evolving, offering community outreach programs by providing a place to learn and create with friends. The plans for a future library would provide space designated for community use that will be available to all residents of Cornish. The new space will be equipped with two bathrooms, kitchen facilities, accessibility, parking, HVAC, access to outdoor space, and room for around a group of, plus or minus, 75 people. Libraries of today are spaces for community members to engage and learn by providing an open and welcoming space that will augment small groups needing a pleasant, light filled area. The plans of a future library being

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<sup>3</sup> *Cornish School Board Policy KF-R*

<sup>4</sup> *Cornish School Board Minutes, 10/17/2022*

considered today will offer a comfortable, well lit, and easily accessible space for Cornish community members to gather.