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Bethel Will Be Asked To Bond for Town Hall

The Bethel Selectboard finalized plans for a bond vote to rehabilitate the Town Hall at their Sept. 22 meeting.

The bond is needed to match the \$301,000 grant the town received in January through Sen. Patrick Leahy from the federal Save America's Treasures historic preservation program.

The board decided to bond for the full \$1.3 million amount needed to substantially complete the rehabilitation of the hall, saying that the project had been in the works for many years and now is the time to complete the project and get into the building and begin using it and reaping the benefits of having it.

The Selectboard voiced full support for the project.

The town bond question will be a separate ballot at the general election on Nov. 4.

Town Manager Dell Cloud explained that state statutes require that though the town will not be required to spend this much, the bond question needs to be phrased to ask for the full cost of the project, "subject to reduction of the application of reserves."

In other words, the full \$1.3 million would be authorized, but funds that are already in hand would be subtracted from the amount the town would actually bond for.

Funds in hand include the \$301,000 Save Americas Treasures grant, \$25,000 that voters approved at last year's town meeting and approximately \$30,000 in the present town hall fund, most of which was raised through the "1892 Fund Campaign" carried out by the Town Hall Finance Committee.

Using figures provided in May by architect Laz Scangas the board expects the actual amount still to be raised by the bond issue would be no more than \$944,000.

It might, in fact, be less than that. Cloud listed three other possible sources of funds which could reduce the total, all of which require matching funds from the bond. These include an accessibilities modifications grant for handicapped accessibility, which could total \$50,000, an historic preservation grant for the front doors and lower windows, which, if awarded, may be for up to \$15,000, and a possible grant from USDA Rural Development for \$40,000 or \$50,000 if the town them to finance the bond. If all these potential grants were awarded they could reduce the total to \$829,000.

Cloud offered the recent example of the Church Street Bridge, where the bond question had been asked for the full amount of the town's share of \$750,000, but was eventually reduced to \$350,000 and retired early.

Chairman Neal Fox thanked members of the Town Hall Finance Committee who were present, saying that without the diligent help of the committees which have worked

on the hall rehabilitation project over about 8 years, the Select Board would not be nearly as far along as they are now, adding "now is the time to go for it and to complete the project."

The bond question will be finalized by the board by October 4th and then advertised for 3 successive weeks. The Select Board will hold an informational meeting about the bond question at the beginning their meeting on Monday October 27th.