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### Armory cost: \$1 Rehab job: \$6.3m?

By Nadia Salomon, Globe Correspondent | September 30, 2007

It took only \$1 to purchase the Milford Armory on Pearl StreetBut it looks like the town of Milford will face a hefty price tag of \$6.3 million to restore the building, and at least one official is wondering if that would bleed resources from residents or lead to tax hikes.

William Buckley, chairman of the Board of Selectmen, said that even though the armory has been housing the town's youth center for the past 10 years, he believes the proposed renovation would pit the needs of the town's senior citizens against its youth.

"It simply becomes a question of economic fairness," said Buckley, speaking at the selectmen's meeting on Monday.

Asking board members to be mindful of senior citizens living on a fixed income, Buckley said, "As a town we do so very much for the children... improving schools, creating some very impressive after school programs, so, it can't be said that Milford does not do enough for our children."

Selectman Brian Murray, chairman of the Armory Renovation Committee, said the \$6.3 million figure is only an initial quote from a town-commissioned feasibility study on the restoration of the armory, and called Buckley's comments premature.

"It's just unfortunate that the most expensive option got presented first," Murray said. "We're currently in a process to evaluate a number of different options, and eventually, the town has to decide on one option."

According to officials, the first step toward bringing back the armory is to decide what needs to be done to the physical structure of the building, to update fire, safety, and building codes, plumbing, and to make the building handicapped accessible. The second step is to evaluate how the building is currently being used and whether those uses can be expanded.

Architect Thomas A. Scarlata of Bargmann, Hendrie & Archetype, Inc. explained to selectmen that the \$6.3 million price tag covers a full renovation with upgrades. "The estimated construction cost is \$4.8 million," he said. "The figure rises to \$6.3 million when you include the cost of consultant fees, material testing, and fixtures furnishings and equipment."

Scarlata said the project is at a preliminary stage, with options that include reduced costs to be presented to the board over the course of six to nine months. "BH&A and the building committee will also look at the soft-cost budgets, particularly the fixtures and equipment budgets. Many of the items carried in the draft budget may be deleted or modified," he said.

"Once we get a design we're comfortable with, we'll look at different funding options. People can't panic and shouldn't feel threatened because we've done past projects responsibly," Murray said.

While BH&A expects to complete the feasibility study this fall, Buckley said the Armory Renovation Committee and BH&A need to have a good grasp on Milford's total financial resources. "The high-dollar programs on the plate are in my view, things that could lead this community down the path of override, like so many towns around us who demonstrated an inability to say no to some things, then built their projects, spent their money, and are now paying the price," he said.

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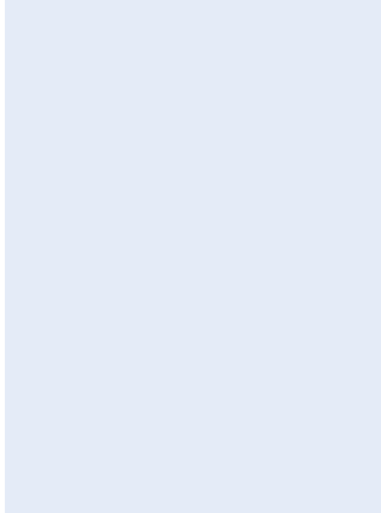
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