

THE MUNICIPAL BUILDING PROJECT

In March 2021, Islesboro's Select Board initiated the Municipal Building Project to provide additional space for the Health Center and the Department of Public Safety, which comprises Policing, Emergency Medical Services (EMS), and the Fire Department. The project includes a new Health Center building, reconfiguring the space vacated by the Health Center in the Municipal Building for use by Public Safety, and constructing a Public Safety Garage above the Narrows. Except for additional storage space, no changes are proposed for the Town offices.

THE MUNICIPAL BUILDING'S HISTORY

Until 1991, Islesboro had no Municipal Building. The Town Office was located in the basement of the school, the deputy or constable ran policing and fire safety from home, and the ambulance and three fire trucks were parked up-island at Durkee's Store. Medical services were provided to the community by physicians who practiced in their own homes or in a house at 199 Derby Road bought by the Town in 1930 to serve as the doctor's residence and office. The physicians were supported by a Doctor's Fund to which community members contributed.

Recognizing the need to consolidate and improve Town services, in 1988 the Town acquired a building at 150 Main Road that had been built in 1979 as a market. The structure was renovated to serve as the Municipal Building, housing the Town Office, the Islesboro Health Center, and Public Safety. The renovation was completed in 1991.

SPACE NEEDS AT THE MUNICIPAL BUILDING TODAY

Over the past 30 years changes in program practices and growth in the island's population have led to growth in health and safety services, and the space requirements have grown as well. In recent years, staff at the Health Center and Public Safety have found their facilities to be too small and/or inappropriately designed for the services they are expected to provide.

ISLESBORO HEALTH CENTER (IHC). When the IHC moved into the Municipal Building in 1991, the IHC had two Physician Assistants and a full-time Administrative Coordinator; the number of patient visits was in the hundreds. Then in the following decade Islesboro's population grew, particularly the number of summer residents, and the IHC increased its emphasis on primary care. By 2020, the average number of patient visits had risen to approximately 2,400 annually. Since 2002, the IHC has had three medical providers who work on a rotating basis. A Transcriptionist and a Filing Clerk joined the Administrative Coordinator on the support staff to handle the increasingly complex paperwork required by insurance companies. In 2021 a Medical Assistant was hired in order to assist with the increase in the number of people who had become primary care patients at the IHC as a result of the rise in ferry rates, and with work relating to the onset of Covid. In order to meet space needs, the IHC put up two temporary modular units adjacent to the Municipal Building.

The staff uses every nook and cranny to confer with patients and to store supplies, drugs, medical equipment, etc., but for quite a few years the lack of space has been an everyday problem. The needs include:

- 2-3 additional offices. At present, what was the patient waiting room must be used for staff.
- 2 additional exam rooms to accommodate routine patient visits; separate room for blood draws.
- Separate room for Tele-Health and visiting specialists, including psychiatric nurse practitioners.
- Separate rooms for blood draws, the lab, and the kitchen break area. At present the same counter is used for blood draws as well as non-medical purposes.
- Space for essential equipment such as oxygen tanks and sterilizers, which are now located in the trauma room.
- Better space for medications, which at present are stored with the cleaning supplies.

PUBLIC SAFETY. Public Safety is directed by the Public Safety Officer, with the help of an administrative assistant. The Public Safety Officer runs the Police Department and EMS; the Fire Department is headed by the Fire Chief. Central to Public Safety's operations is a cadre of approximately 25 volunteers who provide invaluable assistance to EMS and the Fire Department. There is a comprehensive training program for volunteers; 3-4 classes in a variety of emergency practices are held each month at the Municipal Building. At present Public Safety has two small staff offices and one 19' x 19' multi-purpose room.

Police Department. In 2021, Public Safety Officer Fred Porter and a part-time deputy, who comes from the mainland, handled 379 incidents. Fred and his administrative assistant operate from one 8' x 8' office. All other policing activities such as interviews and work associated with emergency operations must take place in the multi-purpose room. Space needs include:

- Separate offices for the Public Safety Officer and his assistant.
- A separate room to serve as an emergency communications hub, with open walls for mapping and logistical charts.
- Interview room.
- Evidence room with work bench or table for processing.
- Storage space for supplies and training equipment.

Emergency Medical Services (EMS). In 2021 EMS responded to 77 calls for assistance: of these, 48 required ambulance trips to the mainland. Space needs include:

- Larger, better laid-out space for training sessions.
- More space for training equipment and storage of mannequins.
- Changing room and lockers for EMS responders.

Fire Department, Municipal Building During 2021, the department responded to 44 calls and issued 1,616 burn permits. Chief Durkee's office – formerly the market's meat locker – is small and narrow and has no window that can be opened. Space needs include:

- A larger office for the Chief, with a window.
- Larger, better organized space for volunteer training.
- A maintenance area in the garage for repairs to vehicles.

Fire Department, up-island, Public Safety Office Fred Porter and Fire Chief Murt Durkee have long advocated for a building to house a fire truck and an ambulance above the Narrows. The population there has increased, and residents must pay additional property insurance premiums because they live far from a fire station. Rising sea levels, which in recent years have caused the Narrows to flood during storms, make this need even more pressing.

ADDRESSING THE SPACE NEEDS

THE BUILDING PLAN. Responding to staff concerns about the space needs at the Municipal Building, in March of 2021 Select Board members began to assess the present health and safety facilities and to investigate how more space could be provided in the most efficient and cost-effective way. Board members interviewed staff and town employees, evaluated prior proposals, and obtained the advice of 2A Architects in Rockport. In November, the Board appointed a seven-member Municipal Building Project Committee “to assist in the evaluation of space needs in Islesboro’s Municipal Building...and the implementation of solutions to overcrowding there.”

The preliminary work revealed that the existing footprint of the Municipal Building cannot accommodate the needs of the departments responsible for health and safety. There is not enough square footage, and the Health Center would require extensive, costly ventilation and sound proofing in order to meet present codes. The consensus is that the most workable, cost effective solution will be to build a separate building for the Health Center and to renovate the vacated Health Center space to suit the needs of Public Safety. The Town Office will remain essentially the same. The overall plan also includes an up-island Public Safety Garage to house a fire truck and an ambulance.

In February 2022, the Select Board approved a contract with Stephen Blatt Architects of Portland to prepare a schematic design and cost estimates for the new IHC building as well as for the Municipal Building renovation and the up-island Public Safety Garage. Steve Blatt knows Islesboro well, for he was the architect for the extensive renovation of Islesboro Central School (2008-2010). During the winter and spring of 2022, Steve prepared a general plan and concept designs for the three buildings based on extensive interviews with Health Center and Public Safety staff.

Health Center – To be located at the west end of the Municipal Building. Three exam rooms, a critical care room, three offices (two to be shared with medical personnel coming from the mainland), a laboratory, a pharmacy, rooms for counselling and dental care, a reception area, and a meeting room. The building also includes a small apartment for staff members from the mainland who stay overnight. The roof will have solar panels.

Public Safety. Present space in the Municipal Building to be expanded into the area that was formerly used by the Health Center. To include a reception area, three offices, radio room, emergency operations center, evidence room, interview room, storage room.

Up-island Public Safety Garage. Spaces for a fire truck and an ambulance, small room with cots and a table, storage room. Solar panels on the roof or on the ground near the building.

THE COST. Stephen Blatt Architect’s cost estimate for the three-part project in 2022: \$3,500,000.

	Square feet	Estimate cost/SF	Subtotal
Health Center	4,500	\$553	\$2,488,500
Public Safety Renovation	2,000	\$50	\$100,000
Public Safety Garage	1,728	\$250	\$431,820
Sub-total			\$3,020,320
Construction Contingency @5%			\$150,000
A/E Fees @ 10%			\$302,000
Reimbursable Expenses			\$6,500
Furnishings			\$21,500
Total Project Cost Estimate			\$3,500,000

FUNDING. The construction cost is to be met through a combination of public and private funds. Fifty percent of the total, \$1,750,000, to be covered through the issuance of general obligation bonds, paid down with tax-levy funds over 20 years. The balance, \$1,750,000, to be raised through private contributions raised by the Municipal Building Project’s Campaign Committee.

On August 3, 2022, the Select Board approved the schematic designs and cost estimate. Islesboro voters approved the overall plan at a Special Town meeting on September 22, 2022.

PRESENT STATUS OF THE PROJECT

FUNDRAISING. The campaign to raise \$1,750,000 in private funds began in September 2022 and met the goal in April 2023. To date, the Municipal Building Project’s Campaign Committee has raised \$1,850,405. There are 211 donors: gifts range in size from \$25 to \$300,000.

CONSTRUCTION COSTS. In this post-Covid period, construction costs have risen nationwide. As this trend will surely affect the budget for the Municipal Building Project, every effort is being made to keep costs down. The architects have lowered the roofs of both the Health Center and the up-island garage. The size of the Health Center building has been reduced by 13.2 percent, with a smaller waiting room and some hallways narrowed. Cost-saving refinements to both buildings are ongoing.

Despite these measures, it is possible that the construction costs may exceed the initial estimate to some degree. If that turns out to be the case, the Town will go back to the Islesboro voters with a request for the additional funds required.

CONSTRUCTION MANAGER. During the planning process, Stephen Blatt Architects advised that the new Health Center building, and the up-island garage be built simultaneously, which would have significant cost savings. This approach would require a construction manager to administer the complex bidding process and the construction that follows. In May of 2023 the Municipal Building Committee interviewed four companies, choosing H. E. Callahan Construction of Auburn, ME. Over the summer and fall Callahan worked on the bidding process for the two buildings. In November they submitted a draft Guaranteed Minimum Price that included the new buildings and the Municipal Building renovation for Public Safety. The total cost was \$4,813,508, \$1,213,508 above the \$3.5 million estimate. Considering this to be excessive, the Municipal Building Committee decided to

change construction managers. On November 15, 2023, the committee voted to retain Ledgewood Construction of South Portland. In the next two months the company will manage the final design refinements and the bidding process. If the Guaranteed Minimum Price is acceptable, construction will begin as early as possible in the spring of 2024.

TIMETABLE

2023	December	Construction manager oversees final design refinements for Health Center building and up-island garage, begins bidding process.
2024	Winter Spring	Construction manager submits a Guaranteed Maximum Price for construction of Health Center building and up-island garage. Construction begins.
2025		Renovation of the present Municipal Building for Public Safety.

Municipal Building Project Committee, November 26, 2023