



**SELECT BOARD MEETING
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2021
BUDGET COMMITTEE 5:30 P.M.
REGULAR MEETING: 6:00 P.M.**

ZOOM ONLY

(If you wish to attend via Zoom, please email the Town Manager at kgeorge@thomastonmaine.gov or visit the calendar on the Town website at www.thomastonmaine.gov for the meeting link.

AGENDA ADJUSTMENTS:

- 1. Review the Beechwood Street Culvert replacement project per John Fancy.**
- 2. Discuss the Watts Hall Community Arts organization per Bill Hahn.**

Memo

To: Selectboard
Cc: Town Manager
From: Brandon Allen & John Fancy
Date: February 18, 2021
Re: BEECHWOOD STREET CULVERT REPLACEMENT

We have received word that the DEP has awarded Thomaston a \$125,000 grant toward the replacement of the seriously deteriorated culvert on upper Beechwood Street. We have also received the Army, Corps of Engineers permit for this project. These are two of the three major steps needed to move this project ahead. The last step is voter approval to finish the funding.

The current budget put \$24,000 in the Culvert Reserve Account for this project. Last September the Board approved using these funds to have Dirigo Engineering work on the design, grant and permit applications. At this point the design is about 75% complete and the grant and permits have been received.

The project is estimated to cost between \$225,000 to \$275,000. The proposed FY 21/22 budget has \$25,000 in it (new funds of \$17,855.53 and \$7,144.47 from Drainage Reserve). If approved, this would give about \$174,000 of the funds needed.

The actual replacement can only be done from July 15 to the end of September by regulations. Dirigo Engineers can finish the design, get bids and have the project ready for construction this summer if funding is available. One course of action would be to have the voters approve a short-term borrowing, not to exceed \$100,000, that would be repaid in the next few years by the annual \$25,000 that would have gone into the Culvert Reserve Account. No property tax increase needed.

If the Board decides to move this project ahead you could pass the following motion: **Move to authorize Kara George, Town Manager, to place in the Town warrant an article authorizing the Town to borrow up to \$100,000 for replacement of the failing culvert on Beechwood Street.**

WATTS HALL COMMUNITY ARTS

A non-profit organization with 501.c.3 status

Mission

Watts Hall Community Arts is committed to the arts, the community, and ensuring that Watts Hall continues the proud tradition of enriching community life in Thomaston for generations to come. Creating and inspiring excellence in the performing arts for Thomaston and Mid Coast Maine, WHCA will provide professional entertainment as well as community enhancement and education to drive economic growth for our community and the Mid Coast area.

Overview

Watts Hall Community Arts will manage the use of Watts Hall and its associated spaces on the second floor of the Watts Block for the purpose of enriching community life, contributing to a thriving downtown and promoting Thomaston's economic and community development. With these goals in mind, WHCA will:

1. Encourage and support community-building activities created by and for Thomaston residents of all ages

WHCA will continue the Hall's legacy of hosting a wide array of community gatherings for families and townspeople of all ages. The Hall will continue to be the venue for community theater productions and will provide space for residents and local organizations to hold their meetings, their dances, their fairs, their gatherings of all sorts, continuing the tradition of bringing the people of our town together and strengthening community bonds.

2. Capitalize on the historic yet fully equipped stage and multipurpose auditorium to promote the use of the Hall as an entertainment venue

Recent improvements to Watts Hall and future renovation projects, combined with Thomaston's enviable location between the two Georges River peninsulas and proximity to Rockland, make it possible to expand to the Hall's use for income-producing events. Capitalizing on Watts Hall's unique characteristics, and with community interests and reasonable prices in mind, Watts Hall Community Arts will present an annual program of entertainment events for Mid-coast residents and visitors of all ages. In addition, working with Johnson Hall in Gardiner and other similar organizations, WHCA will host a series of events featuring performing artists from around the country who are touring in Maine. These events will run the gamut from musicians to variety and magic shows, stand up comedians, and theater productions for children.

3. Manage rental of the Watts Hall for public and private meetings and social gatherings

Watts Hall Community Arts will also seek out and coordinate rental of the Hall to such groups as Bay Chamber Concerts, Camden International Film Festival, The Camden Conference, regional theatre companies and other organizations and events that are compatible with the community's needs and priorities. WHCA will also seek out and coordinate rental of the Hall for private events such as weddings, reunions and receptions.

4. Undertake a fund-raising campaign to cover the costs of renovations to the Watts Block

With particular attention on improving the functionality and aesthetics of the second floor of the building, WHCA will conduct a capital campaign for such renovations as installing state of the art audio/visual equipment, upgrading heating/cooling systems refinishing floors and woodwork, upgrading bathrooms, improving kitchen facilities, repairing windows, and improving interior lighting. Income from WHCA programming beyond that which is needed to cover expenses will go toward supporting maintenance and upkeep of the Block as a whole.

Operations

WHCA will be governed by a Board of Directors that is responsible to the Watts Block Board of Trustees. The Board along with a part time Director, interns and volunteers will be responsible for booking, promoting and managing events as well as promoting and managing Hall rentals. Rentals rates will continue to be affordable for Thomaston residents and non-profits with a sliding scale for social events, out of town non-profits and for-profit organizations.

Partnerships

Watts Hall Community Arts will forge close ties with the following partners to coordinate efforts and provide mutual support: Thomaston Public Library, The Knox Museum, the Thomaston Community & Economic Development Committee, RSU #13, Watts Hall Community Players and regional theater and performing arts groups.

Background: Watts Block

Watts Block, a gift to the people of Thomaston from Captain Samuel Watts in 1890, has stood proudly in the center of Thomaston's historic downtown serving as the center for both commerce and community life. For over 100 years its second-floor hall with its full stage has hosted town meetings, high school graduations, theatrical productions, movies, concerts, proms, variety shows, penny auctions and so much more. The building housed the Scout Room and some say the Hall was even used as the basketball court for Thomaston HS. The building continues to have an important role to play in preserving Thomaston's small-town character by capitalizing on Watts Hall with its stage, its history and its heart.

Watts Block also acts as an economic stimulus. It comprises approximately a quarter of the historic downtown with its first floor-store fronts and the Hall is economically interconnected in providing a vibrant downtown and a successful growing community. Having an active event center in the middle of town is an economic development asset. Population growth and economic growth go hand and hand and people want to move to a town where there is an active social life and where the sense of community is strong. Additionally Watts Hall provides the vital link that brings people to town after hours to frequent restaurants, bars etc.