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MARCH 30, 2023

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Town Hall repairs could cost up to \$7 million

Board of Selectmen discuss Tighe & Bond report

By Dalton Zbierski
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HAMPDEN – Structural Engineering Manager Craig French of consulting firm Tighe & Bond reported to the Board of Selectmen on Monday that repairs to Town Hall will cost between \$4 million and \$7 million.

Town Hall has been integral to the community for generations, and French believes the building is worth reinvesting in.

“From a big picture point of view, overall, the building is not in bad shape. For its age, it’s got some issues and cracks and some things you have to address, but overall, I think the building structurally and foundationally is in good condition,” French said.

A significant portion of the projected cost is tied to bringing the building up to code and making it handicap accessible. If significant repairs occur, the building must comply with mandates set forth by the state’s Architectural Access Board.

French said the building could need structural improvements, an elevator, improvements to elevator ramps, new doors and perhaps new bathrooms.

“The biggest problem you guys have is it’s a town building, it’s a publicly-accessed building, and it’s not accessible at all; not handicap accessible,” he said. “The ADA codes, the new AAB codes, they all require public buildings to be accessible, and that’s where a lot of the big ticket items on this list are,” French said.

French said all of the improvements don’t have to happen simultaneously, but they must occur.

The most expensive item in the Tighe & Bond report is the

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Boy Scout installs Blessing Boxes in Wilbraham to earn Eagle badge

By Dalton Zbierski
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Scout Luke Whalen-Sylvester of Wilbraham’s Troop 359 stands next to a Blessing Box he installed outside of Christ the King-Epiphany Church. (Staff photo by Dalton Zbierski)

WILBRAHAM – In an effort to earn his Eagle badge, Boy Scout Luke Whalen-Sylvester of Wilbraham’s Troop 359 has created two Blessing Boxes.

One Blessing Box is located behind Wilbraham United Church, at 500 Main St., and the other can be found behind Christ the King-Epiphany Church, at 758 Main St.

“Any hour, day or night you can donate food, you can take food out. Nonperishables like deodorant and toiletries anything like that... There’s food insecurity everywhere, no matter where you are in the United States. There’s always people in need,” Whalen-Sylvester said.

Whalen-Sylvester is a senior at Minnechaug Regional High School and has been a member of Troop 359 since sixth-grade. He’s earned many merit badges along the way and is close to achieving his Eagle badge, the most coveted and hardest to earn of them all.

One merit badge Whalen-Sylvester earned was focused on citizenship in the community. To earn the badge, he was required to research an issue in his community and chose food insecurity.

As he began to pursue his Eagle badge, the process inspired him to

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Board of Selectmen reviews proposed sewer rate increase

Also welcome Wilbraham Cultural Council and discuss Bylaw Study Committee vote

By Kristin Rivers
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WILBRAHAM - The Board of Selectmen held a public hearing on March 27 to discuss proposed sewer rate increases for the town.

Department of Public Works Director Tonya Capparello explained the changing economy and significant increases from the Springfield Water and Sewer Commission in the next couple

years increased prices.

Additionally, there are revenue losses from the main street betterments. Capparello said it was expected as they are in place for 20 years, while debt services are for 30 years.

She outlined her proposal. “Our rates are currently \$4.10 per 100 cubic foot for residential customers and \$5.00 per 100 cubic foot for commercial customers,” she said. “I’m proposing a rate increase of 50 cents for each, which would bring us up to \$4.60 and \$5.50.”

The last rate increase was in 2008.

During the discussion, Gordon Allen, a resident, asked Capparello how the betterment works along with town payment

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(1st row L to R) Wilbraham Board of Selectmen Clerk Susan Bunnell, Chairman Carolyn Brennan and Vice Chairman Theresa Goodrich. (2nd row L to R) Wilbraham Cultural Council Members Karen Grycel, Sue Bennett, chair, Jane Clark, Susan Hintze, Jen Powell and Julie Slavick. Powell displays the new Wilbraham Cultural Council logo.

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