



FROM TOWN HALL

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RENOVATIONS AT TOWN HALL

The Seabrook Island Town Hall, quickly approaching its 20th birthday, got the first phase of a needed facelift in August.

The building has not undergone any major renovations since the Town's staff and council moved from rented space at Bohicket Marina and into Town Hall in 2001. While fresh paint and some new and rearranged furniture will be evident to visitors, most of the changes are "behind the walls, under the floor, and in the ceil-

ing." Those changes were done to improve the functionality of the building, both for staff and residents, and also involved some needed routine maintenance.

Those visiting and using the building will first notice the relocated conference room and its new furnishings. The original conference room could only accommodate six people at the existing table, which was also too narrow for large plans and architectural drawings. The room also lacked any semblance of modern technology.

The new conference room is now to your left as you enter the building in what had been the town administrator's office. The slightly larger room features a new conference table and chairs for ten, and the room was been retrofitted with upgraded electrical wiring, Internet access, HDMI/VGA cables and connections, and improved lighting. A 60-inch flat screen TV will expand presentation options. Added

wainscoting and fresh paint, a must after all the new wiring work, complete the makeover.

Perhaps most significantly, the Town's conference room, also now equipped with HAM radio jacks, can function as a fully equipped emergency command center should the need arise.

Changes in Council chambers are not as evident, unless you've attended meetings and wondered about all the thin white wires dangling from the ceiling that have now disappeared (along with the sagging crack in the ceiling drywall). Those wires were microphones used to record official business, which (believe it or not) were still being recorded on cassette tapes. Not only were replacement cassette tapes becoming difficult to purchase, the recordings on the original sound system were fuzzy and nearly impossible to transcribe.

The chamber now features an up-

to-date digital recording system. This includes eight microphones at each seat on the dais for use in Council, Planning Commission, Utility Commission, and other public meetings. A wireless microphone was also added for use in the audience when addressing the dais.

While Council members had recognized the need for improving the functionality of the Town Hall building via technology upgrades, and provided funding in the budget, new Town Administrator Joe Cronin has been instrumental in making the changes happen in just his first year on the job. He has also overseen hardware and software upgrades in the Town's computer system and is redesigning the Town's website. (Watch for news about that launch in coming weeks!)

The facelift totaled approximately \$35,000. Competitive bidding and using island talent brought the renovations in under budget, leaving some

funds to be applied for additional painting and woodwork repairs throughout the interior of the building to further freshen up the aesthetics.

In the future, the Council has budgeted for a second phase of renovations that will involve work to the exterior of the building. Much of that work will address general maintenance issues, such as pressure washing, repairing cracked caulking and exposed seams in the siding, and re-scaling decking boards. The deteriorating railings will also be fixed, and the entire exterior of the building painted. In addition, staff would like to see cabinets and closets built to provide storage space – something that was completely overlooked during the building's original construction.

All said and done, the building should be in good shape when it's time to celebrate its 20 years in service to the community.▲