

Brookfield

Tantasqua students offer town hall plans

BROOKFIELD — Tantasqua Regional High School architectural design students presented preliminary renovation plans for the Brookfield Town Hall at Tuesday's Board of Selectmen meeting.

Invited by selectmen to submit a set of plans, team leader seniors Samantha Francis and Brandon Trafford gave a presentation that included a floor plan and 3-D graphics.

The plans feature expanded municipal office space in the basement and first floors, a senior center, meeting rooms and additional bathrooms and kitchens. The design includes making the building accessible to the disabled, and includes a second basement entrance, a wheelchair lift and an elevator that runs from the basement to the second floor.

"These plans are tentative. They give the town a visual, and (the students) saved us literally thousands of dollars," said Stephen J. Comtois II, chairman of selectmen.

Municipal Facilities Planning Committee Chairman William R. Simpson Jr., who was also present at Tuesday's meeting, said grant money for both the project design and implementation of renovations may be available through the Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund.

Mr. Comtois said selectmen would

discuss the grant possibilities at their Feb. 25 meeting.

"This is all hypothetical at this point," Mr. Comtois said, adding: "The town hasn't voted on anything yet, and it all hinges on (the adoption) of the CPA."

Adoption of the Community Preservation Act enables communities to raise money to create dedicated funds for open space preservation, preservation of historic resources, development of affordable housing and the acquisition and development of outdoor recreational facilities.

CPA funds are raised through a voter-authorized surcharge of 3 percent on local property tax bills that is matched by the state. The first \$100,000 of assessed property value is exempt from the surcharge, and there is also an exemption for low-income families and low- and moderate-income seniors. Approval requires a majority vote at the town election and a two-thirds vote on a CPA bylaw adoption at the annual town meeting.

Selectmen said a visual of the preliminary town hall renovation plans are available at the Board of Selectmen's office.

The historic town hall, built in 1904, has long played an important role in the community. For several years town officials have discussed the future of the building and how best to renovate it to suit current and future municipal needs. Recent repairs include replacing broken roof tiles, repairing the outside brick and restoring the bell tower and clock.

In business Tuesday, selectmen set the annual town meeting for 7 p.m. June 7 at Brookfield Elementary School. If the meeting must be extended, selectmen said it will reconvene at 7 p.m. June 14.

— Karen Trainor