



Local Government Center

March 24, 2011

Mr. Warren Hammack, Selectman
Nelson Board of Selectmen
7 Nelson Common Road
Nelson, NH 03457

RE: Safety Survey, Town Offices and Old Town Hall – March 22, 2011

Dear Mr. Hammack:

This letter will confirm my visit to the above captioned locations for the purpose of surveying the properties and identifying, if any, safety problems that may expose either employees or the general public to loss. I appreciate your accompanying me throughout the buildings and your assistance in providing background on matters.

When looking at buildings built in the 1800's and adapted, changed or renovated over time to comply with existing standards, one tends to see these buildings "chopped up" to meet the needs of both a growing workforce and storage requirements. Such is the case with the Town Offices.

Please note the observations and recommendations contained herein.

Town Offices (Brick Schoolhouse)

1. **Observation:** The Selectmen's meeting area is a small area at the rear of the building. This area is not isolated from the main office area as only $\frac{3}{4}$ height walls exist. When in non-public session, the board has to relocate to a small kitchenette area which is separate but not sound proof. The board has the potential to deal with significant confidential legal and personnel issues that cannot be overheard by other employees or other board members. **Recommendation:** Provide an isolated, sound-proof or reduced sound transmission area for selectmen's non-public sessions.
2. **Observation:** Access to the rear exit on the first floor is clear. When opening the exit door to the exterior, I noted that it did not seem to be shoveled. It is vital that all exits be kept free and clear of any obstructions. **Recommendation:** Ensure all exits are cleared of obstructions internally and externally.

NH Municipal Association
Fax: 603.224.5406

HealthTrust
Fax: 603.226-2988

Property-Liability Trust
Fax: 603.226-2322

Workers' Compensation Trust
Fax: 603.224.6093

3. **Observation:** The furnace is in a wet crawl space beneath the first floor and accessed via a trap door and wooden ladder. The furnace is relatively new, contains all the firematic switches and is enclosed (as best as possible) with what appears to be 5/8" firecode gypsum wallboard. In addition, a single domestic sprinkler head is situated over the burner. **Recommendation:** Ensure that means to evacuate water from this crawl space area are reliable such that the furnace will not be subject to flooding. Also consider relocating the furnace to a more serviceable area.
4. **Observation:** Access to the second floor is via a steep stairway in the front of the building. The door leading from the entry foyer to this stairway is normally kept locked. Egress is not impeded by the lock. **Recommendation: See 5 below**
5. **Observation:** The second floor once housed the police department and the Board of Selectmen. Access by disabled persons to the second floor is not possible and the board relocated both agencies. The second floor is now used on a limited basis by the records archivists and the town historian. **Recommendation:** Consider renovating/remodeling the entire building to meet current code requirements. Exits would be fully enclosed stairs, the fire escape would be removed and an elevator would be installed. Presently, despite the limited occupancy of the second floor, the building does not meet state regulations for occupancy.
6. **Observation:** A small, climate-controlled room houses the town's vital records. Other historical data is in boxes or binders stored openly on the second floor. They are not protected from fire or other environmental damage (smoke, water leak, etc.). **Recommendation:** Consider purchasing a high-quality fireproof cabinet for the town's vital and original documents or storing these items at a climate controlled, secure, protected off-site storage facility.
7. **Observation:** Access to the rear fire escape is blocked by storage. In addition, access to the exterior fire escape is via large 6 over 6 double-hung window with a wire mesh screen over it. The height of the window sill above the floor is about 2 feet – approximately the same as to the access to the platform of the fire escape. **Recommendation:** As a temporary measure, clear all storage from in front of the access to the window; remove the mesh screen covering the window; operate the window for ease of opening. A step in front of the window to allow easier access to the window is acceptable. Like Item 5 above, this poor and non-compliant egress would be removed and an enclosed stairway installed.

Old Town Hall/Library

1. **Observation:** An engineering report indicates that the floor in the Old Town Hall is settling due to moisture and water in the basement/crawl space exposing structural members to rot. The floor can be visually observed to see this settling. **Recommendation:** Take immediate measures to shore the floor up so that a large occupant load can be accommodated. As town meeting and contra dances are held here, it is important that a level of safety be provided.

I thank you for contacting the Local Government Center in your efforts to reduce the risk and exposure of loss to the town. Should you have any questions or desire additional assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



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