

**SWIFT HOUSE TASK FORCE**  
**REPORT to BOARD OF SELECTMEN**  
December 8, 2020

The Swift House Task Force has concentrated its primary efforts over the past six months on identifying and addressing the most urgent short term needs of the building utilizing the limited, special funds that were made available, while also planning for more mid-term and long-term concerns.

**COMPLETED WORK:**

Specifically, we have completed the following:

- Removal of rodents and bats
- Repair stone foundation around perimeter of building to eliminate rodent access and water infiltration.
- Removal of two deteriorated chimneys and flashing, and installation of temporary protection at chimney sites
- Priority carpentry repairs to help secure building exterior including replacement of rotten soffits and fascia boards, and most urgent items on a list of needed window sash, sill, and trim repairs

**ANNUAL OPERATING BUDGET:**

In analyzing the current and ongoing needs of the building, which had not received much care in recent years, it became apparent that Swift House would need an increase in its Annual Operating Budget to adequately fund overall maintenance and ongoing repairs to the building, care of the grounds, and custodial care on an annual basis. We are therefore requesting that the Board of Selectmen approve an increase in the Swift House Annual Operating Budget of \$6,500 for the 2021-22 budget year, in addition to appropriations, as in the past, for electric, heating fuel, water & sewer, and supplies.

**ROOFING & CHIMNEY REQUEST:**

The one significant project that needs to be dealt with in addition to more modest repairs and maintenance in the Operating Budget request is concurrent replacement of the roof and the left front chimney. That chimney and another in the far rear of the house were removed this fall and the holes temporarily covered with roofing board and tarpaulins, effective for only a year before more permanent action is needed. That action was undertaken in an effort to protect the building from ongoing leaks and additional squirrel incursions as both chimneys were in significant disrepair with missing and damaged, old, porous, "salmon brick," badly in need of replacement, which squirrels had already eaten through in numerous locations.

Town records indicate that a Kent Town Building Preservation Committee chaired by Nancy O'Dea-Wyrick presented a report to the Town's Board of Selectmen in January 2006, which said in part, regarding the Swift House roof:

*Target to replace the roof in FY 2009-10 when its age will be 25 years.  
Preliminary estimate \$33,000.*

Now the roof is 36 years old, very fragile, and well beyond its useful life. Regrettably, the Building Preservation Committee's recommendation was not addressed and did not become a reality, and in more recent years neither the roof nor any other significant Swift House improvements have been recommended or addressed. So we must note that it seems well past time for some catch-up.

In an effort to try to keep costs as reasonable as possible, the Swift House Task Force is recommending that only one of the two chimneys that have been removed be rebuilt, reducing the cost significantly. We are therefore proposing that the Town undertake the rebuilding of just one chimney, concurrent with replacement of the entire roof for an estimated total of \$35,000. Of that amount, Marge Smith, member of the Swift House Task Force, is actively working with Joyce Kearns in pursuit of a \$10,000 grant to the Town from the 1772 Foundation toward roofing costs. We will make an effort to seek other grant opportunities as available.

Please see attached quoted estimates for a breakdown of the \$35,000 appropriation request, as follows:

• Left Front Chimney Replacement, including flashing	\$ 5,330
• Replacement of Front Roof including gutters or extended metal drip edge	13,900
• Replacement of Rear Roof including gutters or extended metal drip edge	12,800
• Contingency for unforeseen repair of wood sheathing, framing or adjacent moulding repairs, etc.	<u>2,970</u>
	\$ 35,000

A possible option would be to replace chimney and roofing over two years, separating the front and rear roofs into different phases. That would mean that one of the temporary roofing panels and tarps now providing protection over the chimney holes would need to be inspected and reinstalled at an additional cost, and there might also be an increase in labor and material costs for the second year. But if a two-year project would be more manageable, that would be fine, if potentially a bit more expensive.

We acknowledge that the above request is certainly not insignificant, but please remember that it would be an important investment in a valuable Town asset, whether it is ultimately determined that the Town will retain Swift House for multiple valuable community uses as a treasured emblem of its historic past, or whether it will be sold to an outside party as a solid, intact, well-maintained building commanding a much higher price than one in regrettable need of significant repairs.

**FIVE YEAR CAPITAL PLAN:**

We would also like to establish a place for Swift House on the Town's Five Year Capital Plan, where it is the only Town-owned building that is noticeably absent. We anticipate

the need to replace the existing late '80's heating system with a new, more efficient heating and cooling system. Most of the windows in the historic building are not operable, so air-conditioning would be an important addition, allowing the building to be used and rented for functions in the warmer months. The anticipated cost of a new HVAC system would be approximately \$35,000.

In the coming months we will be examining issues concerning the future use of Swift House through interviews and responses to questionnaires in anticipation of making a final report with recommended options for its future use.

Thank you for your attention to the needs of Swift House.

Submitted by  
Zanne Charity, Chair  
on behalf of the Swift House Task Force