

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO BEMIS HALL IF THE COA MOVES OUT?

Determining the use of Bemis Hall after a community center is built is beyond the scope of the Community Center Preliminary Planning and Design Committee. However, we are happy to provide some information about potential uses of Bemis Hall in the future.

We anticipate that the upstairs hall will continue to be used for performances, classes, dances, lectures, meetings, and private functions just as it is now. In fact, this use can be expanded once the COA no longer occupies the space during the day, providing opportunities for organizations to have space for playgroups, classes and lessons, afterschool activities, meetings, and more. The Town has received numerous requests in the past to use the upstairs space during the day for these purposes.

The basement is currently occupied by the Library book sale, the Lincoln Minute Men, and the Lincoln Historical Society. We expect that these organizations will continue to use the space they now have, with the possibility of expanding into some of the space that will no longer be used during the day by the COA. The COA has already received requests from the Library Book Sale to use more space.

Thus, the space that will be vacated by the COA and need to be filled includes the 450 square foot program room and two small offices in the basement, and the first floor space. Two ideas for using this for municipal space that have been discussed include programming space for the Library and space for all the Town's land use offices and organizations.

If space is leftover, Lincoln could follow the lead of other cities and towns that have buildings much like Bemis Hall and rent it to non-profit organizations, small professional firms, and others or use it for arts or other purposes.

One perfect example of this re-use is Bedford's Old Town Hall, which is much like Bemis Hall in terms of size and configuration. It has a large upstairs hall that is used for exactly the same purposes as the upstairs hall at Bemis is currently. The downstairs offices and other spaces are used by the Bedford Center for the Arts and Bedford Community Access Television. It is owned by the Town of Bedford, but managed by a non-profit organization. Other towns with town halls that are no longer used town halls and are rented out or used for other purposes in a similar fashion are in Tynsgborough (rentals), Salem (art exhibits), Athol (Historical Society), Bedford, NH (rentals and community use), Easthampton (arts, maintained by non-profit), and Andover (private function rentals).