

✓ Felton nears agreement on new community hall

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FELTON — Nearly two years after the town's community hall burned down, residents are getting closer to agreeing on a design for the building that will replace it.

Stormy public meetings marked the early stages of the design process of the Felton Community Hall, which was destroyed in a fire Aug. 9, 1990.

Older residents pushed to replace the 1927 building as it was, while younger residents wanted something that would anticipate the town's needs. Uncertainty over the insurance settlement thickened the tension.

But Monday's meeting of the Felton Community Club, which administers the building, was relatively uneventful, said one of the architects who prepared the drawings.

"There wasn't a lot of the factionalism of the early meetings," said Jim Allen-Young of architect Jeff Oberdorfer's office. "People

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seemed ready to get together behind the building."

Allen-Young would not estimate the cost of the building, saying it depends on the materials used and the amount of donations and volunteer labor.

Club members approved with minor changes drawings of the 5,417-square-foot building. The final version will be presented at the group's Aug. 10 meeting.

The latest drawings feature a main hall facing Highway 9 and styled after the old building. The 1,900-square-foot room, with a

raised stage at one end, would hold 268 people.

A smaller meeting room facing Kirby Street would hold 60 people. The hall also would have a commercial kitchen.

An unusual feature of the building is a two-story entry tower planned for the front corner of the property. The tower would be offset from the rest of the building for both practical and aesthetic reasons. Setting it at an angle will improve the interior circulation, Allen-Young said. It also would catch the eye of drivers coming toward the building from the town's main intersection at Graham Hill Road and Highway 9.

Allen-Young described the building as a "blend of traditional and contemporary materials and forms."

After the final design is approved, community members will begin raising money for construction. Insurance proceeds on the building have fallen short of the amount needed to rebuild it.