



City of Lambertville
Special Council Meeting
Saturday, November 12, 2022, 9:30 A.M.
City Hall, 18 York Street, Lambertville
MINUTES

STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE WITH THE OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT

Mayor Nowick called the meeting to order at 9:30 am and he asked the City Clerk to read the statement of compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act into the record.

The City Clerk read the following statement into the record: This meeting is being held in compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act with the meeting notice provided to the Trenton Times and the Hunterdon County Democrat, members on the list serve, department heads, the City Attorney and City Engineer.

The meeting agenda provides for all action items known at the time of publication and is subject to change.

ROLL CALL

PRESENT: Councilwoman Lambert, Councilman Sanders, Councilman Stegman, Council President Taylor, Mayor Nowick

ALSO PRESENT: Cynthia Ege – City Clerk, Karen J. Kominsky – Councilwoman-elect, Evan Lide – Councilman-elect, Karen Taylor-Ogren, member of the public.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE AND MOMENT OF SILENCE

Mayor Nowick led the public in the Pledge of Allegiance and a moment of silence in honor of those serving in the United States Armed Forces in Country and abroad.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Judy Gleason questioned the validity of the allowance for site visits for the Governing Body and the Open Public Meetings Act. Mayor Nowick responded that the City's Attorney is well aware of this and said the statutes permit the visits.

SCHEDULED SITE VISITS

Mayor Nowick noted that each Council Member, Council Member-Elect, and Karen Taylor-Ogren were given a packet that included the Construction Cost Estimates and Priorities (pages 223 through 230 of the report prepared by The Musial Group P.A.) to use as a resource.

The group traveled to the following locations and this captures some of the items noted. The tour included an exterior and interior review of each of the buildings. The notes represent an overview of the tour.

Phillip L. Pittore Justice Center, located at 25 South Union Street:

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The interior had staining on the ceiling in the front office and on the plexiglass ceiling in the hallway. The HVAC system is not adequate and there are issues with moisture. Outside the building, it was noted that the parking lot in the back is much higher than the rear entrance to the building. This causes persistent water issues, mold, and the building has flooded four times (2005, 2006, 2011 and again in 2021).

Lambertville Free Public Library, located at 6 Lilly Street:

The following things were noted on the interior of the building: the windows are not energy efficient; the elevator often does not work and people need to be rescued; storage under the building in the basement is very damp. The exterior of the building needs to be painted; the soffits need to be repaired. It was noted that the City does not own the land that fronts on Route 165.

Public Works Department, located at 120 Quarry Street:

The site, which was built in 1950, no longer meets the needs or requirements for a Public Works Department. The interior space is inadequate to house all the equipment, which does not hold up well with exposure to the elements. Outside, the fence needs repair and the means of ingress and egress create a dangerous situation when exiting the site.

Lambertville Police Department, located at 349 North Main Street:

This building was renovated from a car repair shop to the police department. The shell of the building and interior walls are sinking, leaving large gaps of 1 to 2 inches in sections throughout the building. The lockers are not deep enough to hang uniforms. The flow for visiting members of the public does not work. On the exterior of the building, it was noted that the retaining wall is failing.

City Hall, located at 18 York Street:

The five-story building is not fully usable space. A roof leak caused damage to the ceiling by the cupola, there is no electricity in the attic rooms on the elevator side, and the third floor is not safe to enter due to holes in the floor. The exterior of the building shows signs of wear by the elevator, and rainwater enters the basement through the drains in the room. The storage space is very limited. Digitizing records would help, however the City would still be required to retain paper copies in perpetuity for minutes, ordinances, and other legal records.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 12:30 p.m. with a motion made by Councilman Sanders and seconded by Councilwoman Lambert.

LUNCH

Mayor Nowick provided lunch to all members in attendance.

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Discussions were limited to chatter regarding personal matters. The group did not discuss the site visits or any other governmental issue.

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia L. Ege
CMR, RMC, City Clerk

ADDENDUM A: Lambertville City Facilities Site Visit, November 12, 2022, prepared by Karen Taylor-Ogren.

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ADDENDUM A

Lambertville City Facilities Site Visit, November 12, 2022

Mayor Nowick, all four current council members and the two council members-elect made site visits to the five city facilities on Saturday. Their intent was to see and consider the capital needs of these structures. The tour followed a brief council meeting during which a resident asked about the facilities evaluation done during the previous administration. She also pointed out how difficult it is to find both that earlier evaluation and the new one on the website. The mayor promised that both will be more prominently displayed on the site and explained that the previous study included furniture needs and other items which don't pertain to the actual facilities making the two difficult to compare.

Councilwoman Julia Taylor reminded the group that long-term sustainability should be considered when assessing the facilities. Mayor Nowick said he has no fixed ideas on whether to keep all of the buildings or not.

Pittore Justice Center was the first site visited. City Clerk Cindy Ege stated that the city acquired the building in 2002 because the old court didn't have sufficient space to meet AOC (Administrative Office of the Court) requirements. Renovations were done and the city held a grand opening in 2005.

The most significant problem at the Justice Center is flooding. The building has been flooded three times since the city purchased it. After each flood, all wallboard and insulation must be removed and replaced to a height of three feet. Flood gates for the doors have been acquired but must be installed each time high water is a possibility since they cannot be used when the building is occupied. This makes them ineffective in the case of an unexpected flash flood such as the one caused by Hurricane Ida.

Efforts have been made to find a way to mitigate the flooding but it isn't possible to solve the problem completely. FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) has suggested raising the floor six feet and making use of the dead space above the dropped ceilings but SHPO (State Office of Historic Preservation) approval might be an issue.

A question was raised about the cost of rehabilitating Pittore after each flood. The City Clerk said it cost \$246K after Ida with insurance covering all but the \$1000 deductible. She agreed that the city's premiums are affected by the repeated floods.

In addition to flood issues, Pittore's HVAC system consistently tests positive for mold and the ducts need to be cleaned annually to keep the problem under control. The building also has a problem with excessive humidity so a dehumidifier is constantly in use. There are roof leaks in one section of the building because birds repeatedly destroy sealant on the exterior ACME sign. Heavy rains also cause leaking on some windows.

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On a positive note, the building's generator is above the flood levels Lambertville has experienced to date.

Matt Larkin, president of the Library Board, and Jen Sirak, Library Director, provided a tour of Lambertville Public Library. The library opened on the first floor of the Lilly Mansion in 1989. The second floor was opened for public use in 1994, after a grant was received to install an elevator.

That elevator often doesn't work properly and people routinely get trapped inside. Several council members used it and found they couldn't get the door to open from the inside. Staff have become adept at getting the mechanism to cooperate but it often requires a trip downstairs to the elevator 'room' to turn the mechanism off and back on. Because it is so old, parts are unavailable and service is hard to find.

The other utilities are also old with critical components housed in a ground-level room. That room did not flood during Hurricane Ida but the main basement did and questions have been raised about the condition of the foundation which shows signs of crumbling.

The first floor restrooms in the library are not ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) compliant and several window sashes on that level can't be opened, making it impossible to shut the storm windows.

While the inside of the library appears to be in good condition, the outside is not. Exterior walls have extensive water damage, walls that abut stairs have eroded dramatically leaving hazardous gaps at the edges of steps, and repointing is so desperately needed that entire bricks can be lifted out of place.

The Director mentioned that part of the lawn which the library uses for outdoor programs actually belongs to the gas station on Bridge Street and raised the possibility about someday moving the parking lot to the east side of the building and using the space currently devoted to parking as a park and event space.

The south porch of the Lilly mansion is currently being repaired with capital funds from 2018. Most of the original porch is in good structural condition and could someday be the front door of the library. At present, it is used as a fire escape.

The Department of Public Works is in dire need of storage. Only the street sweeper and salt trucks can be kept under cover due to limited space. The current three-bay garage was built in 1969 and now has cracking walls and doors which require replacement. Lester Myers, Director of Public Works, said his major problem is lack of storage. He is currently using a trailer to store tires and metal on site and is forced to keep mowers, barricades, holiday decorations and other equipment in a barn on the Closson property. Heavy equipment like garbage and recycling trucks are left outside where they rust. The situation is further exacerbated by the lack of a wash bay where salt can be washed off this expensive equipment.

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The Public Works site suffers from a problem none of the other facilities have: there are no sewer lines or city water service to this section of the city. Well water is used and because it is contaminated by naturally occurring arsenic, it can't be used for drinking so workers must use bottled water. Another problem for employees is the lack of a shower facility, a health issue if employees have contact with a toxic substance. The city is also in violation of OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) regulations because there is no lunch room for staff. Employees eat their lunches at a table in the middle of the same garage where the street sweeper and salt trucks are stored which poses potential health problems.

Although not a facilities issue, Mr. Myers was asked how old the Public Works vehicles are. The oldest is the back-up trash truck which was bought in 1998. The sweeper was purchased in 2004, the recycling and trash trucks, and a small garbage truck used for weekend pick-ups were bought in 2009 and the dump truck dates from 2015. Most of these vehicles have an expected life span of 10 to 12 years meaning all but the one dump truck are already obsolete.

According to Lt. Robert Brown, the Lambertville Police Department is the only city facility that relies on one generator which operates only about 75% of their equipment. The equipment dates from the construction of the building and, in an emergency, would leave the police without air conditioning and some lights. He also feels the need for additional security cameras, particularly in the holding areas where their absence poses a liability issue for officers.

While there has been no flooding, the station was constructed with subterranean pillars which provide support around the perimeter. The lack of these under the rest of the building has caused some of the floors to sink slightly. Wide cracks have also developed in one cement floor on the west side of the structure.

The exterior of the police station was last painted more than ten years ago and the paint is peeling and there are problems with parts of the parking lot sinking.

The final stop on the facilities visit was City Hall where the unpaved parking lot is in very bad condition.

Leaks in the cupola pose the most serious problem at this site. Several companies have tried to determine the cause but the leaks continue and have created holes in the floor and ceiling below the cupola. There are also holes in the floor of another room on the third floor.

The purpose of these site visits was not to provide answers but to allow City Council members a chance to see and evaluate problems. However, when referring to the construction needs assessment done by The Musial Group, it was generally agreed that the inflatable flood barriers suggested for four of the buildings were impractical and would not work for flash floods such as those caused by Hurricane Ida.

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