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Sent: Monday, May 19, 2025 at 07:32:14 PM CDT

Subject: Town Hall Addition Estimate

May 19, 2025

Town of New Hope Meeting

Regarding Town Hall Decision:

For those of you that may not know, a 6 month moratorium on making any decisions regarding the old town hall was placed at the Nov. 25th 2024 meeting, and I was given that time to gather an estimate for an addition to the town hall. The board gave their word that no decisions regarding the town hall would be made until after the moratorium and I had an opportunity to give my estimate, which would be after tonight's meeting.

At the March meeting I spoke to the board regarding some of my findings: I worked with the building materials manager at Menards to get an up- to -date cost for a 20x24' office space addition, all the structural items, everything from siding, roofing, drywall, flooring, including ADA compliant unisex bathroom, heating and cooling (electric to avoid duct work and propane tank and to be able to incorporate future solar), lighting, interior and exterior doors etc.. The estimate for the materials I've mentioned and more came in at just a little more than \$40,000.. Plus the cost for replacement windows for the existing building (approx. \$240 ea.) Metal roofing material for the existing (approx. an additional \$5,600. Etc.) I was invited to be on the agenda at the April 15th 2025 meeting to explain further.

At the April 15th annual meeting which began at 6:00 p.m. under the section "persons who wish to address the board," which was prior to my time, the board presented a resolution to authorize the Town Board to manage the existing town hall. By not allowing me the full 6 months per the moratorium, which would actually be at this May meeting, I feel not only violates the trust I had in the board but the moratorium, it prevented me from giving a completed estimate for the addition and did not allow the township to have correct accurate information in order to make an informed decision either on the resolution or the town hall in general. I'm not sure that if the township were aware that a resolution such as this was to be voted on, that the outcome would've been the same. I was told that "I was special and on the agenda" and so would speak after the board was thru with their discussion. I voted no to the resolution. I happen to believe that a decision involving a subject as important and controversial as this subject has been, that advance notice to the public regarding any resolutions and or referendums, and the spending of future tax payer money to construct new or remodel should be a decision made by the tax payers, the people who are going to be using it and paying for it, not 3 people sitting on the board. Unfortunately the resolution passed.

In the March minutes the board states they "will consider a town questionnaire/survey with discussion". Nothing was indicated that a resolution was in the making for the April meeting, taking the decision making away from the voters of the township.

There was inaccurate and incorrect information expressed at the April meeting which may have influenced the vote:

Regarding County requirements regarding setbacks, inspections or code... I spoke to Emmett Simkowski, Zoning Coordinator for Portage County, the 2nd time on May 9th (715-346-1334) Emmett is familiar with the existing town hall: He said, if an addition is added to the south side of the existing town hall, the town hall can stay exactly where it is. It does not have to meet setbacks as expressed at the last meeting. If an addition is added in any other direction however, it would need to be moved in order to meet the setback requirements. Again, if it stays where it is, it does not need to meet county setback requirements, it is grand fathered in. Keeping the town hall where it is, takes full advantage of the land surrounding by not losing land to setback requirements and preserves the remaining land for future development without infringement of those new setbacks. Any maintenance issues, like roof, windows siding etc. can be done to the building without inspection and just to standard building code.

On the matter of combining the parcels, according to Emmett, Zoning Coordinator for Portage County, it is a very simple straightforward procedure, not complicated in the least, as was insinuated at the last meeting, and a small recording fee is the only thing required. It can be accomplished in a matter of minutes.

Regarding State compliance, inspections and code, I spoke with Jon Molledahl, our State District 4 Commercial Building Inspector (608-225-6520) also on May 9th - At the April meeting it was said that the town would have to meet certain strict State code & requirements, this is also incorrect and not the case. Mr. Molledahl informed me that because the combined size of the proposed addition and existing building is below the 25,000 cubic foot threshold, the building does not need to reach those state requirements or be State compliant. Again, because of the size it is below the threshold required by the State and does not have to be State compliant.

Both said that understandably, of course electrical and plumbing would need to meet general code and have permits, but the electrician and plumber etc., would be responsible for that.

As far as asbestos abatement or lead exposure concerns it is unlikely those should be of concern since the addition is all new construction and due to the interior wall construction of tongue and groove wainscot of the existing building, if there is found to be lead on the wood stained interior surface the wood can be sealed with polyurethane eliminating any exposure and of course the window trim would be repainted eliminating concern there.

The option of an addition to the existing town hall accomplishes many things and all the goals set forth in previous conversations with the board and the township without wasteful over spending or high future maintenance costs. The ADA compliance issues are complied with when the addition is added, that is, the need to have an ADA accessible office space, a place to store the voting machines and an ADA compliant unisex restroom (it is not required to provide two restrooms in this building) all of new construction, plus by placing a conference table on the main floor of the existing town hall it will comply to ADA requirements. In doing so, a meeting place for constituents and board members becomes ADA compliant. It is the most cost effective approach and allows it to remain where it is again leaving the balance of the land available for future expansion and also avoids the cost among other things of reclamation of the land it sits on. It does not lose or waste valuable land in order to satisfy new setback requirements. A current, building and materials estimate from Zenith Builders, a local licensed qualified builder with 31 years of experience - to update the maintenance issues of the existing town hall and to add an all New 20x24' addition/IE office space which provides ample space for a clerks desk, treasurers desk, town chairmans desk, conference table, ADA compliant unisex bathroom, and storage room at an approx. combined square footage of 1236 square feet is \$160,000.. As you know an all new construction cost for a commercial building such as this can run approx. \$300. per sq. foot or more, which at 1236 square feet comes to about \$371,000., more than twice the amount for an addition and maintenance updates to the old town hall.

To consider an all new construction, at an estimated cost of at least \$371,000. puts an unnecessary burden on the taxpayer. As the estimate reveals, the townships needs can be met at a lower cost with an addition to the existing available square footage. The existing old town hall portion itself, will be utilized 12 - 16 days out of 365 a year, at an average of 4 hours per meeting with an average of 8 people per meeting, it again makes better economic and future maintenance sense to pursue the addition option. The existing town hall is structurally sound and historic in it's design and adds valuable solid square footage to a new town hall redesign. It merits this fiscally responsible consideration.

In the past the voice of the people was loud and clear. The township was informed and asked to vote on an all new town hall and it was rejected. Because the vote was not what the board wanted to hear, the whole issue was dropped. And now here we are. Without compromise we were left with nothing. An addition is a sustainable, cost effective approach, conserving resources and will be a physical reminder, of common sense value and tradition. Let's be fair to the township, not just a few, but to the people who are paying for and using it, by giving notice of the findings, notice to take a vote and notice to make a final decision.

I would like my concerns presented attached to the minutes of this meeting. (Per the board they will be attached to the meeting) Sent electronically 5-19-2025

Laurie Stoltenberg
Town of New Hope