

SPECIAL SESSION

March 26, 2019

The Council of the City of Chardon met in Special Session on Tuesday, March 26, 2019 at 6:30 P.M. in Council Chambers of the Chardon Municipal Center.

Jeffrey Smock, President of Council presiding.

The meeting opened with the pledge of allegiance and roll call.

Members of Council present: Andrew Blackley, Deborah Chuha, Chris Grau, David Lelko, Nancy McArthur, Daniel Meleski, Jeffrey Smock.

Members of Council absent: none.

Others Present: City Manager Randal Sharpe, Finance Director Mate Rogonjic, Law Director James Gillette, Public Service Director Paul Hornyak, Police Chief Scott Niehus, Community Development Administrator Steven Yaney, Clerk of Council Amy Day, Lands and Buildings Supervisor Mike Butt, City Engineer Doug Courtney, Deputy HR/Finance Director Heidi Delaney, Sylvia McGee, Kelly Slattery, Kyle Martin, Ed Worso, John Greaves, Bernie Greaves, Timothy Kellogg, Rebekah Havanchak, Mary Glauser, Justin Simons, CoCo Griffis, Laura Diemer, Nancy Bushman, Kathy Neill, Aggie Eisler, Jamie Ward, Sandy Ward, Marilyn Rohr, Terri Stupica, Mark Coley, Larry Fulton, Mark Jo Stark, Rick Stark, Marlene Luben, Jennifer Budman, Michael Hannon, Bob Landies, Glen Vernik, Amy Bennett, Dean Peska, Brad Sekas, Hannah Sekas, Matt Rambo, Sharon Kovats, Huck Ford, Liz Ford, Jeff Campbell Jr., Connie Waggoner, Michael Dielman, Erika Hansen, Jeff Markley, Cindy Cesen, Catherine Wolcott, Michelle Garvey, Lori Weber, Paul Hederstrom, Dave Favorite, Alex Jelepiss, Bob Corna, Patrick Colliton, Ron Leyde, Shawn Neece, Howard Herrick, Rick Sommers, Gerard Morgan, Ben Park, Pat Martin, Pat Ingram, Rebecca Samardge, Matt Wasylyk, Ben Carpenter, Kevin Talty, Michael Vasquez, John Cunningham, Lynette Skidmore, Matthew Bartchau, Bill Smiley, Kevin Donahue, Stacy Fitchette, M. Innocenzi, Sam Greening, Joan Windnagel, Melanie Yatsko, Dennis Killeen, Mary Beth Ryan, Bob Ryan, Margie Vaughan, Samantha Cottrill, Mike Benza, Lorrie Sass Benza, Rebecca Herrick, Judith Schwed, John Zachariah, Louise Jackson, Bill Jackson, Tim McKenna, Constance Babcock, Ed Babcock, Bob Faehnle, Tom Nolfi, Cindi Nolfi, Sheldon Firem, Robyn Wolf, Amy Gerin, Connie Wills, Melissa Ricco, Nick Ricco, Lisa Price, Kim Lavine, Richard Piraino, Ward Lawrence, Elizabeth Lajeunesse, Michelle Bartchak, Ruth Tretera, Stephen McCann, Mary Jane Trapp, Ann Lang, Dan Bowyer, Jim McClintock, Ann Dunning, Dominick Durante, Stacia Clawson, David Ondrey, Bari Stith, Karen Blankenship, Debbie Hofstetter, Bill Hofstetter, Carolyn Paschke, Tim Grendell, Amy Patterson, Dennis Galicki, Bob Emmons, Dorothy Stange, Chris Hitchcock, Ken Emling, Robyn Wolf.

Mayor Smock reviewed the format for the meeting to discuss the proposed relocation of County offices. He explained that the purpose of the meeting is to review a study commissioned by the City to determine the feasibility of keeping the County and courts on the Square and give the public an opportunity to voice their support or opposition.

Mayor Smock explained the City's position regarding the County's relocation which is that the City doesn't object to the County moving their offices from 470 Center Street and the Annex and Opera House buildings. In addition, the City wants to work with the Commissioners to develop a plan to insure that the Courthouse will be part of any relocation plan and continue to serve as the center of the County judicial system. He explained that should the County stay on the Square, Council will support a meaningful financial commitment to the project. Council would also support an expansion of the courthouse and would consider relinquishing ownership of the north end of the park if it would mean the project goes forward. He added that Council appreciates the Commissioners willingness to sit down and collaborate on a 100-year decision.

Ken Emling, principal and architect for Bowen & Associates, gave a brief history of the work their company was asked to provide to the County regarding the condition and functionality of their offices and how much space is needed if they decided to relocate. Bowen & Associates determined that they would need 180,000 sq. ft. of office space and at the County's request, provided three options to relocate including: new construction on a 35-acre site on South Street, new construction split between Merritt Road and South Street, and renovation/expansion of existing locations. The City then asked Bowen & Associates to study Chardon Square to accommodate the County offices and three plans were designed.

Robyn Wolfe, project architect for Bowen & Associates, reviewed the department layouts in each of the three options designed for the City.

Mr. Emling reviewed the estimated cost for each of the three office plans designed for the City.

Option 4.1 - \$59 million
Option 4.2 - \$56.6 million
Option 4.3 - \$51.7 million

Dominick Durante, architect for LDA Architects, reviewed color renderings that included additional design details and layout of the buildings for Option 4.3.

Mayor Smock asked Council for comments regarding this evening's presentation.

Mr. Blackley commended the Mayor, Vice Mayor and City Manager and architects for presenting a feasible, viable plan for the preservation of the Square.

Mayor Smock stated that the presented plans are not set but were presented to show that there are financially feasible options that will accommodate County offices on the Square.

Mr. Grau stated that the plans presented reflect the importance of the Square that has been highlighted in the City's Comprehensive Plan as well as the 2017 community survey. He added that he appreciated the way the drawings Mr. Durante presented, are not only flexible but contribute

to the overall appearance and functioning of the Square. He asked Mr. Durante if there will be unique challenges to adding on to the Courthouse.

Mr. Durante stated that adding on to the courthouse is not an insurmountable challenge. There are guidelines for these types of projects and they are easily done.

Mr. Grau asked Mr. Durante about the design flexibility of the County Administration building.

Mr. Durante explained that the building design is created so that the core components that do not change are in the middle and offices are designed around that for optimum flexibility.

Mrs. McArthur stated that Council believes the Square is the focal point of the City as well as the County and when the Commissioners undertook the feasibility study, they did it with good intentions and long-term thinking about saving money and being efficient. She feels positive that Council is working with the County to making this a reality.

Mr. Meleski stated that when Council saw the courthouse was not included in the County's office relocation plans, the City determined that they should look at the feasibility of maintaining its viability. He added that the Courthouse is iconic to the County and its preservation is something that should be considered. He thanked everyone for working together to allow these options to be considered.

Mrs. Chuha concurred with the comments of Council and thanked the architects for their work.

Mr. Lelko stated that the City has attempted to show that what the County proposed to locate on the 35 acres on South Street, could feasibility be put on the Square. The City is open to discussions and he noted that what has been presented is a flexible plan.

Mr. Sharpe thanked the Mayor and Vice Mayor for keeping the initiative going and looking into the various options for relocating the County offices. He reiterated that the City wanted to determine if retaining the County offices on the Square was feasible, and does it address County office and court space and ADA concerns. He added that his hope is that the Commissioners will be open to further discussions with the City.

Mayor Smock opened up the floor for public comment.

Rick Stark, 232 Canfield Dr., asked if consideration has been given to extending the Chase building site rather than altering the Courthouse.

Mr. Emling stated that anything can be moved. The purpose of the meeting was to determine what is feasible. He noted that ADA access at the Courthouse is still necessary.

Ms. Wolfe added that the courts have expressed that they need more space than what they have available now and the Courthouse as it stands now, only has so much usable square footage.

Judge Tim Grendell, Probate/Juvenile Court judge, stated the court functions well in the Courthouse Annex but acknowledged

that the maintenance and security of the Court needs to be addressed. He stated that the Probate Court has been on the Square since 1852 and thanked Council for looking at alternatives so that they may remain there. He stated that the Court's preference is to remain on the Square either in the new building or in the courthouse and they will work with the County and City to keep this tradition going.

Judge Mary Jane Trapp, 11th District Court of Appeals, thanked the City and the architects for their commitment to maintaining the beauty and function of the courthouse. She stated that she holds court in the courthouse and asked if the Supreme Court of Ohio's security standards were considered when the architects were considering mixing the judicial branch and non-judicial offices.

Mr. Emling stated that there is an extreme lack of security in all of the buildings and in past courthouse renovations, security has guided their design. They understand that any building design must follow appropriate security guidelines.

Judge Trapp asked if they consulted with the County Sheriff regarding the layout and security.

Mr. Emling stated that the Sheriff's Department was not included in this phase but would be included in the approval of the design of the building. He stated that right now, they are concerned with meeting the County's space needs.

Judge Trapp added that she is concerned with how the Common Pleas Court may be combined with other non-judicial offices and how this would affect holders of conceal and carry permits.

Mr. Emling stated that these are things that would be considered in the next phase of the project.

Alex Jelepiss, stakeholder of the Chase Bank building at 100 Center Street, spoke to complement the City and spoke to let everyone know that they wish to cooperate fully as it relates to their site.

Bob Corna, architect for the owners of the Chase Bank building, presented a sketch of a remodeled Chase Bank building he designed that incorporated the use of the existing structure.

Mayor Smock stated that if the location is something the County is interested in, it is their decision what they wish to do with the building.

Judge Terri Stupica, asked what happens to the courthouse if it is vacated by the County.

Mayor Smock stated that the City is focusing on the County's possible uses for the courthouse; however, if the County chooses to leave, that is a bridge that will have to be crossed.

Mr. Sharpe added that the courthouse is not able to be used for a commercial purpose.

Dennis Killeen, 119 Main Street, suggested that the former Wilbur House lot on E. Park Street be considered for the expansion of County offices or courts.

Bob Faehnle, 123 Hidden Glen Trail, asked if a traffic study has been completed.

Mr. Sharpe stated that a traffic study at this time is premature but would be completed in the future.

Kelly Slattery, President of the Geauga County Bar Association, thanked Council for undertaking the completion of a study and expressed that the members of the bar association are committed to the goal of trying to keep the courthouse on the Square.

Chris Hitchcock, Geauga County Treasurer, stated that Geauga County is a special place and he believes that retaining the history and beauty of the courthouse is important to Geauga County residents.

Lorrie Sass Benza, President of the Geauga County Township Association, stated that Geauga's 16 townships rely on the County offices which provide a sense of history and purpose and she thanked Council for hosting this meeting. She added that she will encourage township officials to become active stakeholders going forward.

Mr. Blackley added that Council is understanding about the County's interest in providing a more centralized location for some of their customer service oriented functions, but would like to see the administrative functions and the elected officials in the historic center of Chardon.

Judge David Ondrey, Common Pleas Judge, thanked Council for their efforts. He stated that while there is a problem with adequate security and space, he is opposed to abandoning the Square and courthouse. He added that he would like the courts to remain in the Square where they have historically been. He added that courthouses in smaller communities are important to the history of Ohio and they should be preserved.

Hannah Sekas, 390 Park Avenue, thanked Council for conducting the study and for having an open discussion with the City and County residents about the use of the courthouse. She also spoke about the importance of history of the courthouse and its continued use.

Dennis Galicki, S. Russell Village Councilman, commended Council for providing a viable option to keeping the County on the Square. He asked if the design for the third floor of the courthouse would support a future expansion.

Mr. Durante stated that it could be designed to support a full third floor.

Mr. Galicki asked if there is enough surface parking for the employees.

Mr. Durante stated that there is enough surface parking for the employees and for some visitors. The hope is that some visitors will also park around the Square and visit restaurants and other establishments.

Huck Ford, 10480 Wilson Mills Road, asked what the plan is for the Courthouse Annex.

Mayor Smock stated that it is anticipated that the City would work with the Commissioners in an effort to develop the Courthouse Annex into a future mixed use.

Ann Dunning, 129 Burlington Oval, spoke in admiration of what the City of Wooster has done to maintain the vibrancy of their Square and added that the City of Chardon has a real opportunity to do the same and has good leaders to make it happen.

Mayor Smock concluded the meeting by offering some closing remarks. He stated that the study done by the City has concluded that the County's needs could be cost effectively met by renovating and building new facilities on the Square and it provides a viable option for the County to consider. The City looks forward to continuing discussions with the County around any and all ideas involving continued use of the County courthouse including putting all County court facilities under one roof in that location and he would like to see the City and County continue to work together to find an accommodating, secure, and financially feasible solution that serves the long- term needs of all the residents of Geauga County.

EXECUTIVE SESSION - none.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS - none.

ADJOURN

Mr. Lelko moved and Mrs. McArthur seconded to adjourn. Upon voice vote the motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 7:58 p.m.

Attest:

JEFFREY L. SMOCK, Mayor
President of Council

AMY DAY
Clerk of Council