

JOINT MEDINA COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' and MEDINA CITY MEETING
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 3, 2019
6:35--7:34 p.m.

The following were present:

Medina County:

Pat Geissman, Commissioner
Bill Hutson, Commissioner
Colleen Swedyk, Commissioner

Scott Miller, County Administrator
Steven Bastean, Facilities Director
Rhonda Beck, Clerk to the Commissioners
Megan Holly, Assistant Clerk to the Commissioners

Medina City:

Dennis Hanwell, Mayor
Bill Lamb, At Large Council Member
Paul Rose, At Large Council Member
Dennie Simpson, Ward 2 Council Member

Others Present:

Nancy Abbott, Medina Municipal Clerk of Courts
Sally Albrecht, Montville Township Trustee
Lynda Bowers, Lafayette Township Trustee
Jeff Brandon, Montville Township Trustee
John Burke, Medina County Treasurer
Carol Carter, Village of Seville Mayor
Steve Hambley, State Representative

Tom Horwedel, Village of Westfield Center Mayor
Barb Hunter, Village of Chippewa Lake Council Member
Nancy Nozik, Brandstetter Carroll Inc.
Phil Schilffarth, Brandstetter Carroll Inc.
Ray Schulte, Hinckley Township Trustee
Monica Sumner, Brandstetter Carroll Inc.

Call to Order

Medina County Commissioner Patricia G. Geissman called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m. with Colleen M. Swedyk and William F. Hutson present. The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Opening Remarks

Commissioner Geissman welcomed everyone and turned the meeting over to Commissioner Hutson. Mr. Hutson explained that they are still very early in the planning stages for the courthouse despite what many folks have said. There are no definitive designs and input is still being sought. The purpose of this meeting is to ask elected officials from around the county for their input. Mr. Hutson noted that invitations were sent to every township, the cities, the villages and other elected officials to attend this evening and to provide feedback on their opinion regarding the courthouse and plans for building/reconstruction of the courthouse. This meeting has been announced in a number of ways including on the commissioners' website, the commissioners' calendar, commissioners' agendas, by email to those on the agenda distribution list, Facebook (commissioners' and a number of other of interested parties who have Facebook pages), it's been announced at various commissioners' meetings, published by the Gazette and The Post, someone sent out robocalls and a number of anonymous letters and invitations were sent to elected officials; it has been well publicized. Mr. Hutson asked everyone at the table to speak into the mic so that the audience can hear the comments.

Presentation – Brandstetter Carroll Inc.

Nancy Nozik provided a brief history of the Medina Courthouse facilities noting that the original building was built in 1840 (now called the "Old Courthouse"). In 1873, additions were added on either side as was the clock tower, and a series of later additions came in 1906, 1933 and 1952. In 1969, the center courthouse (now called the "New Courthouse") was built. Ms. Nozik illustrated the growth in population in Medina County over the years noting that the population was 82,700 when the new courthouse was built in 1969. The 2010 census in Medina County reported a population of 172,332 (more than double since 1969); it is estimated to be at 183,700 for 2019 and forecasted to be at 190,400 in 2024. Ms. Nozik then reviewed a background of courthouse needs including the history of effort dating back to 2002. In 2018, the County and the City put out an RFP for a feasibility study of combining the county court and municipal court; Brandstetter Carroll performed that study. There were three things they were tasked with: 1) can the county and municipal courts coexist in one building, 2) if so, how big would it be, and 3) how much would it cost. Ms. Nozik reviewed the results of that study noting that both the municipal and county courts are in need of additional courtrooms, magistrate hearing rooms and office space for both current and future needs.

Monica Sumner explained that there are elements of designs they follow called best practices that are national standards that various organizations try to uphold as their practice. Best practices related to court design has to do with separation of the public in the building from the judiciary and from the in-custody persons. This provides everyone autonomy, security and safety, and has their time in court appropriately. Best practices also apply to the outside of the building and how one enters the building. Ms. Sumner reviewed appropriate flow of the building based on best practices designed to keep everyone safe and functional in the building. She then reviewed a list of the recent study process summary. Ms. Sumner explained that they made effort to meet/have discussions with every entity within the courts including all the courts and their staff, the clerks and their staff, probation departments, and the Law Library to identify their needs. All needs must be met and fit within the budget that has been identified,

and all must be done within the framework of best practices. When this project is submitted to the Ohio Supreme Court, they will be looking to see that they met those best practices standards.

Phil Schilffarth explained that in conclusion of the 2018 study, it was determined that the recommended total square footage was 153,564 at a cost in excess of \$45M. Based on a targeted budget of \$38M, they had to make cuts. They are currently working through some modifications to the site plan to reduce the square footage to 128,600 which impacts the cost. The costs consider demolition, site improvements, building and other costs. Mr. Schilffarth noted some additional options they were tasked to investigate include reuse of the 1969 portion which is estimated to add \$1.5M to the projected cost understanding that it is more difficult to revamp and reuse that space, and to keep the façade only which is estimated to add to the projected cost \$800,000 due to needed shoring and a large amount of structural design and efforts to maintain the façade structurally. He then reviewed the current project schedule noting that we are really scratching the surface and not at all nearing any final decisions to come forward into construction.

Ms. Nozik provided examples of a variety of different courthouses Brandstetter Carroll has designed.

Elected Officials Discussion

Mr. Hutson recognized representatives of the City of Medina: Mayor Hanwell, Paul Rose, Dennie Simpson and Bill Lamb. He stated that from a design context, only one decision has been made; the 1840s/1870s section of the building will remain. Those sections of the building will be preserved. As the design process moves forward, decisions need to be made concerning what is going to happen to the other sections of the building. He opened the meeting to discussion from elected officials in attendance.

Mayor Dennis Hanwell stated that the City and County's interest is using the tax dollars as effectively and efficiently as they can. A portion of that is to not build a building on the Square for the County purposes and a block away have the City replicate a building with a lot of the same functions, security, restrooms, and meeting rooms that could be shared. He stated they want to work towards a building that will complement the Square, meet the needs of the County and meet the needs of the City in a tax effective manner.

Lynda Bowers thanked the Commissioners for the conversations she has heard. The old Courthouse is very iconic. She had conversations with Commissioner Geissman and Swedyk about not tearing the old courthouse down. That was the only concern she had heard from her residents.

Ray Schulte thanked the Commissioners for taking on this important mission. It is critical. He supports that they are maintaining the façade because it fits the City square. Mr. Schulte stated he does not spend a lot of time in the court, but he did get a tour of the Municipal Court and he was a bit stunned. The Commissioners are elected to make decisions for us and we have the confidence that they are doing the right thing.

Mr. Hutson added that when the initial feasibility study was done, the projected cost on the 154,000 sq. ft. building was upwards of \$45M. They looked at those numbers and given what they believe the debt load the County can afford and with the City's contribution, they settled on a \$38M budget number. They are doing everything they can to accommodate the needs and take care of the current needs as well as plan for the future. Medina County has more than doubled in population since the 1969 edition was constructed and all projections indicate that the County is going to continue to grow. The last thing he wants to do is build a courthouse that is good today and inadequate tomorrow.

Nancy Abbott spoke about the importance of collaboration in government groups. The fact that Medina City and Medina County are collaborating on a project – that's what's going to make it work. She stated she thinks they will come up with the best courthouse for the County as well as for the City.

Carol Carter explained that concerns she's been hearing include that residents feel they don't have a voice and the cost. People just want to have a say.

Jeff Brandon stated that there is a lot of collaboration around this table. Mr. Brandon discussed the growth happening around the county.

Mr. Hutson addressed Mayor Carter's concerns.

Discussion occurred about the history of the 1969 courthouse. Steve Hambley inquired about the budget for the courthouse project and discussed the commissioners' obligation to complete this project. Mr. Hambley stated that he supported the shared costs of the project. Scott Miller noted revenues from reappraisals, reimbursement from indigent defense and monies from NEXUS. Mr. Miller discussed the interest rates for debt payment.

Mr. Hambley stated that people have inquired if a floor can be added to the new courthouse and about moving some judicial functions to someplace else in the city such as the industrial park or Kmart Plaza. Certainly, he knows why it is important to keep it downtown, but having the opinion of other elected officials would be helpful. Mr. Hutson answered that he does not know if the County Courthouse is structurally capable of holding an additional floor. Mayor Hanwell stated that when the City paid for the county parking deck, the contractual agreement was that the County operations would remain in those buildings around the square because the vitality of the square, having the county administration and county courts there, feed those businesses. The City was opposed to moving any of the court operation to the industrial area for two reasons: (1) when you change it to a county operation, it takes away the tax base that the industry would provide if an industry was built there; and (2) if courts are moved off the square, attorney offices move off the square and pretty soon the square isn't as vibrant and business vital as it is today.

Unless the county would write a check to Medina City for \$3.8 million for the parking deck, the county court operations must remain in place.

Bill Lamb expressed concerns regarding that the City did not determine internally where they would get the money from and demolition in a historic district. He discussed plans in 1967 to move a bank out of Medina into the township where ultimately, at a greater expenses, they were convinced to stay and restore that building on the corner. As much as we talk about other drivers and people coming to Medina County, people come to the City of Medina, drive through and decide they want to live here because of that appearance. Mr. Lamb stated that at the meeting on July 19, these issues were raised. The Historical Society and a lot of other groups that knew about restoration and every one of those groups raised the question and issue. He stated that was in one of those groups and have never heard back since that meeting. The reduction of cost was noted, but asked what is being cut to reduce costs; Mr. Hutson answered square footage. Mr. Lamb noted a contentious issue seven years ago where he decided it would be simpler to not let the public participate; he stated it was the biggest mistake he ever made. He discussed the importance in public input. Mr. Lamb stated his support is based on working out internally the city's funds and demolition. He discussed the importance of preserving the historic buildings on the Square.

Thomas Horwedel stated that he came here tonight to learn about the courthouse. He has not heard any issues on the courthouse when he has been around town. He wishes them luck in the project and anything you tear down put back up the same.

Mr. Hutson stated there have been two meetings that have involved public input and there will likely be additional meetings for public input, but this meeting was specifically to solicit input from elected officials. At this point in the meeting, Kathie Jones interjected that she was an elected official. Mr. Hutson inquired if she was a township official. Ms. Jones stated she was part of central committee. Mr. Hutson stated as a central committee member for the Democratic Party, she is not a township, village or city official and would not be allowed to speak. Mr. Hutson asked Ms. Jones to please be seated. When she refused, he stated she was out of order and repeatedly asked her to be seated. Mr. Hutson inquired if any other elected officials have comments.

Sally Albrecht inquired if they could show the photo of the courthouse and explain how it will be able to accommodate more growth. Mr. Hutson stated that the courthouse hasn't been designed. The photos are exemplars of best practices sharing the separate entrances and circulation patterns needed; that was not a design of the courthouse and a design has not been decided on. The Commissioners and City need to decide what the footprint of the building and portions of the structure of the courthouse will be retained or not. Those decisions have not been made yet. Ms. Albrecht inquired if estimates have been done to show the savings of doing a joint courthouse versus two separate courts. Ms. Albrecht noted that would be a good selling point. Mr. Hutson stated there are not definitive estimates, but if security is looked at, there will be one security check point with one officer versus having two. One joint building has the benefit of shared operating costs and joint common areas. Ms. Albrecht stated there is a lot of value of retaining the structure and façade even if it does cost extra. The essence of Medina is important. Mr. Hutson thanked Ms. Albrecht and everyone for coming this evening.

Adjournment

There being no further business, Mrs. Swedyk moved to adjourn the meeting; the motion was seconded by Mr. Hutson. Roll call showed all commissioners voting AYE. The meeting ended at 7:35 p.m.

All deliberations concerning official business and formal actions by this Board of Commissioners were conducted in an open public meeting this third day of October 2019.

Respectfully submitted,	COMMISSIONERS	_____
		Patricia G. Geissman
	OF	_____
_____		William F. Hutson
Rhonda J. Beck	MEDINA COUNTY	_____
Clerk to the Commissioners		Colleen M. Swedyk