

Lower
Pottsgrove
Township
Infrastructure
Committee
Summary

Submitted by
Raymond W. Lopez
April 2, 2018

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Introduction:

An infrastructure committee was formed in November 2017 with the principal purpose of assessing the infrastructure needs of Lower Pottsgrove and developing a strategic plan for serving the needs of the community. The implementation of community municipal services was and always have been of the utmost concern and are the focus of this report.

A look at Municipal services provided by the Township to the community include police protection, administrative services including Licensing, Inspections and Zoning, Public Works, as well as, Fire Marshal services, Emergency Management, and Finance. All services work in harmony from one central location and are vital to our growing community and ever-changing society.

Workspace concerns have been the subject of many staff meetings, police committee meetings and certainly the focus of numerous manager, police chief and commissioner discussions. It would seem to be a logical approach, to address and review areas that have been identified as problems first. The most important concern that has repeatedly come up over the past 16 years, has been the issue of over-occupied workspaces, primarily in the police department but also in the administrative area. This problem was first officially identified and documented in a 2002 Peer to Peer Study completed for the Police Department.

Brief History:

The historical information and research of Lower Pottsgrove Township's offices has a direct relevance on arriving at a determination of the future planning for the Township. Lower Pottsgrove became a first-class township in 1954. The population at that time was approximately 3,500. The Township started using a formal office in 1961 that was housed on the second floor of Sanatoga Fire Company. This marked the official beginning of our local government. The initial office of the township also served as a Police Station providing a meeting place and office for the Police Chief and his officers at the time. At some point in the late 1970's the Township rented the ground floor of the then, National Bank of Boyertown, located at 1830 East High Street. A portion of the space was also used as a Police Station and Police Chief's office and was identified in a 1988 Peer to Peer Study of the Township Police Department. As the Township out grew that office space, property was acquired at 2199 Buchert Road, where the current Township building was built in 1989 and dedicated in 1990. The population was 8,808, while today the population is at 12,164, an increase of 50%. A population chart is available in Appendix B.

Assessment of space needs:

In 2002, after the current township building was in service for 12 years, a formal study was conducted by the PA Department of Community and Economic Development. The Lower Pottsgrove Board of Commissioners in concurrence with the Police Committee, initiated this Peer to Peer Study of the Police Department which was completed in June of 2002. The purpose of the study was to survey and improve the management of police services for the community. This peer to peer investigative study provided enlightening information regarding, what can only be summarized as inadequate, inefficient space within the Police department. The study suggests reconfiguring the space and looking into purchasing the former Lower Pottsgrove Elementary School. This information can be found in the pages of the study concerning the Police Facility in Appendix D.

In 2015, now 25 years after the current township building was in service, the Board of Commissioners ongoing concerns over needed space prompted a more comprehensive review of municipal service needs. An architectural firm, Noelker and Hull Associates was hired to review the space needs of the township utilizing requirements submitted by each department. Based on this feasibility study completed in 2015, a recommendation of doubling the current workspace would allow for adequate space requirements and for dedicated areas to provide sufficient storage space, while concurrently anticipating current growth of the community.

Expansion options:

Over the past 16 years, the Commissioners have looked in-depth at various options, from purchasing a residential property across the street from the Township building to purchasing and renovating the former Lower Pottsgrove Elementary School. The Commissioners also conducted investigative sessions along with meeting informally with realtors, County Officials, investors, owners of commercial properties, and state representatives. Examples of formal building studies include;

(1.) Noelker and Hull Associates conducted a study in 2007 based on expanding the meeting room and add small additions to the administrative offices and police department. This was deemed to be cost prohibitive because of the cost versus the relatively small area that would be gained.

(2.) Noelker and Hull Associates performed a formal analysis of expanding the building at our current location which took place in 2015 and a presentation was given at the June 1, 2015, Township meeting. The cost to expand the current building would have been more than \$4 million dollars and would have

only extended the use of the current building for a few years. The other downsides to this option would have meant a smaller parking lot and trying to continue operations at the current site while demolition and reconstruction were taking place. This Study is available in Appendix E.

Our current options include:

- do nothing
- expand on the existing building
- buy an additional existing building of similar size as the existing township building and split administrative from police services
- purchase an existing larger building that could house both police and administrative services with room to grow and remodel the building to suit the Township needs
- purchase a property to house both functions and to suit our needs

Conclusion:

Upon appraisal of the five current options;

With respect to option one, doing nothing, the Township has done nothing with respect to the development of a formal plan to construct a township building due to the complexity of this enormous undertaking. This isn't a decision that the Board can arrive at swiftly. The Board has not failed to decide but rather, are moving cautiously and calculating every move in the process.

After reviewing the second option, which is to renovate the current Township building, studies have determined that investing over \$4 million dollars and disrupting all the township departments for at least a year, would result in shrinking the parking lot and providing only a few years of use before the building would again be outgrown.

Option three, the purchase of an additional building, would separate the police department from the administration department. This creates difficulties for the public to access both departments and increases costs due to the duplication of services required when running two distinct and individual locations. The Board prefers the efficiency offered by the consolidation of services and systems along with shared space whenever possible.

The Board seriously considered option four, purchasing a large building, on two separate occasions when contemplating rehabilitating the Lower Pottsgrove

Elementary school building as local to house both the police and administration. However, the cost to renovate the building to meet the township needs exceeded the cost of erecting a new building.

In conclusion, based on deficiencies that have been identified in numerous reports over the past 16 years, combined with township growth and anticipated future build out of the township, the infrastructure committee recommends utilizing the campus a High St. and Pleasantview Road for a Municipal Services Building.

Appendix A

Options

1. Do Nothing
2. Renovate and expand the existing Building
3. Buy a building large enough to house just Administration or just the Police
4. Buy an existing building and rehab it for our use - Administration and Police
5. Find an empty lot and design and build a new building to suit our needs with ability to grow

Appendix B This is a Draft

The mission of the Lower Pottsgrove Township

The mission of the Lower Pottsgrove Township is to serve the best interests of all our residents by providing and maintaining the secure environment that enhances the quality for the individual and the community. We pledge to be a dynamic and responsive organization that will strive to provide the most efficient and effective services for Lower Pottsgrove Township. As we look to build our future we will make every effort to select concepts that meet or exceed our citizens' expectations, implement improvements that best preserve the natural environment and advocate for design that makes the most of our valuable resources.

Appendix C

Population of Lower Pottsgrove Township (based on population records from the U.S. Census Bureau.)

Year	Population
1930.....	1,225
1940.....	1,226
1950.....	3,389
1960.....	3,824
1970.....	5,157
1980.....	7,319
1990.....	8,808
2000.....	11,213
2010.....	12,059
2016 est. ...	12,164

POLICE FACILITY

The Lower Pottsgrove Municipal Building is located at 2199 Buchert Road. It is a brick colonial style building located on a corner lot. The township administrative offices occupy the ground level first floor. The police department is below ground level, in what would be considered the basement area. The entrance to the police department is located on the lower level necessitating walking down outside steps or driving a vehicle into the lower parking lot that is reserved for police vehicles.

The police department consists of fifteen rooms used in a variety of ways. There is also a garage on the lower level, which is not heated. There is a lobby immediately inside the entrance door. There is a walk-up window in the lobby staffed by a police clerk to assist walk-in civilians.

What once was a very large interior room has been partitioned off by cubicles into various workstation areas.

- Sergeant's office
- Administrative assistant's (police secretary) office
- Police clerk / receptionist's work area (behind glass walk-up area in lobby)
- Two patrol officer workstations
- One data clerk workstation (can be used by patrol officers when clerk not working)
- Copy machine area
- Fax machine area
- Storage bin for forms and work table

Many officers felt too restricted by the partitions. The large room was reduced to make separate work space for officers. It also reduced the sound level and created additional thermal and aesthetic warmth. Officers feel too confined by the arrangement.

The following offices are rooms located on the outer perimeter on ground level:

- Chief's office – desk, cadenza, 5 chairs, 2 wood file cabinets, 3 bookshelves, 1 lateral file
- Interview room – table, 4 chairs, 1 typewriter & desk, 2 bookshelves, 1 TV, VCR /stand
- Investigators' office – 2 desks, 2 chairs, computer, bookshelf, large cabinet, file cabinet
- Evidence room – evidence storage shelves, evidence boxes, computer hub
- Records' room – 6 file cabinets (records), 3 cabinets (officers), 26 cardboard file boxes, officer mail bins, miscellaneous boxes, fire suppression system
- Women's locker room – 8 lockers, 8 overhead bins for storage, stall, sink, shower (locker room shared by chief and sergeant)
- Public rest room – for suspects, those visiting police station
- Men's locker room – 10 lockers, 10 overhead storage bins, stall, urinal, sink, shower, bench
- Laboratory – 6 cabinets, long counter, sink, 4 counter drawers, 6 counter cabinets
- Utility room – housekeeping sink, equipment, water heater, AC/heating system
- Holding (detention) room – metal bunk attached to floor, remote camera

- ❑ Gear room – uniforms, metal locker for office supplies, small cabinet for evidence storage, small refrigerator for evidence
- ❑ Lobby
- ❑ Supply closet

In addition to the complaint about the large interior room being too restricted, the following comments were documented:

- ✓ Both the chief's office and the interview room are too small to conduct meetings for more than 5 or 6 persons.
- ✓ Sergeant originally had office, now used as interview room
- ✓ Interview room used as video and reference library
- ✓ No extra room in investigators' office
- ✓ Evidence room also houses computer
- ✓ New lock recently installed on evidence room door
- ✓ Records' room appears inadequate
- ✓ Men's locker room not large enough
- ✓ Women's locker room shared by supervisory male officers
- ✓ Laboratory used for processing prisoners, poor ventilation
- ✓ Detention room contains no facilities other than bunk
- ✓ Gear room also used for evidence storage
- ✓ Not very large for amount of personnel on staff

The facility was built in 1990 and does not leave a lot of room for expansion. The garage could provide additional space however it needs heating and air conditioning. The detention area could be expanded and placed in the garage area. A processing room could be placed in the garage. The existing detention room could be used for additional evidence. The laboratory could be used primarily for investigative purposes. The records room may be relocated to the garage area, allowing expansion along the back wall for the locker rooms. The only other alternative would involve building out into the parking area, which may be cost prohibitive.

The chief mentioned a vacated school, a short distance from the now existing municipal building. If the building could be purchased for a nominal fee, it would be worth looking into. The Borough of Walnutport in Northampton County moved into a school and renovated it. The entire municipal complex is located in the school and a portion is being rented out to a day care center.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- ✓ Consider renovating garage for expansion
- ✓ Other recommendations depend on use of garage
- ✓ Consider the purchase of vacated school building

Appendix E

LOWER POTTSGROVE TOWNSHIP

FEASIBILITY STUDY TO EXPAND THE MUNICIPAL BUILDING

INTRODUCTION

June 1, 2015

Noelker and Hull Associates (NHA) was selected by the Lower Pottsgrove Township Board of Commissioners to study the feasibility of adding sufficient space to the existing Municipal building to improve the ability to accommodate the growth the Township has undergone since the building was constructed.

The existing building was built in 1990 and has not been expanded to meet the needs caused by growth experienced in both the Township administrative offices and the police department.

NHA was involved in a similar study in 2007 to expand the assembly space and add small additions to the administrative offices and police department. That project was never developed.

PROCESS

To determine the space needs of the administration area on the upper level and police department on the lower level, NHA met with the Township Manager, Police Chief, members of the Board of Commissioners and Code Enforcement Official to discuss specific needs, current staff levels and projected increases in staff for the foreseeable future.

A tour and discussion on conditions was provided by Staff to NHA.

Through discussions of space needs it was noted that by reallocation of space, changes to circulation patterns of how the public interacts with Township staff and law enforcement and provisions put into place for future growth there were goals identified that go hand-in-hand with the building expansion needs. Some of those goals included:

- Improved public circulation from parking a car, addressing accessibility for physically challenged and interacting with staff.
- Security of the facility and staff could be improved.
- Unauthorized vehicular circulation on the site could be improved.
- Consolidation of services provided to the public could be accomplished.
- Deferred maintenance of the existing site and building code could be addressed.
- Storage space conditions would be improved.

IDENTIFIED SPACE NEEDS

Assembly/Conference Space - It was established that a meeting room to seat 75 people attending public meetings was a projected size. This would more than double the capacity in the current building.

A variety of conference room sizes would help in providing more than just one such area.

Tax Collection Office - Space allowed in the expansion to bring the functions of the Township Tax Collector into the building would improve access, security and improve interaction with the staff and public.

Expanded Offices - The expansion presents opportunity to reallocate space suitable for the functions. Space for future growth could be planned to permit growth without disruption to space usually experiences when staff are added.

Security - Major improvements can be made to security by controlling public access to staff space. Expansion can be organized to allow circulation to all departments from one common corridor without penetrating secure perimeters.

Police Department - Expansion of facilities will permit increased area to all functions of the department that are experiencing cramped and inadequate space to accommodate staff needs and service to the public. Expansion also provides additional security for the department.

Site - Circulation of vehicular traffic on the site is being abused by the public who use the Township driveway as an alternate route from Pleasantview Road and Buchert Road and vice versa to avoid traffic or time at a public intersection. This causes an unsafe condition. Also sacrificed is security to the Police Department parking and security of the police cars.

In eliminating the cut-through traffic, the police department parking could be secured by fencing around the perimeter creating a more secure area.

In creating parking for the Township Administration and public entrance, the unsafe and less secure issues could be resolved.

Expansion of Assembly space creates a greater need for parking. If proposed parking regulations become effective, 1 parking space per 4 seats and one space per employee would be required for on-site parking. With a meeting room for 75 and a staff of 12 in the future, 31 spaces would be required. Handicap parking need was projected to be four spaces. The site plan includes a parking area of 35 spaces.

The site is adequate to double the size of the building's upper and lower levels, expanding the parking and changing traffic circulation.

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Overflow parking for the larger meetings would be addressed by parking in the Township lot on the south side of Buchert Road. Walkways from overflow parking to the public entrance of the Township Building can be incorporated into overall site design.

The square feet analysis is as follows:

	Existing (SF)	Expansion Area (SF)
Upper Level	3,514	3,786
Lower Level	3,514	3,678
Sub Total	7,028	7,464
Building Total	14,492 SF Existing + Expansion	

(1) Existing Impervious Area 27,401 SF added 4,008 SF
Increase in impervious 14.63%

ESTIMATE OF PROBABLE CONSTRUCTION COST⁽²⁾

Available information indicates police station construction costs are higher than office building costs. For this report, an average square foot cost is used.

From experience in the design of office buildings and prevailing wage projects, NHA would estimate the probable construction cost to be approximately \$ 240- \$250 per square foot range. When calculated the construction cost of the addition would be in the \$1,792,000 - \$1,866,000 range.

Project costs including site construction, scope of renovation of the existing building, furnishings, deferred maintenance, professional design fees, legal fees, and financing costs could double the cost of construction.

MAJOR ADVANTAGES TO THE STUDIED EXPANSION METHOD

With the exception of the on-site parking, the Administrative Office and Police Department can continue to function in the existing building while construction of the expansion is ongoing.

Upon completion of the expansion, breakthrough areas connecting the new to the existing would be complete.

Renovations to existing spaces would finish up and complete the project.

Overflow parking on the South side of Buchert Road would serve as temporary parking during construction.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board of Commissioners and Advisory Staff need to determine if expansion on the existing site is the best location to expand Municipal Services, realizing there is little to no building growth possible on this site in the future.

Determine that Township finances and funding streams are available to support a project of this magnitude.

Refine the scope of work for unknown and not yet studied areas of deferred maintenance, existing building renovation, and new/replacement furniture.

CONCLUSION

As the study results indicate, it is feasible to expand the Lower Pottsgrove Township Municipal Building to serve as the administrative and Police Department facilities.

Existing space and the potential for expansion would be sufficient for the space needs identified in this study.

Footnotes

¹ Existing Impervious Area 27,401 SF added 4,008 SF
Increase in impervious 14.63%
Information provided by Township Engineer - Bursich Associates

² Estimates of Probable Construction Cost. In providing estimates of probable construction cost, the Client understands that the Consultant has no control over the cost or availability of labor, equipment, or materials, or over market conditions or the Contractor's method of pricing, and that the Consultant's estimates of probable construction costs are made based on the Consultant's professional judgment and experience. The Consultant makes no warranty, express or implied, that the bids or the negotiated cost of the Work will not vary from the Consultant's estimate of probable construction cost.

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Our posts on construction cost data per square foot for various project types are so popular, that I will continue updating them more frequently as this is fairly time sensitive data. Please note the date on the blog posts so you know that you are viewing the most current information. Also, click [HERE](#) for other construction cost topics, or you can always search by keyword from the search bar on the upper right hand corner of this page.

Please note that all of this information is made available from the industry experts in construction cost estimating, RSMean's, and is our basis for estimating conceptual project costs during the initial programming phase here at EVstudio. Please note that these are great numbers to ballpark initial budget goals and expectations, however, more accurate pricing can only be developed after full programming of the project and initial schematic designs can be developed with some understanding of size, scale, scope, construction type and level of finish.

For more information about RSMean's Square Foot Cost Guide and RSMean's Construction Cost Index, which indexes square foot costs for cities in the US and Canada, visit the RSMean's [Online bookstore](#) and click on cost data publications.

And of course, feel free to contact any of us here at EVstudio about your project and we would be happy to help get you started on your proforma as well as assist in any or all of the design phases or disciplines that will help you realize your vision. We have professionals that can help with the process as early on as entitlements as well as full Architecture and all of the Engineering disciplines, all of which help to inform your project budget and goals.

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For the most common office building size, two to four stories tall, the range is from just over \$140 per square foot in Winston-Salem to over \$240 per square foot in New York- Note that this is over \$10 per square foot more than last year. The spread here is largely due to the local cost of labor and regulations that allow various construction types that are allowed in low rise construction. For example, in some cases where wood frame construction is still allowed, depending on location and occupancy, this would help to keep costs lower. In areas that are restricted to non-flammable construction, price per square foot will go up.

By taking advantage of savings provided by vertical construction, you will see approximately a 4% savings in cost per square foot by increasing the stories to between five and ten stories. While one might expect a larger savings for that economy of scale, several new requirements come with the mid-rise building that are often not dealt with on the low-rise buildings. For example, elevator shafts and service corridors get more complicated as well as HVAC systems.