

The best way to get your most basic questions answered about the municipal building proposal is to start with the Town Hall on June 23, 2020 and then review the information on the borough website (found under Facilities Committee), including these Frequently Asked Questions. During the Town Hall, you will see Mayor Judah Zeigler, Councilman Bill Ziegler, Chair of the Facilities Committee, Councilman Pasquale Fusco (professional architect by trade), Borough Administrator Andrea Wardrop and project architect Anthony Iovino discuss the proposal and why we are where we are today. They also take numerous questions from the over 100 households who dialed in live.

View Meeting Recording: Please note that the meeting starts at the 12:14 minute mark.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/10mD0KvZDvzZsnebRX2FkAMcx9vj1XGb4/view?usp=sharing>

View Presentation: <https://www.leonianj.gov/Home/ShowDocument?id=1604>

Some frequently asked questions...

Why do we need a new municipal building?

First a little history... Leonia has been operating our Police Department from the same HQ since 1931. Leonia's Court was previously housed at the Borough Annex (the current Senior Center from the 1980's through last year. Our Borough Hall is at 312 Broad Avenue in the old Telephone Exchange Building since the 1940's.

No one should say the Borough of Leonia has not gotten its money's worth out of every one of our municipal buildings. And as your Mayor and Council (M&C) move forward the watchword and our driving force will continue to be value for the money. With 93% of Leonia's tax base coming from residential property owners, this is a necessity and something your volunteer elected officials (who are also taxpayers) never forget.

Please understand not one of these buildings (Police HQ, the old Court, and the current Borough Hall) were built for the purpose we used them. They are all repurposed; made workable through an additional (and ongoing investment) to keep them viable. This by itself, creates inefficiencies. Up until several years ago we could continue to invest a modest amount of money to keep them going for what we needed. No longer can their continued viability be guaranteed with just a modest amount of money. Nor is the footprint and space available going to meet state and county statutory requirements.

We are at the point where it no longer makes sense to invest additional money to keep these buildings operational because their inefficiencies of function and facility are now untenable. Leonia has been considering a new municipal building for over 10 years, hoping against hope that somehow we could just continue to get by. We can't continue to kick the can down the road any longer without significant legal risk. We are obligated to take action. Addressing these issues isn't optional anymore, it is a necessity.

Why... Because NJ state authorities and the Bergen County Sheriff have informed the Borough that we are NOT in compliance with existing state and county statutes governing both our Police Department HQ and Court. There are over 100 safety and security violations outstanding. Both facilities are inadequate for today's requirements in many ways including but not limited to officer security, evidence storage, interview rooms, training rooms, prisoner handling and space requirements for cells, a mandated prisoner garage/sally port, and, with a police force which prides ourselves on the diversity of our officers, we lack separate female officer locker and bathroom space in HQ.

Leonia is proud of the diversity of the Leonia Police Department. Yet today, we provide female officers with a locker room which is really a closet and to get there they must walk through the men's locker room. This is ridiculous and untenable. There is simply not the space in the current building to accommodate all the new requirements. Similarly, when the Court was at the Annex, LPD officers were unable to perform adequate screening because the Annex footprint was inadequate and therefore created a serious security risk to Court personnel, police officers and attendees.

Who has been driving the effort for a new Municipal Building?

Three years ago, Mayor Zeigler appointed a Facilities Committee to get serious about moving forward on an issue which had been dragging for many years and previous M&C's. This Facilities Committee, comprised of Mayor Judah Zeigler, Councilman Bill Ziegler as Chair, and Councilman Pasquale Fusco, has been meeting monthly ever since. Before he resigned, Councilman Greg Makroulakis also served on the Facilities Committee. Many of these meetings, when not involving legal matters and contract negotiations, were open to the public. Information and updates are posted on the Borough website. If you haven't already read this information, please avail yourself of it.

What is the new building going to be used for?

We intend to move Police HQ, the Leonia Court and all administrative departments/functions to a new three floor building. The bottom floor is for the police station, the top floor is the Court and the middle floor will be all borough administration and departments including the Borough Administrator, the Finance/Tax office, the Health Department, and the Borough Clerk.

What will happen to the current police station building?

As the current Police building is also Fire HQ (at the northern end facing Borough Place) and the Fire Department desperately needs additional space to improve the safety of its volunteers, we will be using the majority of the vacated police space for the fire department's use. This will allow the Fire Department to ease some of the current congestion in the firehouse. For example, firefighter gear is stored along the side bay walls with very little room to maneuver between the lockers and the departing trucks. This has been an untenable situation for quite awhile and it is a safety hazard that needs to be addressed. By utilizing additional adjacent space formerly occupied by the police HQ and making some needed renovations, we intend to open up this area, working closely with our volunteers and soliciting their input on how best to accomplish. It is essential we address this congestion and decrease any risks of firefighters getting hurt.

It is also the intent of the M&C to use the southern most part of the current police building to build a community meeting room which would be available both for fire department training classes and also Boards, Commissions, and community organizations who sign up to use the space. We recognize meeting space in Leonia has always been at a premium, and we believe this will help the community considerably. We excel as a community largely due to the time and effort put forth by our volunteers across all the different organizations, Boards, Commissions etc. they serve and represent. This will provide another place for our town volunteers to meet and help get their work done on behalf of Leonia.

What locations did you consider before settling on the current plan to build adjacent to Wood Park?

We considered a wide variety of locations for a new building. We did not engage in a one dimensional decision calculus and considered many variables to settle on the most balanced and appropriate proposal to move forward. Some of the criteria we focussed on, as it related specifically to location, included central accessibility by our residents to encourage shopping in the business district either before or after their visit to Borough Hall, a central location to enable consistently quick police and emergency ambulance response to all parts of the borough, proximity to other public lands, cost considerations and consistency with Leonia's longstanding Master Plan.

Here is a partial-- not exhaustive-- list of sites we considered:

Elm Street Parking Lot, the current location of the new Senior Center (previously the Borough Annex) and the adjacent Sculpture Garden, the Recreation Building, Dudley Allen Park and adjacent town property at the north end of town, Willow Tree Road, Station Parkway, and the southwest corner of Leonia.

A central location also helps Leonians continue their easy access of the finance office, the health department, Borough Clerk or Borough Administrator whenever they require (making walking there a potentially easier alternative to consider from any point in town).

As in the past, Borough Hall serves as a magnet for the business district and this helps by placing more Leonians in proximity to the diversity of merchants and service offerings currently available in our central business district, further enhancing the viability and vitality of our small businesses. The pandemic has shown us afresh how vulnerable our merchant community and small business in general are to economic downturns. Supporting our merchants and creating a more vibrant downtown enhance home values throughout Leonia.

Why are we confident this is the right location for the new municipal building?

The new municipal building will house the Police, Court and Administrative offices for the Borough. A central Leonia location (which, of course, the area adjacent to Wood Park represents on Fort Lee Road) will facilitate the same quick response by the Police to an emergency anywhere in the Borough. Police Chief Tamagny confirms a central location as being very important to a quick and consistently fast emergency response. Time saves lives. We are going to do everything possible to also ensure the Englewood Hospital Ambulance service continues to stage from Leonia and this central location will facilitate that as well. Leonians enjoy an ambulance service response which includes EMS and Advanced Life Support services from the old Ambulance Corps Building in Wood Park today. There is no doubt that medical emergencies requiring ALS need to be on the scene quickly. Minutes and

seconds matter. A central location makes all the difference and Leonia is very fortunate to have Englewood Hospital staging their area response covering multiple towns from our town center.

The property we are going to build the new building on (the existing Ambulance Corps building plus the property at 245 and 247 Fort Lee Road) has been designated in the Master Plan to be acquired for public use for the past 50 years. The footprint is ideal for the modular construction building which we have in mind. Other locations did not offer the same centrality of location or the desired footprint without considerable negatives.

Being adjacent to public land (Wood Park and the Library) makes for a seamless public area that Leonians will be drawn to for a variety of reasons. It is a win for emergency response (both Police and Ambulance) and a big win for the town's merchants, and a win for walkability. The intent is to attract additional business to the Broad Avenue commercial/retail corridor with a centrally located Municipal Building giving Leonians another good reason to frequent our merchants and increase small business health and viability.

Did the Borough use eminent domain to acquire the private properties at 245 and 247 Fort Lee Road?

No. A mutually beneficial and agreed to contract has already been executed with the former owners at 247 Fort Lee Road. We anticipate a similar result at 245 Fort Lee Road and negotiations are nearly complete with the owner there. The Borough also ensured that all tenants were offered assistance in finding new housing and arrangements were made for continued, uninterrupted education of any school age children.

Isn't it possible to simply build a new story or two on the old police station and firehouse?

No, this isn't possible or practical. The basic footprint of the building is inadequate in two respects. First, it cannot accommodate a sally port for prisoner processing as required by State statute. Second, the inefficiencies of the old building for continued 24/7 use makes the improvements necessary cost prohibitive relative to a new building constructed for the purpose we need.

What happens to the beautiful and iconic Broad Avenue building if it is no longer going to be used as a Borough Hall? It won't be torn down will it?

The M&C are committed along with Leonia's Historic Preservation Commission to protecting this historic building. What does that mean? The M&C have indicated their strong support for all preservation moves recommended by the Historic Preservation Commission to protect the building facade from demolition. The outside front of the building will not be able to change. If there is a private owner, they have the option of changing the interior substantially to suit their requirements. We are also in the very early stages of exploring the sale of the building to another public entity which would not likely make as many significant changes to the structure.

In any case, the facade, which everyone appreciates is the defining attribute of this wonderful and iconic structure would be protected.

How can Leonia afford a \$10-\$12 million price tag right now?

Frankly, we don't have much choice when it comes to moving forward with a new building. Please take some comfort in the fact Leonia has a strong track record of getting our money's worth out of our facilities. This investment will be no different. There are several ways we intend to make sure we've again put ourselves on the path to getting the best value for money.

We've determined that modular as opposed to standard construction is our best bet. Again, the watchword is value for money. Modular construction will hopefully save the taxpayer's some money with a higher quality construction over standard on site construction, an accelerated timetable to completion and a 50+ year useful life. Recent changes in steel and other construction costs may impact our initial estimates. We've estimated the full costs at \$10-12 million with modular construction and without factoring in any revenues received from the sale or lease or new ratables created by the old Borough Hall. Modular construction labor costs will not be the prevailing wage paid here in Metro NY (typically more expensive) and will reflect the lower prevailing wage wherever the winning modular construction bidder is located. There is a complete breakdown of cost estimates associated with the new building on the website and included in the June 23 Town Hall presentation.

What is different about a modular building vs. standard construction and why can it save \$?

Modular construction is basically a pre-cast building. The building pieces are made in a factory somewhere else and transported for assembly to the site. Labor costs are based on the fabrication facility location which will most likely be outside of the NY/NJ metropolitan area and represent a significant savings by itself. Modular has been cheaper than on site construction from the bottom up, even with the transportation costs of the building segments to Leonia included. Yet, we know modular construction does not compromise quality in any way, accelerates the timeline to building completion/occupation and likely will last longer because of the high quality construction.

Why has Leonia gone out to bid for the new municipal building now?

The most reliable way to truly gauge the construction and grounds costs associated with a new building is to put a project out to bid. Leonia is under no obligation to accept a bid if we find it unsatisfactory in terms of cost. However, we will clearly know by bid submissions how much this project would cost.

There are three bid result possibilities and we are planning ahead to determine our actions in advance. We can all agree it is much better to anticipate and come up with various alternative

well thought out actions now as opposed to simply reacting when the bids come in. The bids will either be lower, higher or match our range expectations. If they are lower, there is little doubt we will proceed and the same is true should the bids come in within the cost range we are anticipating (approximately \$11-\$12 million). Should the bids come in appreciably higher than expectations due to higher construction and materials costs, we are developing a series of alternatives now to ensure the greatest value for the taxpayer dollar. Whether the scope and/or scale can potentially change are to be determined and being discussed now in our contingency plans. The bottom line is that Leonia's M&C are focussed on all of our bottom lines with the objective being getting the most value out of every tax dollar.