

**TOWN OF WESTERLO
PUBLIC INFORMATIONAL MEETING
RE: PROPOSED RENOVATION OF TOWN HALL & DEMOLITION/CONSTRUCTION OF HIGHWAY
GARAGE**

**OF
TUESDAY, JUNE 16, 2015**

The Town of Westerlo Town Board held a Public Informational Meeting for the purposes of proposed renovations of the Westerlo Town Hall and demolition/construction of new Town of Westerlo Highway Garage structure estimated maximum cost of the project is set not to exceed a maximum of \$2,750,000. Supervisor Richard H. Rapp opened the meeting at 7:00 PM with the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

Attending were: Supervisor Richard H. Rapp
Councilman Anthony W. Sherman
Councilman Theodore S. Lounsbury III
Councilman William F. Bichteman Jr.
Councilman Alfred L. Field

Also attending were: Delaware Engineering, DPC- Fred Grober, Project Manager; Mary Beth Bianconi, Sr. Planner; and Brad Brigett, Design Engineer; Town Attorney Aline D. Galgay, Town Clerk Kathleen Spinnato, several Town employees and approximately forty-five residents/interested persons.

Mr. Grober of Delaware Engineering (DE) introduced himself and his colleagues Mary Beth Bianconi and Brad Brigett. DE provided a handout for the public of the proposed project it included the following information:

- Existing Highway Garage Conditions
- Financial Facts
- Westerlo Town Hall Renovation \$893,000 Budget
- Westerlo Town Highway Garage replacement \$1,810,000 Budget
- Town Hall Renovation existing and proposed floor plans and site plan
- Town of Westerlo Highway Garage proposed Floor Plan/Front Elevation and proposed site plan.

Mr. Grober informed of the prior history with highway garage building. Previously the Town had looked at the cost of rehabing the Highway Garage. The bids that came in were high for covering up a building which is 55 years old. The Highway Garage is a series of 5 buildings consisting of block, wood, and metal. The Highway Garage structure still houses the Town Court, NYS Police substation, and the Highway Dept. The initial thought was to look at the existing structure to reuse it for Highway Dept. purposes, it became difficult because the existing structure is too small, too antiquated, not energy efficient, as well as the buildings that have been added on to it. DE was approached by the Town Board to determine whether the existing highway garage was worth saving or demolishing and constructing a new building. DE had recently completed the Town of Windham Highway Garage and some Board members as well as some of the Highway Dept. workers had visited that facility. He indicated the Town of Windham Hwy. Garage is more functional, more energy efficient than the Town of Westerlo's Hwy. Garage.

DE looked into the consolidation of the offices and moving of the NYS Police substation, and Town Court to Town Hall, this would save on heating. He reviewed last winter's energy bills for just the office portion of the Highway Garage building for a five month period it averaged \$980 a month to heat. DE then needed to determine if the Court, Court Clerk, Judges Chamber, conference room, and NYS Police would fit into the Town Hall.

Brad Briggett reviewed the existing and proposed floor plan of offices as well as the need for ADA compliant bathroom facilities for the Town Hall Renovation.

Mr. Grober then reviewed the financial standpoint of the proposed project. DE reached out to the Town Board to determine the tax base, the impact to residents, and they also needed to determine what the Board felt would be a reasonable tax rate for the average taxpayer to fund the proposed consolidation of offices into Town Hall and the new construction of highway garage. The tax increase would include residential, industrial, commercial, agricultural/vacant land. Mr. Grober advised the Town Board had determined a reasonable rate for a tax increase for the average taxpayer would be less than \$100 a year (approx. \$8.25 to \$8.30 a month) based on potential financing for 20 years with a bond interest rate of 4%. He advised this is where the proposed project stands right now from a planning standpoint. To proceed forward a Design Budget would be needed. A Design Budget based on the facts and figures would not exceed \$2,750,000, but we are not currently in a design stage. He announced that a copy of the assessment roll is available on the front table for those who want to look up the potential tax rate increase for a tax parcel. (The document is based on assessment prior to any tax exemptions)

Marybeth Bianconi reviewed the Financial Facts portion of the handout advising the 2014 average assessment was calculated at \$1,418.34 the annual cost to the avg. property would be \$99. If a parcel is assessed higher than \$1,418.34 the annual cost would be more than \$99, if assessed for less than \$1418.34 the annual cost would be less.

The public asked questions regarding commercial, industrial, and agricultural properties. The Town Attorney advised the annual cost for those properties would also be based on assessment for each individual parcel and if tax exemptions are applied the annual cost would be reduced. Exemptions can change, that is why DE did not include them in the assessment roll provided this evening.

Town of Windham Highway Superintendent Tom Hoyt spoke about the process which occurred in the Town of Windham for their Highway Garage project. A resident asked him about a petition filed in Windham. He responded to her question and explained the process in Windham.

The public asked questions or commented on the following: budgeted costs, construction estimates, highway garage well, highway garage septic, storage of records, asbestos abatement, bids for professional services, the generator at highway garage. Fred Grober & his colleagues, Aline Galgay, and Richard Rapp responded to and answered their questions.

Kevin Flensted of the Westerlo Vol. Fire Co. advised the public the Fire Company building is 70 years old and they may need a new building in the future. Town Attorney Galgay advised all attending the Vol. Fire Co. is a different legal entity from the Town. The Town of Westerlo **cannot** take a bond out for the Westerlo Volunteer Fire Co. The Vol. Fire Co. is an independent not for profit and those properties are owned by the Vol. Fire Co. The Town contracts with the Fire and Rescue Depts. If fire or rescue services costs go up and those entities want to transfer their costs to the Town then the Town decides if they still want to contract with those entities for their services. If their budgets increase due to additional costs (purchase of vehicles, buildings, etc.) then those entities can seek additional funds in their contract for services.

A resident indicated that what seems to be getting lost in the conversation is the annual debt service of approximately \$200,000 on the proposed project would be offset by lower operating costs. Mr. Grober indicated this is correct. Mr. Grober discussed the cost of fuel oil heating bills only (electric was not included) for the Westerlo Court/Highway Garage and Town Hall and he discussed the savings the Town of Windham received after new construction of their highway garage. Attorney Galgay advised there are still unused grant monies which were previously received for the Town Hall which could help to offset the cost of a new heating system in the Town Hall.

A resident inquired about the lack of maintenance of the highway garage building. Mr. Grober advised this is a highway garage with heavy equipment and heavy usage. Charles Benninger disagreed

and he reported on many repairs to the highway building over the years. He listed removal of snow from roof to prevent any potential collapse during heavy snow and ice storms, replacement of garage overhead doors with insulated ones, painting of exterior of building, repair to rubber roof caused by wind damage and new plywood underlayment.

A resident asked about the proposed project time schedule. Fred Grober explained the scheduling is very critical. He briefly advised of the staging and the time scheduling required for bidding, necessary renovations, followed by the relocation of Court & State Police to Town Hall, before any demo/construction could begin for garage.

More public discussion followed concerning the following topics:

- The Resolution which authorized the Supervisor to borrow a maximum \$2,750,000 for proposed project
- bonds and the potential borrowing process
- future maintenance of buildings and custodial staffing
- budgetary constraints and 2% tax cap
- the current reduction in number of highway dept. employees compared to the past
- new building materials which could reduce maintenance
- a potential reduction in operation and maintenance costs associated with new building materials and energy efficiency
- the lack of public knowledge of proposed project
- 30 day permissive referendum
- a potential petition which may be filed
- health insurance coverage costs for employees

There being no further public discussion Supervisor Rapp made a motion to close the Public Informational meeting, Councilman Field seconded, motion carried all in favor. Meeting adjourned at 8:53 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen Spinnato