

OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE MEETING
MUNICIPAL BUILDINGS PROJECT FOR THE BOROUGH OF CALDWELL
MEETING MINUTES
December 12, 2023

A Meeting of the Borough of Caldwell's Municipal Oversight Committee for the Municipal Buildings Project was held at 1:30PM Tuesday, December 12, 2023 in the conference room located in the Caldwell Firehouse, 32 Roseland Avenue, Caldwell, New Jersey.

ATTENDEES: Mayor Jones, Alex Palumbo, Councilman Brown, Councilman Daniolowicz, Lucia Guarini, Tom Tucci, Mike DeCarlo, and Joe Haines from Dassa Haines Architects

OBJECTIVES: To brainstorm possible locations for a new Caldwell Police Department and Borough Hall Building and discuss different options.

Mr. Palumbo opened the meeting with discussion of a possible location for the Caldwell Police Department building that would offer the following positive aspects:

- The property is already owned by the Borough of Caldwell (Although it was noted that confirmation should be made by obtaining a copy of the official deed to the property to ensure ownership and confirm that there are no deed restrictions or easements).
- Location would be in close proximity to the center of town and the Firehouse.
- Allows for the construction of one stand-alone building with two means of emergency egress, which would allow for better traffic flow for police vehicles.
- In an area that does not experience significant stormwater issues.
- Will allow for more parking to be provided on the Provost Square site.
- Potentially could build a two-story building with a sallyport on the second floor.

Some drawbacks to the site:

- A "buffer area" will need to be created for the adjacent residential properties and for the preschool playground area.
- Investigation needs to be made on if there is a deed restriction on the property.

Discussion ensued regarding the possibility of purchasing a property on Bloomfield Avenue to serve as a Municipal Building and possibly Library for the Borough.

Background information on the building:

- The proposed site on Bloomfield Avenue has a footprint of 5,550 sq ft. per floor. Two levels exist for a total of 11,000 sq ft of usable space. In addition, there is a significant basement area (not included in the aforementioned totals) that could serve as storage space for Borough files.
- The Borough is in discussion with the property owners on the possibility of purchasing the property.
- Some of the Committee Members were able to perform a walk-thru inspection of most of the site.

Mr. Haines provided two sets of plans for the building: one set with an existing tenant utilizing part of the building and one set with the Borough utilizing the entire space.

FIRST CONCEPT PLAN presented (One tenant, whose lease is on-going would be utilizing part of the second floor of the building):

- The basement could be used for storage and a break room for staff.
- An inspection was made after a heavy rain event. Running water along the back side of the basement by the elevator pit was evidenced. A sump pump was operating. The Mayor noted that the Pine Brook runs along the property and that a generator will be needed.
- For the first floor, there will be a lobby area and a hallway along the back of the building. Fire-rated doors will need to be installed. There is an existing elevator. One hallway will consist of an open area (by the elevator doors) with offices for the Tax/Water Department, Building Department, Public Works/Engineering and the Clerk's Office. The other hallway will consist of the Courtroom, Violations Office, and Judge's Chambers. A separate door will be needed for the Judge to enter and exit, possibly by the back of the building near condensing units and parking area. Both bathrooms will need to be ADA compliant. A retaining wall will need to be constructed outside to make the first floor level for handicapped access.
- For the second floor, one half of the footprint would be occupied by the existing tenant. Discussion ensued regarding the possibility of noise disruptions from the area of the second floor unoccupied by the Borough. The second floor would consist of offices for the Borough Administrator, the Mayor, the Mayor's Assistant, and the Finance Office. A bathroom and possible Conference Room would be available as well on the second floor.
- In this Concept Plan, Mr. Haines stated that he believed there would not be enough room to provide space for the Library.

SECOND CONCEPT PLAN presented (The Borough would occupy the entire building):

- Basement would have an office area for the Department of Public Works and a storage area for Borough files.
- The first floor would consist of an expanded Courtroom/Council Chambers with an IT storage area and an adjacent room for Executive Sessions. Eliminating the drop ceiling for the Court Room/Council Chambers would allow enough height to provide for a platformed dais. A lobby area would be created outside of the entrance doors to the Courtroom /Council Chambers. A metal detector could be stored in a closet and bathrooms would be available for the public in the lobby area.
- For municipal functions, the second floor would house the Clerk's Office, Tax/Water Department, Engineering Office, Building Department, Mail Room, Storage Areas, two bathrooms (existing), the Finance Department, a Conference Room, a Staff Break Room, and an Executive Suite Area with 3 offices, a conference room and a waiting area.
The Mayor suggested making some modifications to allow for the Library to utilize the space that was occupied by the tenant on the other half of the second floor. He suggested the possibility of having the books/materials stored in the basement and the library staff, upon request, would be able to retrieve items for a patron from the basement. A suggestion was also made to keep the Mayor and Borough Administrator's Offices upstairs with the Library and move all the other offices to the first floor. Mr. Haines stated that it would be difficult to move all the other offices to the first floor and keep everyone's current desk and operating space. A suggestion was made to eliminate the currently used "L - shaped" desks.

ADDITIONAL TOPICS DISCUSSED REGARDING THE BUILDING:

- Discussion ensued regarding the importance of including the library in the concept plans of the building. Committee Members stressed the importance of having program space for the library. The required space for the library, at minimum, would be 3,500 sq. ft.
- The consensus of the Committee Members was that the most optimal location of the Borough Administrator's Office would be with the Departmental Offices.
- There is one long demising support wall in the middle of the building that would need to remain which factors into decisions on where some of the larger spaces, like the Court Room/Council Chambers should be.
- Separate doors will be needed for the library.
- Suggestions were made on omitting the offices in the building for the Department of Public Works and creating space in their existing building at One Provost Square by adding square footage or purchasing a trailer.
- There was a consensus that no offices should be created in the basement area and that the space would be better utilized for storage.
- There are multiple hvac zones and condensers for the building.
- The sump pump and detention basin for the building were probably not designed properly. Measures could be taken to mitigate any stormwater issues.
- After looking at both Concept Plans, Committee Members agreed that the possibility of moving the Borough Hall to this building would only work if the existing tenant relocated and vacated the building.

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSIONS:

- The plan for 24 Small Avenue once the Health and Human Services Building renovations are completed.
- The plan for the existing library building is to make it a historical building which would house all the pictures and artifacts documenting the history of the Borough of Caldwell. There is potential as well to create an additional conference room or meeting space.
- Any bathrooms will need to be unisex.

PLAN OF ACTION:

- The Borough Administrator will talk to the Real Estate Agent to add language to the sale agreement that the buyer will inspect/confirm the integrity of the building but that it will not be used as an additional round of negotiations.
- The Tax Assessor, George Librizzi, will be consulted to find out the assessed value of the Bloomfield Avenue Property.
- Mike DeCarlo will obtain a copy of the deed for the potential property for the Police Department to determine if there are any official deed restrictions or easements.
- Ray Sullivan, the Borough's Communications Consultant, will meet with Committee Members to discuss IT needs for both potential buildings.
- At some point, a meeting should be scheduled with members of the Advisory Committee for the Community Center to receive additional suggestions and input.

The meeting adjourned at 3:20pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kim Conlon
Deputy Clerk