

Borough of Hellertown  
Informational Presentation  
Public Works Facility  
Monday, April 8, 2019

Present for the presentation from Council and staff: Phil Weber, Earl Hill, James Hill, Andrew Hughes, Michael McKenna, Thomas Rieger, Gil Stauffer, Mayor Heintzelman, Cathy Hartranft, and Angie Thiede.

Mr. Rieger explained that this presentation will begin with a description of the proposed project by the engineer, Bryan Smith, and then move onto a question and answer session. No decisions are being made at this meeting.

Mr. Smith- The Borough has been working on plans for the Reinhard site since it was acquired in 2003. There are three functions that are housed at Borough Hall: Administrative, Police, and Public Works. The Public Works utilizes many other sites throughout the Borough to house equipment and materials. Most of the vehicles are housed in the old stable building which have not been modified since they were built. Due to the design, the building would have to be demolished and built from scratch for improvements to meet today's standards. Due to the limited size of the drive lane in the parking area, there is no room for expansion. Prior to the proposed placement at the former Reinhard site, the Borough looked into purchasing property on Whitaker Street and also Front Street but those properties did not meet the criteria outlined in the feasibility study and are not financially possible.

The Reinhard site was deeded to the Borough from the Saucon Valley School District. It must be used for municipal purposes. The building was beyond repair. The Borough used grant funding to cover asbestos abatement, storage tank removal, and demolition of the buildings.

The proposed building will keep the same footprint as the school so the impervious coverage is reduced. The proposed rear parking lot will remain open after business hours. The back lot will be enclosed by a fence. All storage and service will be done in the building which will be heated. The salt shed will remain at its current location. There are no plans to move it to this site. The baseball field and open space area will remain.

Rick Williams inquired as to why Council is choosing the Reinhard site.

Mr. Rieger- Over the last several years, Council has looked into the acquisition of property. If we were to purchase the privately owned lot that used to be a playground on Whitaker Street, we would have had to purchase the two adjacent lots as well. The cost estimate was millions of dollars. Also, that site was formerly known as the "dump" so we aren't sure what would be found if digging would have occurred. The former Kichline property was also not big enough and had a cost of millions of dollars. The Gristmill and Thomas Iron Works property were purchase with Act 70 funds which requires the property to be maintained as recreation space.

Melissa Kroeger asked whether the storm water improvements to the property are for quality or storm water management. She would also like to see a vegetative buffer around the smaller garage.

Mr. Smith- The storm water system that is there currently is set up to handle the "100 year storm". The new additions would be for added quality.

Gerald Savitske is concerned with the large truck traffic and changing Delaware Avenue to be one-way.

Mr. Rieger- I have no knowledge of changing Delaware to one-way. The typical vehicles of the Public Works are pickup trucks. Larger dump trucks are only used when plowing snow or larger projects.

Dave Schweisgut wished to discuss reverting Saucon Street to two-way.

Mr. Rieger requested this item be placed on the April 16, 2019, agenda since no action can be taken at this workshop.

Carol Savitske wanted to know the size of the Saucon Street entrance to the building.

Mr. Smith- It could be used for trucks but it will mostly be car traffic. The entrance will be normal size which is two car widths.

Casey Koch- Does moving Public Works off-site alleviate space issues with the Police Department?

Mr. Rieger- Space is definitely an issue in the police department. Once Public Works has a new building, the stables can be repurposed to house the police vehicles. This plan would allow for additional parking and add an addition off the back of the current building to have a 21<sup>st</sup> Century police facility.

Don Guierro- What tax increase would be needed to build the building sooner rather than later? They deserve a new building.

Mr. Rieger- The Borough has been very lucky with receiving grant funding. We have also put aside a small fund balance to allocate toward matching grants. Debt service is not being suggested at this time but would be approximately \$2,000,000. This would equate to an additional mill of taxes for 20 years.

Dave Koons- Are the grants site specific?

Mr. Smith- The funding authority want as much information as possible described in the application but the site may be movable.

Mr. Rieger- The Reinhard site is deed restricted. It must be used for municipal purposes or the property would revert back to Saucon Valley School District. If the school district would get the property back and decide to sell it, based on the current R2 zoning, there could be up to 168 units of senior living, 63 multi-dwelling units, or 30 single family homes placed on this site.

Melissa Kroeger inquired as to the grants that the Borough applied for.

Mr. Rieger- The Borough has submitted two applications. One to the Monroe County LSA and the other to Lehigh/Northampton County LSA. Both grants required very little matching funds.

Mr. Savitske noted that a Public Works building is not listed as a permitted use in that zoning district.

Mr. Rieger- A Public Works Building would be considered a conditional use and would need to go before the Planning Commission and Borough Council for approval.

A resident asked about when the earliest would be that ground would break on this project.

Mr. Smith- If we received the grant funding, it would be at least a year before the Borough could break ground.

Mr. Rieger- Since 2012, the Borough has reinvested in the Borough's infrastructure. We are in the final year of the 11 year road paving project, all of the Borough owned bridges have been repaired, the grandstand has been restored, the band shell was built, the pavilion at Dimmick Park was refurbished, work was completed at the pool and Water Street Park has seen significant improvements. In addition, pedestrian safety issues along Main Street and Water Street are being addressed. The space issue has been placed on the back-burner long enough and now it is time to focus on these issues.

Mr. Williams stated that he lived there when it was a school and that was fine but he does not want to live next to a Public Works building.

Elaine Lipp- I don't believe that people are aware of how many people actually work in the Public Works Department. There are only six employees. Their hours are 7:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. unless they get called out for an emergency or snow. There is not a lot of noise down at Borough Hall now. Most of the time, Public Works is off-site.

Mr. Rieger- I have never received a complaint from any residents that lives behind Borough Hall regarding noise.

Bill Broun- The neighborhood is not remotely deceived by the way the history of the site was presented. Of the people I've spoken to, only two people were in favor of the project. This is not just an empty space. It is the most cost-effective open space in the Borough.

Brianna Kroeger- I am a student at Saucon Valley and go to the Community Center. I am concerned that without the open area at Reinhard that we might need to walk twice a day to Water Street Park.

Mr. Rieger- The current baseball field site is remaining. We will work with the Community Center on this project.

Terry Boos asked if the small grass area by the Community Center would be utilized.

Mr. Smith- Yes that will be part of the storm water management of the site.

Barry Yonney- I am all about green space but if we don't utilize the space, the school district will sell it to a developer. There will be no green space left.

Annmarie Drury feels that Borough Council has not thought about this project's impact on the children of the neighborhood and the fact that over half of the children are not allowed to go down to Water Street Park due to the difficulty of crossing Main Street. This project will also decrease the property value of adjacent properties.

Mr. Rieger- Council is very cognizant of the children. We also have to look at what is best for the whole. Construction has just begun on the new playground at Dimmick Park which is only a block from this site.

Mr. Broun- We hope Council understands that there is little chance that this project will get built. The community doesn't support the plan and we have allies that go beyond Council.

Mr. Rieger- We are doing what we think is best for the entire community. We have reviewed all other possible properties. Council is not promoting decisiveness and will work through this as a community. On another note, the Saucon Valley Community Center is not a municipal use. They are a private, non-profit organization.

Mr. Savitske inquired if the Library lot would be another possible location.

Mr. Rieger- The Post Office had looked into moving to that area years ago. The lot does not provide any natural site coverage. It is not large enough for the required site flow.

Don Werkheiser- The proposed building is only an extended one-story building. Many developers would not care about the height of the buildings or open space. I'm sure the school district would be happy to sell the land to a developer should they get the land back. It would increase tax dollars to them.

Matt Brady- I am not concerned with the plans as presented but I am concerned about the possibility of expansion in the future. Could it be a condition that no other buildings or storage are erected on this site other than what is currently on the plans?

Mr. Rieger- During the conditional use hearing, Council could definitely place a conditional use on the site that no further expansion could happen.

Mr. Broun- The only options for this site are not between a Public Works building and townhouses. Council should consider other projects and use the funding toward serving the residents.

Mr. Rieger- What is great about living in Hellertown is when there is an issue or need, the community comes together. Examples are the Saucon Rail Trail, Hellertown Area Library, Hellertown Historical Society, and the Saucon Valley Community Center. Hellertown is an expensive Borough to live in but it is also a great place to live.

Council thanked everyone for coming out to the meeting and sharing their points of view. If there are any other suggestions for placement of the building, please let Council know. Mr. Weber asked for a show of hands in support of the project and also against the project. A definite majority of the hands raised were in favor of the project.

Mayor Heintzelman- I would like to thank everyone for coming out tonight especially our young student, Brianna. I am very proud of you for coming out and reminding us to keep the Community Center in mind during the planning of the proposed building. We do not have to all agree but at the end of the day, we are all still friends and neighbors. Creative discussions are the best. The Borough works hard with the limited staff that we have. Taxes are high but there is not a lot of "fluff" in the budget. Taxes will continue to go up regardless of whether or not this building gets built. As a Council, it is our job to define needs of the Borough. Right now, the Borough needs help with staffing and buildings. Be proud of the decisions that your elected officials make.

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The workshop concluded at 8:13 p.m.

Adopted by the Hellertown Borough Council this 16<sup>th</sup> Day of April 2019.

  
Cathy Hartman  
Borough Secretary