

This report was submitted by Harry O'Mealia on 12/15/2015

At the request of Councilman Chris Nelson, this committee was formed to look at possible options to the proposed town hall building.

The following summary report and recommendation is respectfully submitted on behalf of a group of citizens that was formed following the November Town Council Meeting. Between the November Town Council meeting and today, the group met twice - once with and once without representatives from the Council and has communicated via email often. We thank all for their input and ideas. We on the citizens' side of the committee have worked to answer the following questions -

- Can the Town Hall as currently proposed be delivered at a cost acceptable to the community?
- Does the Town Hall as currently proposed represent the best outcome- or even an acceptable outcome - for our community within the context of aesthetics, town character, financial health and long term priorities facing Mantoloking?

We endeavored to unearth as much information as we could about costs and comparables to enable the citizens of our town to make an informed choice regarding whether or not to proceed with the plan that has been proposed by the Town Council. Along those lines, following the first meeting the Council posted more information about the project on its website. In addition, two other projects grew out of this effort – a side by side comparison of Lavallette, Bay Head and Mantoloking Town Halls spearheaded by Tom McIntyre and a value engineering study to validate costs spearheaded by Mike Lucciola.

Based upon our meetings with members of the Town Council, Police Department, Fire Department and concerned citizens we share the following-

Weighing multiple inputs broadly sought and relying most heavily on Tom McIntyre's work , we believe that adjusting for site, a non modular approach and quality of construction materials ,the costs of the current plan as proposed are in-line to higher when compared to those of Bay Head and Lavallette. Our hope is that the value engineering study currently being undertaken by the Hollister firm could, when placed alongside Tom's report, yield cost save information on the Council's current proposal. While unfortunately that report is not yet complete, it would be our intent to make its findings available to all as soon as it becomes available.

The question would then become what level of saving, if any, is enough to satisfy the community at this point. Tom McIntyre's report comparing the various projects speaks to the cost issue using the assumption that the current Town Council specs for the project are the appropriate starting point. The value engineering report, which is being undertaken by Hollister, also uses the current plan as its base line. While at this point that starting point is understandable, it is possible that we really need to step back and address a fundamental underlying question as to what is driving us to the space requirements in the proposal – ie, what are the zero based budgeting space requirements for a town of our size? Are the staffing and services assumptions at the base of the Plan acceptable to the community?

Assuming what we know today and then assuming no major negative or positive surprises arise from the value engineering report, we are now faced with the fact that there probably are some potential

savings to be had but that the project as proposed by the Council will cost in excess of \$5 million and may approach \$6 million before financing costs.

At this point, our conclusion is that the real and most pertinent issue lies with the basic scope and concept of the project and the fact that a wider range of alternatives have not been fully considered. In addition, the proposal suffers from not being part of a larger and up to date Town Master Plan. We do not believe that the Council's Plan as currently proposed satisfies either acceptable cost or best outcome for Mantoloking.

We propose that the Town table the current proposed Town Hall plan and appoint a diverse, well qualified committee of citizens to study alternatives and propose a new solution. We are aware that this entails risk to our financing and reimbursement money but it is more important to the Town given the magnitude and lifespan of this project that we get the right project and not let financial expediency get in the way of the best long term decision for our community. The critical issues that will need to be balanced are threefold- – reasonable cost, character of our community and optimal to acceptable delivery of essential services.

Based upon the foregoing, there are two basic choices although there are some interesting nuances possible if we follow the approach that we recommend-

- 1) The Council can choose to go ahead with the Plan as currently proposed and vote to move forward to raise a bond that partially finances the construction. This will then set in motion the possibility that townspeople who object to the Plan will file a petition to force a town wide vote on the issue. That is a likely outcome. It will cost the town additional time and money as well as increase divisiveness.
- 2) Table the current plan and engage the people of our community in a collaborative effort to study the following alternatives and perhaps others within the next 90 to 120 days-
 - 2.1 Provide a longer term Strategic or Master Plan that incorporates all future investment in facilities and other issues that are facing our town.

Alternative approaches to the municipal facilities may include:

 - a. De-centralize Municipal Services by utilizing all town facilities in order to build a lower impact "one story" new building. This may result in locating the Police Department and other Town Staff within the new building, utilizing the upstairs of the existing firehouse for OEM needs as well as meeting space requirements and utilizing space above the Public Works building for construction related personnel and then use Lavallette, as we currently do for our courtroom.
 - b. Centralize Municipal Services in the proposed new building by incorporating other town functions in order to reduce future costs of renovating other town facilities. For example; use the new municipal building for firehouse meeting space so that the future renovation scope of the firehouse will be minimized; and/or move OEM offices to the municipal building to centralize operations.
 - c. Creatively utilize all town owned property – For example the current municipal parking lot is expensive and valuable real estate that is not being optimally utilized – Perhaps the Public Works building could be expanded or repurposed to incorporate some of the Town's needs – All Town owned property should be inventoried as

should contiguous property that could become available so we have a sense of options down the road.

- 2.2 Review building massing of current design to reduce the size and visual impact. For example, roof lines could be lowered in a way that reduces the overwhelming visual scale of the building by potentially moving eliminating attic space, utilities could be moved down a floor and more space could be shared among groups that are not 5 day a week 8 hour a day functions, the size and cost of the building might be reduced. In addition provide a more welcoming entrance at ground level with detailing and use of traditional town materials would lessen the feeling of an institutional building perched in a small summer community.
- 2.3 Appoint a Task Force to examine or have the Council clarify what assumptions underlie the Plan and are driving us to the space requirements extant in the proposed plan. After review of these we may be in a better position to evaluate the Plan from an objective point of view. This goes to the concept of incorporating the proposed Town Hall Plan within the context of a deeper look at the Town, the possibility of strategically chosen shared resources and what that might imply in terms of appropriate options.

These are among ideas surfaced in a very short time frame. The Mantoloking community wants to help and wants input into this process. That message is crystal clear to us. A decision that does not engage the community is very likely to fail. All of those who have participated in this long process , as witnessed by the size of meeting turnouts , letters , calls and one on one conversations should be seen as evidence of a desire throughout the Town and from all of its citizens - voters and taxpayers -to have a positive long term impact on our community. We respect and appreciate the hard and complicated work that has gone on to date but we do not agree with moving ahead as proposed.

In conclusion – weighing the options - it is our recommendation that the Council delay a vote on the Bond offering pending a full and transparent consideration of alternatives that take into consideration financial , aesthetic and long range planning considerations.

Respectfully Submitted,

Harry O'Mealia
Lynn O'Mealia
Bill Richardson
Don Redlinger
Gary Sayia
Lance White
Walter Boyer
Pat Boyer
Pam Rew

