

TOWNSHIP OF CHIPPEWA

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Date: September 18, 2023

Subject: Responses to the Proposed Chippewa Township Office Building Project Feedback

In the previous mailing we included a questionnaire regarding residents' opinion regarding the addition to the Community Building. We received a number of responses with a majority voicing approval for the project. However, there appears to be some confusion as to the reason why we are pursuing this project at this time.

Is this a repeat of what I received earlier this year?

Not exactly, earlier this year we did send out a questionnaire to evaluate the property owners' opinions regarding this proposed project. The majority of the responses supported the project which led the Board to approve putting the issue on the November 7, 2023, ballot. The purpose of this letter is to address some of the questions and concerns that were raised and were not addressed in the previous letter. It also will provide a reminder to voters about the project so no one will be surprised.

Upcoming ballot proposal purpose

Chippewa Township is asking approval of a one year, 2 mills tax to build an addition to the Community Building to replace the current Township Office Building and consolidate to one location.

What is the proposed addition?

The proposal is for a 1,512 sq ft. addition to the west side of the Community Building. This size allows room for (5) office workers and sufficient room for storage of Township materials and election equipment which is currently stored in a non-heated storage shed. The addition will blend in with the existing building.

Why build now?

Chippewa Township has a unique opportunity to take advantage of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA). In 2021, The American Rescue Plan Act stimulus package was passed by the 117th United States Congress which is a \$1.9 trillion economic stimulus plan and signed into law by the President on March 11, 2021. These funds have been awarded to various levels of government but must meet specific criteria to be spent. Chippewa Township has been awarded \$127,367.53 dollars. This money is dependent on a project that meets the ARPA guidelines. The Township has investigated this fully and has been assured that this project meets the ARPA requirements. The money has been awarded but must be spent by December 31, 2024, or the funds must be returned to the Federal Government.

Why wasn't the office building completed at the same time as the community building?

After the original Community Building burned down, the plan was to build both the Community Building and Office together. However, the insurance money received was not adequate to do both. The Township Officials decided to delay the office until a later time.

How much is this project going to cost?

Because the utilities in the Community Building such as gas, electric, HVAC, water, restrooms were designed for an office addition, the current build cost is less than may be expected. The estimated cost for the building construction material and labor is \$243,078.00 including a 10% contingency. With the ARPA Funds (\$127,367.00) the taxpayer cost of the project is \$115,711.00 or 48% of the total cost.

How large is the building addition?

The overall footprint of the addition is 28'x54' or 1,512 sq ft. This size allows room for (5) office workers and sufficient room for storage of Township materials and election equipment which is currently stored in a non-heated storage shed. The width of the building is designed to blend in to the current community building and eliminates the need for a fourth exterior wall. The addition also takes advantage of the existing mechanical systems which were designed to support both the Community Building and Offices.

How does elections affect the building addition?

With the passing of Proposal 2 in 2022, we are required to have a polling place that allows onsite voting 9 days prior to election for voters. This means that the election equipment and personnel must be setup, available and secure at the polling place. The Community Building does not have room for the election equipment storage which requires the equipment to be moved to and from an unheated storage location each time

there is an election which subjects the equipment to undue wear and tear from remote storage, loading into vehicles, delivery and setup. The new building will have sufficient room to store the equipment onsite and will no longer subject the election equipment to temperature extremes and moving stresses.

Why not just eliminate the library and hold elections in that area just as we did in the past?

This worked in the past because Chippewa Township had fewer voters. In 1980, when the current office building was built, Chippewa Township had 478 registered voters. Today, we have 1055 registered voters, and with the new election spacing requirements this just is not an option. Election mandates specify that we have 1 voting booth per 100 voters and each voting booth be set up 8 feet apart. Also, the Township by law is required to support a library. Chippewa Township is part of the Barryton Public Library. Providing the library area within the current office building make sense by providing our property owners a branch library without having to drive to Barryton.

Is there another option for elections?

There is but not a good one. The mandatory 9 days early voting could be turned over to Mecosta County. If this were to happen, all early voting would require Chippewa Township residents to vote in Big Rapids versus Chippewa Township. It also means that Chippewa Township voters would wait in line to vote along with voters throughout Mecosta County. In addition, Chippewa Township would be required to provide equipment and human resources for each election. This option is confusing to voters and not convenient. Chippewa Township Board addressed this option at a recent Board meeting and rejected this alternative. The alternative was rejected because the Board felt elections should stay within our own jurisdiction and it would eliminate voter confusion on where they needed to vote.

What condition is the current office building?

The current building built in 1980 is a pole barn construction and the posts that support the building are not holding up well and are compromised. The building is not very efficient and difficult to heat in the winter and it is not air conditioned (you may have noticed the doors propped open in the summer).

The building is undersized for today's needs especially with the new election requirements. We also need to store some office records off site. Mechanical equipment such as the furnace are old and inefficient and may soon need to be replaced. The building itself is not insulated very well and there are significant temperature differences in various locations of the building during the winter.

Combining the Community Building and Offices in one location will allow us to save money on utilities and services such as gas, electricity, internet, garbage, etc. The Community Building is already being serviced by utility and technology companies.

Have other building designs or structures been explored?

Township Officials have investigated numerous construction options and designs. The proposed plan is the result of over a year of finetuning the design. This proposed design provides an efficient no-frills design that meets the needs for the foreseeable future while keeping the costs as low as possible.

What happens to the existing office?

As mentioned earlier, the Township by law is required to support a library. The Township provides space for the Barryton Library (Chippewa Branch). The library personnel have expressed a desire to continue to occupy and possibly expand their footprint of the building.

Who would build the addition and are they available?

This is an important question in regards to the current construction industry labor shortages. To get to this point the Township has met with many construction companies to get quotes and discuss projected build time. Along with getting solid quotes we have discussed their availability. We also concentrated on getting quotes from local contractors that have a vested interest in making this a project they can be proud of.

Has a Licensed Architect reviewed and approved the plans?

Yes, initially plans were vetted using the cad resources of one of the Township Officials. This allowed us to modify the drawings many times for very little cost. Once we came to an agreement on what we needed, the drawings were submitted to a Licensed Architect to review the plans, create official "stamped" drawings and the prints were reviewed with Mecosta County Building and Zoning Department.

What happens if the project is not approved?

We have a couple of different options. We could continue to use the current building as is and make repairs as required; however, it is delaying the inevitable. The ARPA funds make this an extremely attractive time to complete this building project. Or we could remodel the current community building to make room for offices, leaving enough room to have elections, and no longer rent the community building out for community events. This would mean a loss in rental revenues as well as a loss of a vital resource for our community.

How much is this going to cost me?

The November 2023 ballot proposal will ask for approval of 2 mills for one year only. The 2 mills will be based on your property Taxable Value (not the Assessed Value). For example: You would multiply your 2023 value by .002 for the amount this voted millage would cost you. Commercial and DNR properties will also be included in the millage if it passes. Please call the Township Treasurer, Julie, at the office (231-867-3777) if you would like an estimate on your property tax cost.

Summary

Chippewa Township has a unique opportunity to finish the original concept of the combined Community Building and Offices in the same location. The ARPA funds significantly lower (over 50%) the cost burden to the Chippewa Township residents. If you have further questions regarding this issue, please do not hesitate in calling the Chippewa Township office.