



Town of Tusten Town Board Meeting

Public Hearing Minutes/ Transcript
Zoom ID: 890 1678 4280
May 3rd, 2022
6:30pm

PRESENT

Supervisor Bernard Johnson
Deputy Supervisor Jane Luchsinger (zoom)
Councilman Alfred Smith
Councilman Bruce Gettel
Councilman McDonough
Councilman Greg Triggs

OTHERS PRESENT

Crystal Weston, Town Clerk; Ken Klein, Attorney to the Town; Victoria Strumpfler, Deputy Town Clerk; Jocelyn Strumpfler 2nd Deputy Town Clerk; approximately 24 members in person and 31 on Zoom

PUBLIC HEARING

Supervisor Bernard Johnson opened the Public Hearing at 6:36pm for,

“All that wish to be heard will have the opportunity to be heard will have the opportunity to comment and give their input for the future use of 210 Bridge Street building & 93 Main St. building.”

Please see the Public Hearing transcript:

2022-05-03 Tusten Board Public Hearing Transcript

Supervisor Johnson [00:00:35] Thank you. Sorry for the technical delay. Welcome to the town of Tusten Town Board Hearing. We thank you for attendance, but the purpose of the hearing is for the board to hear comments and uses for the properties. At 93 Main Street Bank 210 Bridge Street. The current town Hall. The format for the evening will be the speakers from the sign in sheet will be called on in order on the sign in sheet, and anybody who hasn't signed in is more than welcome to (inaudible) use the raise hand function on zoom. Then we'll get back to public comment for the store that those who did not sign in and wish to comment. We'll follow it back to zoom for any participants there that have not spoken. Each participant will have 3 minutes and only one opportunity to speak. Each person may only speak for the allotted time and others times will not be allotted to another person to speak for them. If someone does not wish to speak, they may still submit written comments to the board. And that's in fairness that I don't have one person want to speak for any people and take 24 minutes. So that being said, I will open the floor to public comments. Crystal, do you have the sign in sheet?

Crystal Weston [00:01:56] Mike Farrell

Mike Farrell [00:02:00] Really. It's envy. It's the worm or something else. What I'm about to say to the board, it comes as no surprise that the board, send some correspondence out with it up to the race so that the general public here, I believe we have a unique opportunity right here to create a town hall at the time of the meetings. But it's not going to be here in this antiquated building. It's not going to be in that way from the small bank building down on Main Street. What we need is a brand-new town hall, which would be energy efficient, Practical and functional. How do you pay? So, let's just pay for it by either selling or leasing this building, selling or leasing the bank building. Selling or leasing Any other property that the town may like that former barn down on the flats which has now been demolished. You can put enough money together to make the project that these buildings we're talking about, including this one on Bridge Street, one on Main Street, are incredibly valuable real estate. They're incredibly valuable to the town in terms of bringing people into town, in terms of creating businesses and creating jobs. Having the town hall sitting on them is really not an efficient use of That the Town Hall does not have to be in the downtown business. It can be anywhere in the town it could be in lava; it could be in Beaverbrook it could be anywhere. It doesn't have to be right here. And if you remove town hall from here on bridge street and don't put it on to Main Street. You help solve a never-ending problem of parking that frees up a certain amount of space for more cars, more visitors, more business. Mike, thank you for your time. Thank.

Crystal Weston [00:04:01] Sue Powell.

Sue Powell [00:04:09] I would like to know who would be making this decision

Supervisor Johnson [00:04:14] That would be a town board, and we're not going to get into a question and answer, but it is a very good question. I would like to answer another question, I'll answer, later on. And I can be corrected by the council. The decision would be to the town board. And depending on what that decision would be, may be subject to the commission's referendum.

Sue Powell [00:04:36] may I ask another question or not? I didn't know it was not a question and answer

Supervisor Johnson [00:04:44] No, that's okay

Sue Powell [00:04:46] Why isn't it going to be a referendum from the start?

Supervisor Johnson [00:04:53] The Board has certain obligations and duties can be checked by referendum such as of cannabis referendum. The board made a decision that people have the opportunity to put a referendum. That's the easiest answer to that.

Sue Powell [00:05:12] (inaudible) Where would you move your offices? That's up to you guys. This building is used for many other things other than just the offices. And where would we have the town meetings and then also community events. Such as the Breakfasts and other dinners for the volunteers and other things. I know. We're just a whole variety of uses for this building and we put a lot of money into this building. We need parking. So, my opinion keep this building demolish the bank and. Make it a parking lot. Thank you.

Sue Powell [00:06:10] (inaudible)

Supervisor Johnson [00:06:11] It's not working?

Jocelyn Strumpfler [00:06:12] No.

[00:06:41] We can't hear.

Crystal Weston [00:06:54] We have no sound.

[00:06:55] No sound.

Jim Powel [00:06:58] Regarding banks building downtown. I'm envisioning a time ten or 20 years from now when somebody asks you or me why parking in town is such a mess. And either.

Crystal Weston [00:07:21] You had it, but now we've lost it.

Jim Powel [00:07:32] And the parking wasn't improved. The bank building gets sold and then does the improve at all? I don't think so. I know that's an expensive piece of... The per cost of each parking space would be high then, but the town I don't think it's likely to have another opportunity to get. Parking more parking downtown. The at any cost. Thanks.

Crystal Weston [00:08:02] Iris.

Iris Helfeld [00:08:14] First I would like to say that I am very much in favor of keeping this building an enormous amount of money has been put into this building. It has been upgraded. It has multiple functions on multiple levels. So, I am. Yes, for this domain. But I do have a couple of questions. I wonder and I did not know that we couldn't ask questions. So, I would present some questions and however they get answered by the evening or whatever. Question one, Has the Town obtained appraisals for both buildings? Question two, Has the town signed any sort of letter of intent or any promise to sell this building 210 Bridge Street? Question three, what kinds of cost would be required to renovate the bank building? And since so much cost has been put in, so much money has been spent into this building. Is that worth it? And four, has a civil engineer given his or her professional opinion on whether a second floor could be added to that bank building? Thank you.

Crystal Weston [00:09:56] Brandi Merolla

Brandi Merolla [00:10:10] As the Town Board entertain the idea of selling this historic town hall, but also look closely at all the financial as well as the human cost of ceasing of many of the community services provided in this town hall basement. The downstairs community hall. All town board meetings, planning board meeting, planning board of appeals meetings and many meetings take place here. The idea of holding meetings at the firehall seems impractical if and when the fire department gets an emergency call during the meeting having government officials and residents in their way. Is the last thing they need. Not to mention that our two firehouses are working on a merger within the future of the Narrowsburg firehouse uncertain. Work sessions, where would they be relocated? Careful consideration needs to be given to town core procedures. The town's polling location. Where would we all vote? The library is considerably smaller than the town hall basement and cannot accommodate pandemic social distancing in their tight space. Emergency warming stations for extreme weather. After learning firsthand about our residents needs during an emergency weather event in May 2018, we purchased and installed a generator sufficient to keep people warm and offer electrical charging to their phones and medical devices when there a power outage. We set up cots for those in

need, right here and distributed water and offered dry ice we bagged from the National Guard. Where would residents find a safe refuge and a place to plug in their oxygen tanks in the future? Meals on Wheels program. Food preparation takes place in the kitchen. This important service feeds our seniors who are in need of food, including our disabled residents. Should we be responsible for ending that program? The community hall generates revenue for the town. This space has been rented for bridal and baby showers, receptions, flea markets, karate classes for kids, DMV and as the town the theater's dressing rooms/greenroom for the last 33 years. Volunteer appreciation events and Tusten Repair Cafe will take place at the space serving residents with these inclusive community efforts. The Tusten Theater has been rented to the DVAA for 33 years. They pay half of the water bill for the building, as well as \$100 a month, plus electric year-round. They invested \$300,000 in the theater in 1990. They own two provinces and the theater, all the seats, lighting, sound equipment, stage presence. The DVAA has wanted to get a separate water meter for years, but they were told they can't do that we can't carve out the theater from the building if we were to sell the building. How do we compensate DVAA for the substantial investment they've made over those 33 years? We really want to put an end to the DVAA theater productions and their big eddy film festival. If another theater group purchased the building, the DVAA would most likely no longer have the use of the theater. We owe them a careful consideration of the decades of theatrical reductions, concerts, lectures, films offered to the public in the theater. Their investment is a big concern. Recent financial investments in town hall over the last several years of taxpayers' dollars have paid for a new efficient boiler, a new generator, new LED lighting in the whole building, replacing all the antiquated fluorescent bulbs that were in here. New efficient heat pumps, a stairwell to the upstairs offices, a newly renovated ADA compliant bathroom, water saving toilets and (inaudible) sinks in three of the bathrooms in the building and a new roof.

[00:14:01] That's Crazy.

Brandi Merolla [00:14:01] The Main Street Bank building as 2667 square feet of office, 5460 square feet, not including the theater. Little more than double the space of the bank. Town hall basement provides space for many communities service needs vital to the town. We built a second story on the bank building. That would be a huge tax burden on our residents and wouldn't have it for years and years to come. In the meantime, is not a sustainable plan to accommodate the many services for the public. The taxpayers have invested in this town hall building since 1945, and as we place huge water and sewer infrastructure expenses today, I find abandoning investments irresponsibly irresponsible and fiscally foolish.

Supervisor Johnson [00:14:48] Brandi you're at 4:30

Brandi Merolla [00:14:50] Okay, just one last thing. I'm so sorry. That town hall of historic relevance. In 1925, the Narrowsburg fire department voted to build a firehouse community hall through saving subscription, fundraising and door to door appliances. The goals for the structure were met and planned for a two-story building. Should we honor the history of the building and reconfigure offices if that's necessary, before we abandon the whole building. Moving forward. The bank to be demolished, almost finished making room for ADA compliant parking, public bathrooms or the building could be divided so the town can create a space in the rear of the building is creating a retail space in the front of the building for a monthly income for the town. Or we could simply sell the bank building, retaining the parking lot. If and when we do will need architectural renderings. That should

be an RFP for architectural services made of the public. Think of all the town's needs and we listen to the residents who will be funding these changes. Thank you.

Crystal Weston [00:15:53] Star?

Star Hesse [00:16:02] It's been made amply clear that we're not allowed to ask questions of the board at these public hearings. So, I'm just going to say I'm giving my input, which is I can understand why all the evidence of things that would be wrong with giving up this building and trying to shoehorn it into this tiny thing on Main Street where there's already things losing a lot of parking. I can't even believe that the board is considering to do that kind of a swap. The town hall is by far one of the focal points of this town. It has all the town functions, the meetings. It has events that bring money in. It has a large enough space for people to come in for educational programs. It has social value and things like the celebration of the yearly get together of the Tusten historical society so that people can come in here. I remember in the past that they had some of the Eagle Fest presentations down here. You just don't have this kind of size anyplace else in town except possibly the union. And the suggestion that we should just go out and find an area that's big enough to build an Empire State Building town hall someplace other than here. What are you going to find out? Where does the money come? It's prices of just land, forget about the building, but just the land. Where is that money coming from? And I'm sorry. You could rent this building as a I don't know 16 story condominium. And you would still not accrue enough money to replace and rebuild with what we've got right here now. So, I. I just I just can't understand that. Also, the fact that. This building allows for people to participate in their government functions. You don't have lines out the door. You don't have people having to come in remotely. They can come in here in a large group and listen to what's going on in their government. So was it Ken or no it was Manning's, Manning's presentation at the zoning rewrite. You were here, you could see what was going on, ask him questions. You're not going to find that in the bank building. And of course, the most ridiculous thing is the parking. That's already 13 or nine years, people have been complaining about the lack of parking on Main Street, and the problems with trucks pulling out and no place to say where you can have a handicapped access to something. This is just going to explode that exponentially. So just in closing, I feel that it would be extremely irresponsible and wasteful of this board to say, okay, we're going to put the building out for sale before we have any place to replace it. We're going to go out and just rebuild or bump up the second story of the bank building and God knows what cost that would be if we were allowed to do it. You got to use you heads people. This is taking away a lot of services for people, especially the emergency. When we had these weather events, nobody had electricity. That's gone. You don't have another place like this that can provide that. Now, you can't even think about getting rid of this building until you have something viable not planned but in place. Thank you.

Crystal Weston [00:19:50] Hi, Jim. Sorry Doreen and Ed Krouse

Ed Krouse [00:19:59] Probably just one of us

Crystal Weston [00:20:00] Okay, Ed Krouse

Ed Krouse [00:20:07] Of this moment, the Tusten Town hall we're located in the former Wayne Bank building, I believe, will be an unnecessary tax burden to we the taxpayers of the Town of Tusten. First, I thought it was a bad decision. The more I thought about it seems to make sense. After I've heard of a potential buyer for the bank property, I thought it was brilliant that where we essentially got the parking lot for free there's too much activity

that goes on in town hall and could not be handled at two location meaning emergency shelters flood of 2008. Then everything else that Brandi Merolla said is sending a letter to the other. It would increase parking on Main Street instead of helping you say, how is that their plenty of parking now where we are here? Easy access for all citizens to conduct business, meeting, projects, etc... If the town hall is moved to the banks seniors and many other folks will be expected to park in the parking lot walk down the steep slope to conduct their business and then walk back up. It's not going to happen. If you need, we will be parking on the street. If you need more office space in the town hall now, I'm sure a person with creativity innovation could draw up plans to accomplish that. You have a theater a large space in basement, in a large kitchen that may not be used enough to keep. The bank buildings can probably be sold for commercial development. We make a good use of parts of the recurrent information center that they had one time, along with restrooms for weary travelers and visitors. Please don't hurt us with this bad decision just to create more office space. Thank you.

Doreen Krouse [00:22:01] May I say something? he took all the time

Supervisor Johnson [00:22:08] You get your own time anyway.

Doreen Krouse [00:22:10] I guess one of the things that would be a perfect time to approach Wayne Memorial Hospital. The medical center down the flats now that they would know it wouldn't be another hospital or another doctor coming in from out of the area. Just a thought

Crystal Weston [00:22:45] Anna?

Councilman Triggs [00:23:09] We are having a challenge reading someone's handwriting. It might be Jarell or Jeralyn Lenker.

Crystal Weston [00:23:20] No comment? Okay.

Councilman Triggs [00:23:20] Thank you.

Crystal Weston [00:23:21] does anybody else in person have a comment? Oh, Ariel.

Ariel Shenberg [00:23:39] Good evening, everybody. I'm Ariel Shenberg, the executive director of the Delaware Valley Arts Alliance and just wanted to represent DVAA in these hearings. We all know the arts have been and will continue to be a cornerstone for the ongoing revitalization of Narrowsburg as a community and as (inaudible). The Tusten Theater as a core platform for DVAA and our role in supporting local and regional talent, as well as bringing sought out artists to our region. Are for 32 now going on 33 years of stewardship has included major investments have been noted on our part, including capital renovations, technical improvements, extending access to various performing arts companies and festivals that do not have there. And we are at an exciting juncture with more programing and planning than ever before. That will include live performances, opportunities to engage our communities youth, and continue to support the new surge of residents and talented artists in our community. We look forward to working with the town board and the community to ensure that this gem of our community continues to enrich the lives of all who live in Tusten. Thank You.

Ariel Shenberg [00:25:12] That's everyone on the sign in sheet

Supervisor Johnson [00:25:15] Okay. We're going to move to Zoom and you can use the raise hand function. The clerk will acknowledge you and unmute you

Crystal Weston [00:25:29] Tony Ritter.

Supervisor Johnson [00:25:31] Can you hear me okay?

Crystal Weston [00:25:32] Oh, yes.

Tony Ritter [00:25:33] Okay, great board members. Why would the town board authorize the bank building to be used as a town hall and add to the congestion of Main Street besides the various questions that I raised on my March 8th email. Numerous deliveries are made throughout the day where delivery vehicles stand for more than half an hour. Truckers Park in opposite directions. Vehicles double parked, especially on weekends. The town has no enforcement nor wants to budget for any law enforcement, especially on weekends opening and or events at the DVAA at times add 2 to 3 times to existing traffic when they occur. So why choose this location making parking difficult for visitors and tourists? The Rasmussen building has been purchased after touring the interior and speaking with the new owners. They plan to have a brewery and restaurant downstairs. Retail stores on the ground level. Luxury apartments on the upper level. The building is 30,000 square feet, and with the amount of commercial establishments planned, why would the town want to relocate directly across the street from this building, thus adding to the already bad traffic flow and minimal parking ingress and egress from into the main street parking lot is narrow and steep with cars parking adjoining the post office building diagonally on one side and the streets, a steep drop off on the other side, thus adding to more congestion and possibly accidents. And knowing these facts, the town wants to move a town hall which has ample parking on Bridge Street to a building on Main Street, which has less feet for office space and various municipal meetings and courts, as well as adding to congestion on weekends and holidays from May to October. Where does the town of Tusten plan to have their town board meetings, planning board meetings, zoning board meetings, justice court meetings, meetings for energy, zoning, rewrite, etc... Community events such as repair, cafe, karate receptions, etc... Public overflow meetings for the Upper Delaware Council, National Park Service, Boy Scouts, etc. Where town board members do you intend to have your future meetings? Or maybe you won't have future meetings. There is no meeting space in the bank building compared to where we presently have where you're sitting right now. In fact, the interior square footage is much less than the existing town hall building on Bridge Street. In addition, the existing town hall has over \$100,000 worth of repairs and renovations via grants and or taxpayers' funds, mainly a new roof lighting ADA compliant bathroom, a generator for public warming center in the last four years. Lastly, this is the most important thing I've got to say. Lastly, now that the board has heard from the people who live and pay taxes in this town, I think it's time for each board member to explain to the public what's on their minds and how they feel about this proposal. As public servants, you were elected to preserve the health, safety and welfare of this town. And I think that I'd like to hear from you, but I think the whole the public would like to hear from you. Thank you.

Crystal Weston [00:29:15] Somehow, we need to ourselves. Jen it's your turn

Jennifer Bitetto [00:29:18] Okay. Thanks, everyone. I'm not going to give all the details again because I think everyone that spoke tonight has really hit them hard. And I am in agreement 100%. I would just like to add that I would really love to see our time and resources being put forth to focus on the parking issue and the water and sewer issue that

I believe is now decades old. There should be no other talk of anything else, in my opinion at this point that we should be investing in buildings and this and that, getting the parking situation, which was perfect and acquiring that parking lot. Thank you. I think that was a great move. You have a little building there. Let's do something little with it or take some of it down. Leave bathrooms, rent it. I get the why not rental? Because you're now just adding to the parking again. So then make it bathrooms and make some more space for parking and use it for what it was intended to be purchased for. And really, your time board members like I don't want to have to see you doing this when we have other things that need that attention. So please, let's focus on what is needed in this town right now, which is fixing the water and sewer problem and dealing with the parking. Thank you.

Crystal Weston [00:30:50] Have no one else.

Supervisor Johnson [00:30:57] Back to the floor. Is there anybody in attendance?

Crystal Weston [00:31:00] I have, Dawn.

Supervisor Johnson [00:31:01] Okay.

Dawn Curreri [00:31:06] Am I on? Is it my turn?

Crystal Weston [00:31:08] Yes go-ahead Dawn

Dawn Curreri [00:31:10] Okay. So sorry. I'm doing this from a car, so it may be a little bumpy. I agree with everything that has been said this evening, especially with Brandi. Tony. You made a lot of good points. We don't have to rehash everything that the town hall stands for and what it's been used for. I don't want to see this town hall sold if we have the bank building. I agree. We need it. That parking that's in the back of the bank building. But if we keep the building, that's fine. We could have it for other office space. Or, like Jen said, take down part of that building and leave bathrooms and more parking there. But there's no way we should get it. Get rid of the town hall. And I, too, would like to see transparency with our leadership. And really what you have in mind was this in mind from the time you purchased the bank building or was it not is it just something that came up? I think the people of the town need to know. But I haven't spoken to anybody that agrees with selling the town hall. And what would the library do then for parking? That's the majority of the parking there and for the town. Thank you.

Naomi Holoch [00:32:40] Hello? Can you hear me?

Crystal Weston [00:32:42] Yes. Can you state your name, please?

Naomi Holoch [00:32:44] Naomi Hallock. I'm. I live on the flats. I am just totally bewildered by this whole issue. And I agree that if the board is seriously considering doing what seems to be on the surface an expensive and unnecessary move that the board member, each board member should explain where they stand before any decision is made. Because I for one, I can't fathom why you're trying to do this. Thank you.

Crystal Weston [00:33:19] I have a Cass Collins

Cass Collins [00:33:28] Yep. Okay. Yeah, I just. I just like to dido what Tony and Brandi said and most every everyone else who's commented tonight. I think that Town hall as it stands, is a wonderful resource for the town. If you need extra office space, you know,

maybe we need to rent some offices from the union. I don't know. They have office space might be cheaper than building a whole new building. And I appreciate the the parking garage on Main Street or parking area rather on Main Street. That was a wise move, but that building is never going to replace the building that we have and that we've used so well over the years. That's all I have to say. Thank you.

Crystal Weston [00:34:29] I don't see anybody else online. Ben?

Supervisor Johnson [00:34:49] We'll come back to Zoom, return back to the floor other people that wish to comment. That have not signed up Bernie?

Bernie Lohman [00:35:05] I'd like to see the town hall moved down to the bank, with an addition on the back, level with the parking lot for handicapped access. This building for the town hall offices. It's not really handicap access I've gone up those stairs twice in crutches, it's no fun. This building is 100 years old and it's going to turn into a money pit, it already has all the money that was spent just to make it stand here I like to see the town of Hall moved down to the bank with an addition on the back. You can have your meeting hall behind the bank as big as this that's when the second story underneath where all the space is, storage. Solve the problem for everything(inaudible) two cars here, maybe three. So, it's not going after your parking problem on Main Street. I'd like to see you down at the bank building

Supervisor Johnson [00:36:14] Were there any others on the floor? Yes, sir.

Jake Johnson [00:36:19] How are you doing today Jake Johnson I guess we're contemplating opening the brewery in town. We're just discussing the parking issue, as we tend to do. More often than not in prior meetings, we both kind of come to the conclusion that perhaps there is not as big of a parking problem as we may think. There is rather a mis use of the space available for parking, maybe some signage issues. I drove into town yesterday morning and when Saturday morning main street was loaded but the lot behind the bank was empty. People were double parked, almost like they were turning around but the lot behind the bank is empty. It just seems like there could just be a signage issue. Is it actually a parking issue? It may be that we need to expand that lot. We've talked before about the potential of adding another 30 to 40% parking better. How do you do that? How do you pay for that? Whether the town hall moves out of this building, or into the bank building on main or even secures a line of credit to purchase a new building, leasing these spaces and maintaining ownership over it, that creates revenue. Bank would look to add or any sort of loaning officer has extra revenue to cover the costs of that. We're talking about how to pay for new building. There you go. What could you get for this building? What could you get for the bank building to cover a monthly mortgage on building a new building? I think those are things that we should all look at and consider. But we'll continue to talk about this parking thing. I think there are much simpler solutions than tearing down buildings on Main Street when there's property behind that building that's not being used for parking. As far as ADA parking. Make some spots on Main Street ADA if we have more parking behind the bank, less people need to park on Main Street. And if their ADA area is zoned anywhere marked, that's where they'll be if we can. I don't know the exact number, but if you can get 100 spots behind the banks then, is there really a parking problem in town? I know we keep talking about it, but every time I drive by it, it's not full. So, and again, this lots not full. I understand Big Eddy weekends and the Eagle Fest weekends. Of course. But that's a problem we all expect. Never. Every weekend situation. Let's just utilize what we have here.

[00:39:05] (inaudible discussion)

Barry Becker [00:39:17] Barry Becker and basically a lot of what's been said is all valid you've got, no matter what the option, whether it's built new, build on top of the bank, work here, or try and get the medical facility down there. All of them were good. All them, all great options. All this stuff from historical factor into town being and maintained here and it's very multifaceted in its uses, all which everybody is familiar with, including having the theater here. So, a lot of money has been invested in this building. No matter where we go. There's got to be massive. Money is needed to make things happen here. We've started the process with roof generator. There's a lot of extra retrofitting that needs to be done. Whatever falls over here, does every office have to be here in the second floor or various offices be shifted and maybe take over the bank area? So, you kind of split up town hall by offices and utilizing that also there could be expanded bathrooms or something down there and extra parking, however there is. And also, just having an overseeing engineering and architectural layout of what would it take to expand into the attic of this building Add on to the back of the kitchen needs to be really redone, of which I've worked in many a time. And so, it's trying to redo this new and three other places, maintain and update of all the cosmetics of this building needs to maintain the historic balance to it. So, it's a lot on your feet. What goes out. Where do you get the money? You know, whether there are grants where you get any kind of Contracting vendors that go to (inaudible) and do, what, 50, 50 or Whatever, all bonds, out of the Taxes, whatever. There are so many different ways to go about it. But just there is lots of food for thought. It's on the plate. So, let's start. Thank you very.

Supervisor Johnson [00:42:00] I've always said once but Iris. You've got something.

Iris Helfeld [00:42:02] We won't have anybody else?

Supervisor Johnson [00:42:06] I'm not going to the board. I mean, it's up to.

[00:42:10] (inaudible)

Iris Helfeld [00:42:27] So I wanted too just. Meant what I have said before speaking to many people in town by phone, by email, by texting and I would say that there was only one or maybe two people that was on the fence, so to speak. Everyone else that I spoke to was called me by email or text. They say, why would you want to sell this building? This has everything that we need to do for this building so it's not just me that's saying this this is as a representative of sorts of context. That's one. The other thing is that we made a very valid point, I believe, in terms of many, but it's important for us as counsel here and on Zoom to know what your thoughts are, because if your thoughts are. well, I don't even want to give. What are your thoughts? And this would certainly be a good opportunity to share that. Lastly, for those of us who did not know about not asking questions, those questions that I brought up before, I would like to know how those questions will be answered.

Supervisor Johnson [00:44:03] I'll answer your questions. Matter of fact, I'll probably instrument closing state.

Jim Johnson [00:44:22] Jim Johnson, excuse me sorry I just got off work,

Supervisor Johnson [00:44:23] We won't hold you.

Jim Johnson [00:44:33] When I think about moving town hall from here to the bank. I think the bank affords us an opportunity to generate more community on Main Street and kind of support the vibe on Main Street by allowing us a chance to have some revenue for the town generated by people moving into the back rooms and businesses. I know in the bank there's that large vault area. So how do we navigate that do you tear it all down or if a cool shop moves in there or something? Is that a cool part of that? Is this an opportunity to generate some income for the bank generating more attraction to Main Street and people coming into town and spending money? Thank you.

Supervisor Johnson [00:45:33] Thank you

Supervisor Johnson [00:45:34] Well, before we go back to zoom, Greg, would you mind reading?

Councilman Triggs [00:45:38] No, we have we have three emails that came in that should be on the public record. The first one is from Stephen. I got one from Stephen Stuart that says hello. I want to seize this opportunity to participate in the public comments regarding use of the current Town Hall 93 Main Street and make an additional proposal. I am not able to be on Zoom nor at the meeting as I will be driving back to my daughter's home at the time of the hearing regarding 93 Main. That building should be available for a business to lease. This keeps the property on the tax rolls, preserves the handicapped parking spaces for the downtown business district, and offers an opportunity for a commercial shop on Main Street. Good commerce provides a more stable downtown. As for the current town hall Brandi Merolla's My View, published in the current edition of The River Reporter says it all and that he provides a link. But I believe we've covered most of those points, keeping the current town hall where it offers potential for funding opportunities to further improve the building through the upcoming CFA grant program. Can the roof of this building, with its east and west facing play a major role in creating a community district? Distributed generation project with solar? The downtown businesses would be ideal off takers for the electric generation and why NYSERDA is looking for projects like this. And thanks to the work of the Tusten Energy Committee, Tusten is in a really good space to leverage the work that has been accomplished in considering a grant proposal. Are there additional ways to improve the energy performance of the current building? New York State is looking for projects to support that will help state help the state meet its climate goals. That being the case, why not take a look at decarbonizing the town's highway garage? The radiant floor is heated with oil, the boiler is probably approaching end of life. Cold climate, air to water to heat pumps can provide the appropriate temperatures to warm the building. I realize that this is not the either building relative to the public hearing, but it is a project to be coupled with a grant application for a solar CDG and other energy improvements to the building. So that is from Steven Stewart. Our next one is from Susan Sullivan. And she says, Dear supervisor, Johnson and Town board members. In addition to the many advantages that others have pointed out for leaving town hall where it is on Bridge Street, such as more space, recent renovations bought many community events and services for all ages that require a lot of space, especially providing shelter in emergencies, new generator kitchen facilities, handicapped, accessible bathrooms and more. I would add that the Main Street location would distance the public from town officials and discourage visiting, asking questions and attending public hearings. Parking on Main Street is difficult now and it is not going to get any better. It would be very hard for seniors or anyone with disabilities to access town services. As a taxpayer, I don't want to hear about renovating another building. So, I would suggest the Main Street property be subdivided with the town retaining parking lot for the building being sold. Thank you for taking my comments. Susan Sullivan. And then I got an email

today, which I was hoping to read that comes from Katherine Lewis, who says she will not be able to attend this evening's meeting. So, she is sending this email to me to express her concern. I very much oppose relocating the Hamlet offices from Bridge Street to Main. We presently have a functioning space, much of it recently renovated and available parking. Moving to another space that would require extensive renovations and reduced parking, especially in light of the various businesses planned in the Rasmussen space across the street, would also contribute to greater congestion where the town to (inaudible) this vast space. This would create additional revenue and would be given the interest in Narrowsburg, especially the downtown real estate. One can reasonably assume it at least quickly. Lastly, and although this is unrelated, people have recently seen their water bills practically double. Now it seems necessary to deal with eroding infrastructure. It is nonetheless not a welcoming climate in which to propose something of this magnitude. Relocating these offices is not only unnecessary. I see no real advantage to the members of our community. Thank you for your time. Sincerely. P.S. Those are the three that we got.

Crystal Weston [00:50:38] We have one more.

Councilman Triggs [00:50:39] Another email?

Crystal Weston [00:50:39] Yes

Councilman Triggs [00:50:44] And the last one is from Linda Slocomb, and it says hello to all on the town board. I am extremely concerned about potential plans to sell or demolish the Tusten town hall and for the possibility of moving town hall to the old bank building on Main Street. At this time, we have a fully functional town hall building which has served the town in many ways for close to 100 years. That building is part of our municipal and cultural history. If the town is actually considering moving the town hall to the bank building, they need to understand that there are not enough square feet to meet the current needs of all the town offices as well as the large community hall. The Town Boards responsibility is to meet the needs of the town and work for the benefit of its citizens for today and also decades in the future. There is a new roof, a new generator, and a new ADA compliant restroom facility that have been installed to improve the town hall building. The bank building cannot provide enough space for an emergency shelter or a warming station, and we are all aware of how many record-breaking weather events we've had in recent years. Where are all the town meetings going to be held? The bank building cannot provide enough space for the meetings, which often draw large crowds. The town hall has a huge municipal parking lot to conserve for Election Day as town meetings and community events held in the large community hall. There is also the very important fact that the Delaware Valley Arts Alliance leases the Tusten Theater for their many theatrical, musical and cultural events. What would happen to the theater? The town could utilize a local development corporation, LDC, that would manage/lease the bank building and find the best possible use for it that would benefit our community now and into the future with retail space in demand. The income generated would be significant. The income generated by the bank building would go towards supporting community events like River Fast, Bee Fest, Deep Water Literary Festival, the Big Eddy Film Festival. Youth Activities and Beautification. Furthermore, there are individuals who expressed serious interest in purchasing the bank building on Main Street. Any funds generated from the sale could go towards any necessary repair work upgrades to our historical town hall. The town needs to take responsibility for the town hall and the bank building and use them as real estate assets, not as liabilities. The town of Tusten needs to work with and for the citizens and

the community to make the best possible use of these invaluable real estate assets.
Sincerely, Linda Slocum, Narrowsburg New York.

Supervisor Johnson [00:53:44] Do you have any others on you?

Crystal Weston [00:53:50] Collin Peters did have his hand raised now he put it down. Colin, did you have any comments to make? I think that is no.

Supervisor Johnson [00:54:11] Okay prior to opening the floor to the board we'll say a couple of things. In closing, I like to thank the people for their comments. The board will take these into consideration to find a path forward. Personally, I think many valid points been raised since the board's decision. Many issues to consider logistics and how to deal improve on the board will discuss these issues and find the best way forward. And the best way for the Council to use public monies is regulated by the law as well as selling municipal properties. For the questions that were raised earlier. No appraisals have not been done for both buildings, but in previous meetings it has been discussed that if the town were to try to sell anything, we would require appraisals in order to fill our obligations, fiduciary obligations to the town and making sure that what we do is in the best interests of the town. Has there ever been a promise to sell 210 bridge street? No. There has never been a promise to sell 210 bridge street. However, we have or I have on behalf of the town, solicited the people to find out what we could do with this building would we be able to do something with the building that would allow the DVAA to stay here, allow the theater to operate 365 days a year, allow it to be used in a manner that would still allow the DVAA to be here and bring more people. I met with the DVAA. We will keep them apprised of wherever we go because for me, the DVAA is an anchor of so many decisions that the board makes. I will be fully in favor of making sure that the DVAA is protected. I remember when the only thing that was on Main Street was a barber shop. A newspaper. A diner, a funeral home and DVAA. Not many people here remember that because they haven't seen you in a while. But I do. So, we don't throw our anchors overboard. We don't have to. She said, I'm old and I am old. 28 years of government experience. So, if people think that something is trying to be done without actually thinking about it, I just look back to how long I have been here and how long I have served community of Tusten and how I believe the best thing that needs to be done for this town. The cost to renovate the bank building? No, we have no cost to renovate the bank building. The only thing we had talked about was trying to move the offices down. There would be We Only purchased the bank building for \$140,000. We put \$20,000 into the money that we put the public hearing for. So, we have not done to renovate the building because we did not have money to do that. A civil engineer's opinion on the second floor. We never had talked about putting a second floor on top of the bank. It was always if we were to do something at the bank, it would be to go out the back to put a second story on top of that. We haven't been that far. That's why the public hearing is here. That's why the board wanted to solicit from the people some ideas. And I think we've got plenty of ideas to go forward. Some of them were better ideas than others. Some are very realistic to what our issues are here. And I think the board has a lot of a lot of good information to move forward with. To say that any of the board members agree or disagree with this at this point, I think would be unjustly premature. Because we haven't gone that far. There's a lot of things that need to be done in order to move forward with something such as selling. And that is also being discussed at meetings with council, which tends to keep us on pretty straight.

[00:58:22]

Deputy Supervisor Luchsinger [00:58:22] Just want to say the kind of spiteful lamb that everybody comes out against. And I keep saying over and over and over. When you come and you listen and you learn, this is how government works well, the how government is successful because we need to hear from you. So, thank you all.

Councilman McDonough [00:58:45] I just like to say that I mean, the idea of some secret agenda or that we've made up our mind's is couldn't be farther from the truth. That's why we both went up to this meeting for public, public comment. But I've been on the board, I think, for 2 minutes when this issue came up and I said then and I'll say it now, it's the new piece of the puzzle we need to think out loud is not what this project is, we're thinking out loud about a resource we didn't have last year. And I guess I don't want to get into too much, but I also think some of our duty is to think not about what we have, not about what we've already spent but what this town will need in the year the 2050. You know, with some kid who isn't even born yet sitting at this desk, you know. And while this building needs a 2050, that's not just the sort of thing I really, I'm touched by the affection reminded as a met fan of how people felt when they were going to tear down just the attitude of like, Yeah, it's a dome, but it's our dome. A leaky dome. But I mean, there is you know, I think that that's important here that we certainly.

Councilman Gettel [01:00:15] Well, you know, I've been here all my life to friends. I remember when Main Street was packed and busy. Busier than it actually is now. I can remember it when I've been set to work. So, it's just, you know, the park lot was the main reason for the purchase of that property that that someone could never go anywhere can be changed? Yeah sure, the building, I don't know, was just an idea that was tossed around. Nothing was written in stone. We just talk about things that sometimes it gets out of control that people run with up with hearsay and then, you know, it turns into a big mess. But no, we're here to do what everyone wants to do now. It's not up to just the bypass.

Councilman Triggs [01:01:04] I'll jump in and just say and evidently the newest and youngest member of the Town Board.

Crystal Weston [01:01:13] I'm part of the Town Board and I'm younger than you.

Councilman Triggs [01:01:14] That's true. That's true. That is true.

Crystal Weston [01:01:15] Oh wait Victoria is

Councilman Triggs [01:01:15] I stand corrected, the notion that it's irresponsible to be asking these questions surprises me because I think it would be irresponsible not to be asking these questions. We have we have an asset that we fully need to understand the consequence of do we need more information before we can responsibly make that choice? I think so. I myself am very sentimental about this building and I see the virtues of it. But as Jane said, I think the process of hearing how people. Feel and also fully mining the potential of both scenarios before making a reactionary or uninformed decision is critical. And so, to go into it, assuming that the questions have a foregone outcome, is not how I am experiencing this. This is not how I have felt once during any of the discussion. And so please know that everyone's feelings and ideas and concerns. Are so very important in the process of making an important decision that is best for today, that honors what has happened before today. And Kevin said for the future. So, thank you all.

Supervisor Johnson [01:02:46] With no other comment I'd like to close the public hearing.

With no Further Comments to be heard the Public Hearing was closed at 7:38 PM,
On motion of Supervisor Bernard Johnson & Seconded by Deputy Supervisor Jane Luchsinger.

Respectfully Submitted

Crystal Weston, Town Clerk

Victoria Strumpfler, 1st Deputy Town Clerk