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City of Lambertville

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OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

Dear Lambertville,

Thank you so much for attending our community development fair. The proposed consolidation of our municipal facilities and identifying a new site to meet our affordable housing obligations began through conversations with residents at community hearings, budget workshops, and council meetings. I heard the concerns of the public, and along with the administration and council, created a plan to address the challenges that face our City. As I have begun to roll this plan out - I have heard similar questions, so I thought I would take a moment to address them here. Thank you again for your participation - I look forward to the work we have ahead.

1. This sounds expensive - how are we going to pay for this?

It's important to be clear that we are working to reduce the long-term impact on Lambertville's taxpayers, not increase it. We believe that with careful planning, thoughtful public engagement, and creative problem-solving, we can be both financially responsible and at the same time create more opportunity for the future of our community.

No matter what, the city must take action - we can either rehab the old buildings at the approximately \$9+ million price tag, or we can build a new building that better addresses our city's needs now and far into the future. We believe we should make a true *investment*, giving Lambertville a state of the art building for the next 30 years while also addressing other major policy concerns such as our affordable housing obligation and our structural budget deficit.

2. I don't understand how this happened all of the sudden? Why now?

This plan is the result of a full year of open public discussions regarding how the City can address our budget and accumulated debt, our crumbling facility infrastructure, and our mandatory affordable housing obligations. All of these issues have grown over time to the point where we can no longer kick the can down the road. Two of those issues (affordable housing and our facilities) are time sensitive. Specifically, with our affordable housing, we are mandated by the Court to move forward now.

3. I like our historic municipal buildings - why do we have to abandon them?

Although we have created high standards that we hold the business community and residents to, the City itself has failed to meet these standards, and we have let some of our most prized buildings fall into major disrepair. By either leasing or selling these buildings there is a much higher chance that both the Lily Mansion and our historic City Hall will be better cared for in the future. Historically designated properties cannot be torn down in the city of Lambertville. We are partnering with the Historic Preservation

Commission to ensure that these landmarks are not just maintained, but improved, in a way that is respectful of our history.

4. Seems like the government is running well - why do we need new facilities?

As a municipal government we can provide better services to the public with facilities that were actually built for municipal governing. Be it programming space at the library, meeting room for community groups, activity space for seniors, or more functional and centralized space for City offices.

The City has both a legal and moral obligation to provide a safe, functional and pleasant place to work for our employees. I do not believe we are meeting that obligation. Years of substandard working conditions have eroded the morale of our tireless municipal workforce and created workplace compliance issues that we need to solve. This is the right thing to do and will help support our staff to be happy and productive while they are working for our residents.

5. It feels like the public wasn't consulted for such a big project, is this a done deal?

The city has hosted multiple budget hearings in people's homes, community meetings regarding the affordable housing plan, and nearly a dozen budget discussions in council meetings last year. The City has heard the public loud and clear and took a step back to identify a way to partially satisfy the City's affordable obligation without pursuing the multiple overlay zones that would often would build density while only resulting in one affordable housing unit. Although it is not typical for a municipal government to share plans this early in the planning stage, we believe this project can only be successful if it's done in full view, and with feedback, of our community.

6. We are such a small town - why should we have to build so much new housing?

Providing affordable housing is a requirement that every town in New Jersey is facing. Lambertville has had a long history of progressive action on building affordable housing and this is no different. This plan allows us to satisfy our affordable housing obligation while preserving historic sites, not congesting small neighborhoods, and creating a better, more holistic city plan.

7. Isn't all of this change going to further congest our roads and make our parking situation even worse?

Both affordable housing sites, the new proposed inclusionary (mixed-income) apartment building at the police site and the redevelopment plan for the former Lambertville High School site, will require traffic studies. Those studies will make proposals on how traffic issues can be mitigated before each development is built. These sites will have hearings that will go through the planning board to ensure time for public engagement. As for the new city facility, part of the plan will require us to understand the amount of parking currently available, and to provide the parking that facility will need.

Yours in service,

Mayor Julia Fahl