

NEW PHILADELPHIA CITY COUNCIL MET IN SPECIAL SESSION IN COUNCIL CHAMBERS ON FEBRUARY 26, 2002 AT 7:30 P.M. WITH PRESIDENT OF COUNCIL DAVE JOHNSON PRESIDING.

MR. JOHNSON EXPLAINED THAT THE PURPOSE FOR THIS SPECIAL SESSION IS TO DISCUSS PLANS FOR USE OF THE FORMER ELK'S BUILDING.

COUNCIL MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: MR. ART CICCONETTI
MS. SANDRA COX
MR. JOEL DAY
MR. SAM HITCHCOCK
MR. GEORGE HOUSTON
MR. JIM LOCKER
MR. ROB MAURER

Mr. Johnson read a prepared statement which outlined the timeline for the acquisition and purchase of the Elk's Building, which council intended to purchase for Municipal Court. He proposed that \$1,300,000 be given to the Municipal Court to renovate the Elk's building, and \$200,000 be kept to restore city departments in the Municipal Building. He reminded Council that Memorial City Hall was dedicated in 1931 to the veterans of World War I. He asked each council member to express their opinion as to what direction the city should proceed.

Mr. Maurer said he favors tearing the building down, because he sees it as a "money pit."

Mr. Locker said he has looked at a lot of buildings in the city over the past several years, and he agreed with Mr. Maurer that the building should be torn down because it will be too costly to renovate. He would like to see a new two-story building built in that location for the court.

Mr. Cicconetti said the purchase was made for Municipal Court, and he feels the city should proceed with those plans.

Mr. Houston said he's not sure how to proceed, but council should not force the Judge into a building that she doesn't want.

Mr. Day said he is concerned about future growth, because the city needs additional space for all departments. He said he has voted on this issue twice, and he's not going to vote on it again. He is in favor of tearing the building down. He encouraged Council to develop a plan for the future.

Ms. Cox said studies have been done for a police station and fire station, but the city cannot do all these things at once because of finances. It was decided by the previous council that the Municipal Court should be addressed first because this has been ongoing for about 12 years. She thought it was settled that the court would relocate to the Elk's Building, but now is getting a different picture. She said she studied all feasibility studies and floor plans and still thinks this is the best plan for the city.

Mr. Hitchcock said he couldn't make a decision at this time, because he would like to hear more about the security concerns that the court has.

Mayor Brodzinski said he has always been in favor of moving the city offices to the Elk's Building. He said the Municipal Building should fill the needs of the Court for many years to come. He said he is against tearing the building down, because it is a quality architectural structure.

Municipal Court Judge Mary Space said she attended numerous Public Works Committee meetings, and was asked if the Elks' building could be turned into a court, and said she did not know. She said she has always had concerns about security, handicapped accessibility, etc., and said those concerns would have to be addressed by an expert before the purchase of the building took place. She said many locations have been looked at for the court, and she never refused any offer that was made to her, until the current one. She said she has used the court's "user fees" to

renovate Municipal Building, and is content to stay in this building, but is not against moving to a different location, as long as it is adequate and deals with security and handicapped concerns. She said she was not aware that Council was buying the building for Municipal Court, but was willing to work with the architects to see if it was adequate as a court facility. She said the architect's plans were to put the court in the basement, and that is just not acceptable. She said the state has certain requirements for a court facility concerning safety and security standards.

Ella Slough, 616 Sandpiper, S.E., New Philadelphia, said she would not like to see the building tore down because of its historic value. She said she always understood that the building was being purchased for the court.

Council President Dave Johnson said council's plan was to purchase the building for the court, and he expected the court to work with the architect on a workable plan. Judge Space said the architect's plans were only for the basement, and no other space was discussed. Mr. Johnson said there seemed to be a mis-communication between the court and the architect. Judge Space said a court should be on upper floors, not in a basement, so she felt she should come to council to let them know this was not a workable situation. Mr. Day said the Building Renovation Committee was not informed that there was a problem with the building not being adequate for the court, and they should have been made aware immediately. Mr. Day said evidently the architect got the idea that the basement was the only location to be considered, and only drew up plans for that area. Mr. Johnson said the architect was asked to use the space to the best of his ability, and to work with the judge in drawing up the plans.

Mr. Hitchcock said he is against tearing the building down, and the city should always attempt to buy property adjacent to city offices. He said since the court has already used their money to make renovations to the municipal building, they should be permitted to stay, and it would be less costly to put city offices in the Elk's building. He added the fire and police departments also need space, and the city should look ahead into purchasing land for all purposes. He said other properties in this block should be acquired as they become available. He said if the Elk's building is not feasible for the court, then let's move on and make a decision how to use it.

Ms. Cox said she would like to see council as a whole make the future decisions as opposed to a committee, and then no individual council member can say they were not aware of new developments or decisions. Mr. Johnson asked what council would like to see happen as far as future meetings are concerned. Safety Director Greg Popham suggested that an expert consultant/architect be hired to inform council the best way to proceed. Mr. Day agreed that an objective opinion would be welcome. Mayor Brodzinski said council needs options, not just one plan. Mr. Johnson assigned the matter of finding a consultant to Mr. Maurer's Special Committee. Council agreed to set aside time following each council meeting for an update on anything that may need to be brought to their attention.

MOTION TO ADJOURN MADE BY MR. HOUSTON. MOTION PASSED. MEETING ADJOURNED AT 8:45 P.M.

CLERK OF COUNCIL _____

APPROVED March 11, 2002

PRESIDENT OF COUNCIL _____