

Summary of two Community Workshops  
May 11, 2019 and May 13, 2019

## Corte Madera Town Hall Community Meetings

Two community open house meetings were held Mid-May, 2019. Approximately 30 people attended the combined sessions. A PowerPoint presentation was given each time and boards were on display illustrating proposed concepts for the new Town Hall Addition. A questionnaire was made available and nine filled out questionnaires were returned (See appendix 1). In both sessions a general discussion was held with a high level of participation by all attendees. Following are the notes from these discussions which capture the issues and ideas discussed.

### **Community Meeting #1**

**May 11, 2019, Saturday 9:30 am -12:30 pm**

**Location: Corte Madera Community Center**

#### **Notes:**

#### **Programming Comments and Issues**

What is the current square footage of the existing building? Response: 5,288 square feet total; 2,884 for the upper floor; 2,404 for the lower floor (including stairwell and some non-habitable spaces)

What is the current number of staff members to be housed? Including staff for Public Works, Planning, Building, Finance, Administration and IT, the staff is 24 people with some part-time and seasonal additions.

The overall increases in staffing for the future for the Town are not expected to be too much

Flood plain question. Response; the Town Hall site is not in the flood zone

Will the new building be a 1 or 2-story building? Response: two-stories is planned due to topography

Suggestion for a 3-story building with parking below, offices and a soaring meeting room

There is very little softscape at the existing site where there is a need for outdoor space and outdoor settings.

Suggestions to step back new buildings from Tamalpais Drive, make the best use of the space and provide something beautiful

Comments concerning better serving the community- the 2008 recession caused a cutback in staff. The public counter used to be open for more hours. Now only open 22 hours per week where it had been as much as 45 hours per week.

#### **Comments on the Council Chambers:**

Someone expressed that they would like to see council chambers on the third floor so we could have a higher ceilinged, more soaring council chambers

We use the council chambers for town staff meetings used 6 times per month with Council meetings and Planning meetings

The challenge for seating is that there are either 3 or 150 people

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Can there be a way to adjust the room with a flexible room divider?

With the existing low ceiling (10'), it would be oppressive to enlarge that room without making the ceiling higher.

### **Comments on the Existing Building:**

The current building is awkward, it looks like an afterthought.

Do we have to use the existing building?

Could we build up over it and get more value if a larger volume is created.

### **Budget related comments**

The budget has \$2.5M allocated for this project. The budget is driving the project. Are we so limited by budget? What can the Town afford? Can we do a budget friendly design that still meets the needs?

Temporary housing during construction adds to the construction cost. Where does everyone go? Comments concerning the sequencing of construction and the displacement of staff. Can the project be done in phases?

Public Works is moving into trailers right now.

Can we take a look at resources that the town has; resources that the area has?

In buying the shopping center the town handcuffed itself and the current Town Council location is collateral so can't tear down the existing building

Town has to preserve the house next door as workforce housing

Fire station is encumbered and a remodel is planned for the second floor

### **Civic Identity Comments**

Civic identity comes from the history of the town. We should put the heritage and historical materials about the Town on display in the new building. They are currently stored away in the old Town Hall basement now

Is Town identity objective really a need to be solved? Current building lacks a strong identity or sense of place. Is it an expression of a town being a civic place?

Corte Madera has many identities- Christmas tree hill, Chapman Park, Town Center, Main Street, views to and adjacent to Mount Tam.

Where is Corte Madera's center? We are a unique community. We have a retail center, a park center- we have different themed centers. Do we think of the Town Center as the center of town? Is it the main gathering place for our town?

Is there an advantage to not having a center? Many communities' original centers are decaying and they are putting money into renovating what should die.

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Can the building be a demonstration project to an exemplary level of an energy efficient town? Talking about excellence does not mean ostentatious. We should not put a stake out for grandness. We are not Mill Valley.

### **Eco friendly comments**

Design a highly functional building with Net Zero waste management energy usage, harvesting different types of energy.

Can our Town be a symbol of responsible ecology with “green values” represented in anything that we do for the Town Hall.

Reference is made to the Town’s Climate Change Adaptation Working Group

### **Master Plan Comments**

There were several comments about the importance of making sure this is a master planning exercise, expressing the need to frame this Town Hall project as an opportunity to think long term- an opportunity to think about what the Town Hall should be.

The Town Hall Addition Working Group examined assumptions in meetings held in February and March 2019. Ideally, we should not be handcuffed by assumptions. A true masterplan should not be limited to assumptions that the existing building needs to stay.

Are we committed to the current site at the civic center? The current site is cramped. The existing building is poorly sited on the corner and is potentially a money pit with subpar space in the lower floor area. An addition to this could look like a band aid approach. Can we take a look at what the entire site could be used for and determine how to best use the site? The current masterplan assumes that the existing building will be left where it is.

### **Parking comments**

Can we acquire more space for a parking lot? On the weekend there is nowhere to park. We don’t want to exacerbate the parking problem.

### **Post Office related comments**

Can we use the post office site? The post office is currently leasing their space. When will the lease be up for the post office? It is privately owned and the owner has expressed no interest in selling. The neighborhood hears large post office trucks at 5 a.m. There are also post office vehicles in the park parking lot.

### **Miscellaneous Comments**

Where do people go with their feet, cars and money? Do we have a preference for mixed-use environments? We have an aging community where we live in our homes, do not moving out and go places on foot if available.

Are we limited by apathy of the community for this project? Is everyone’s bandwidth occupied by concerns about sea level rising, flooding and the inevitability of wild fires?

The flyer that came in the mail provided minimal explanation of the issues and opportunities.

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Someone expressed that their personal feeling was to do as minimal a project as possible and asked, "How much more does everyone need to build?"

There was a statement that the community center where these meetings were held is underutilized by the Town.

## **Community Meeting #2**

**May 13, 2019, Monday 5:30 am -8:30 pm**

**Location: Corte Madera Community Center**

**Notes:**

### **Programming Comments and Issues**

The compelling reason for the Town Hall addition is that we don't have enough space right now for staff. Can it be built in two phases, where the least amount is built first then added onto?

We need a place to gather, a gathering area for Town Council meetings before and after.

Street frontage along Tamalpais Drive can provide a civic presence.

Someone expressed a preference for a gabled roof and no stucco.

Use the existing building as meeting rooms with storage at the lower level

We should set building back from Tamalpais Drive if it is a 3-story building

We need a nifty attractive drawing to interest people in the idea of the Town Hall Addition. Make it compelling so that people are attracted to it and can't say no to having a new civic center

### **Comments on Existing Building**

Are we putting lipstick on a pig in trying to remodel and retain the existing building? Is it the proverbial "tail wagging the dog" to keep the old building? The existing building is from 1905. Do we tear it down?

### **Council Chambers Comments**

The current council chambers are not a nice civic space. You will have a large room with a low roof if you try to expand the council chambers there.

### **Budget related comments**

The cost is proportional to need. Dollar wise, does it make more sense to provide a layout to fit the needs vs. a concept that continues to work around the existing building? Let's not add something on that is just a compromise. What are the economies of scale in demolishing the existing building and providing the Town a clean slate in the longer run? Can we get more value to the dollar with a fresh start? Build something new in the old location.

For the existing Town Hall we should rethink the existing floor elevations since the lower level is too substandard. Adding another story to the existing building would likely mean enlarging the foundation- probably not worth it.

The funding for the Town Hall project is competing with other important capital improvement programs. We have \$30M in needs for levees, pump station, other infrastructure priorities that come first. For a \$3M Town Hall project or a \$6M Town Hall project- what other projects get delayed or pushed out?

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### **Civic Identity Comments**

What represents this town is its volunteer spirit as represented by such action-oriented groups as the women's club, Lion's Club or Rotary.

### **Eco friendly comments**

We need a building that says "we care about the environment." Net Zero energy and water and sewer strategies should be utilized. Climate change considerations should be made.

### **Miscellaneous Comments**

Someone mentions the Larkspur Police Station as an example

Someone comments on the disappointed attendance. What we can be done to get the word out more- a town wide call. In response the following ideas are discussed:

Use the on-line "Next Door" website. It is pointed out that the Town used a 4-5K person email newsletter mailing list to send out the flyer for this meeting. Someone suggests an announcement in the Marin Independent Journal and doing a story on the Town Hall addition prior to the Town Council meeting that will discuss this project.

Photos from the meetings:



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