



Dewey leaders propose new town hall on highway

Officials seek facility double in size; current building cramped, outdated



Dewey Beach officials leaned toward constructing a new town hall on Coastal Highway. NICK ROTH PHOTO

By Ellen Driscoll January 28, 2022

Dewey Beach officials leaned toward constructing a new town hall on Coastal Highway that would be nearly double the size of the current facility during discussions at a Jan. 21 workshop with employees and commissioners.

The current building on Rodney Avenue is 24 years old; it initially housed five employees on the administrative side and 11 in the police department, Town Manager Bill Zolper said. The town now has 23 full-time employees, he added.

The first floor is 2,600 square feet, the second floor is 2,200 square feet and the annex on Coastal Highway is 1,200 square feet, Zolper said, for a total area of 6,000 square feet.

Zolper suggested a new building have 4,000 square feet of space on the administrative side and just under 6,000 square feet on the police side. The building could be three stories total, with the first two outfitted for current use and the third floor left unfinished for future use, he said.

The town owns two lots on Coastal Highway and one on Rodney Avenue, Zolper said. The current town hall on Rodney Avenue could be demolished and used for parking and a sally port, which is a secured entry, and town hall could be located on Coastal Highway.

Commissioners said they liked the idea of a visible town hall on Coastal Highway rather than on a side street.

Police Chief Sam Mackert said the town would save money by working in the current building while the new town hall is under construction, because temporary facilities would not be needed.

Zolper displayed photos depicting hallways crowded with storage boxes and equipment, and office space tucked into eaves. Zolper said he has spent \$40,000 just this year on heating and air-conditioning repairs, mold mitigation and new flooring. Another \$25,000 was spent on annex maintenance, he said.

Because of mold and moisture issues, an exhaust fan was installed and runs constantly to fight the buildup of water under the building, Zolper said. An air-quality test showed the air

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is safe, but mold on the ceiling required immediate action, he said.

Code enforcement employees must leave their work area when court is in session, he said.

The police department has only one cell for all male, female and juvenile detainees, Zolper said. A hole was knocked through the wall a couple years ago when a detainee escaped (https://www.capegazette.com/article/suspect-escaped-dewey-jail-may-27/159141) ; a steel plate now covers the wall. Prisoners must be taken upstairs through an outside staircase, which presents a fall hazard, he said.

In 2021, 129 men and 29 women were detained for criminal violations, which don't include DUIs or moving violations, Mackert said. The new facility would have three cells, he said.

DUI suspects would still be taken to Rehoboth Beach Police Department or Delaware State Police Troop 7 for alcohol breath testing with an intoxilyzer, which Dewey Beach Police Department does not have, Mackert said. The state determines which agencies receive an intoxilyzer, he said.

For security purposes, the police department needs a certain degree of separation from town hall, including separate lobbies and entrances, Mackert said, but a break room and kitchen could be shared by all employees.

Zolper said he would use the previously approved \$30,000 to have three different architectural firms develop designs and cost estimates using square footage figures determined by town employees.

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Today

(All day)

[Folger Theatre costume display](#)

(All day)

[Lewes Tulip Celebration](#)

7:45 am to 8:15 am

[Walk Aerobics Class DVD Led](#)

8:00 am to 10:15 am

[Balance & Strength Class](#)

8:00 am to 12:00 pm

[Lewes Senior Activity Center open](#)

8:00 am to 4:00 pm

[Fitness Room open](#)

8:30 am to 2:00 pm

[AARP Tax-Aide Prep Help](#)

8:30 am to 10:00 am

[Weight Down Club](#)

9:00 am to 2:00 pm

Tomorrow

(All day)

[Folger Theatre costume display](#)

(All day)

[Lewes Tulip Celebration](#)

8:00 am to 12:00 pm

[Craft Fair & Pancake Breakfast](#)

8:30 am to 10:00 am

[Writing Boot Camp](#)

9:00 am to 3:00 pm

[IMC Retreat](#)

10:00 am to 3:00 pm

[Delaware Seaside Railroad Club Train Display](#)

10:00 am to 5:00 pm

[LHS Hearty in the Cause](#)

10:00 am to 4:00 pm

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