

**NORTH RIDGEVILLE CITY COUNCIL
BUILDING AND LANDS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS – 5:45 P.M.
MONDAY, MARCH 5, 2026**

To Order and Pledge of Allegiance:

Chairman Bruce Abens called the Building and Lands Committee meeting to order at 6:15 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call:

Members present: Chairman Bruce Abens, Councilman Clifford Winkel, and Councilwoman Kathryn Rogerson.

Others Present: Councilman Robert Holub, Councilman Paul Wolanski, Councilwoman Cali Zingale, Councilwoman Holly Swenk, Planning and Development Director Kim Lieber, Mayor Kevin Corcoran, John Patrick Picard from John Patrick Picard Architect, Inc., and Assistant Clerk of Council Fijabi Gallam.

Action on Minutes:

Chairman Abens asked if there were any corrections to the minutes dated August 18, 2025. No discussion was offered. The minutes stand approved as submitted.

{Clerk notes: The Chair began with the second item of new business.}

Discussion regarding 2026-16:

2026-16 An Ordinance authorizing the issuance of a Request for Concept Proposals for the adaptive reuse of Old Town Hall.
(Introduced by Mayor Corcoran; First Reading on 02-17-2026)

Chair Abens asked Planning and Development Director Kim Lieber and Mayor Cocoran to explain Ordinance Number 2026-16.

Mayor Corcoran remarked that the purpose of the request was to obtain outside opinions on potential reuse options for the building's long-term viability. He noted that the proposal was exploratory in nature, not a final plan or commitment, and represented an initial information-gathering step. A presentation on the Town Hall issues was given on July 9, 2025.

Director Lieber outlined the agenda, which included a review of existing building conditions, repair work completed to date, the City's overall revitalization strategy, an overview of conceptual plans, and an explanation of the request for concept proposals. She reported that involvement with the building began in early 2023 after the Fire Chief raised concerns regarding hazardous conditions that posed risks to public safety. An architect with experience in historic preservation was retained to evaluate the building, address building code and accessibility issues, and provide professional recommendations. The City's goal was to preserve the building while positioning it for future use.

Mr. Picard presented the audit of the Old Town Hall and the findings of the existing conditions assessment. He focused on preservation and stated that the building was historically significant

and in fundamentally sound condition. However, he identified several serious safety and code issues, including unsafe emergency egress, open stairwells that violated fire codes, inaccessible restrooms, a lack of ADA-compliant vertical access, and extensive electrical hazards. Numerous uncoded and exposed electrical wires were discovered, along with plumbing leaks and deficiencies in environmental control, all of which threatened the building's integrity.

He explained that HVAC systems had been restored to operational status to prevent further deterioration. Maintaining stable temperature and humidity conditions is essential for preserving historic structures. He also reported on deteriorating roof conditions, water infiltration, spalling brick, rotting wood elements, and peeling paint. These issues were largely attributed to prolonged exposure to moisture and mechanical failures.

Director Lieber added that the City's response followed the Fire Chief's closure of the building in March 2023. Multiple repair packages were developed and bid separately to control costs, including roofing, electrical, HVAC, plumbing, painting, and interior cleanup. Repair work was largely completed by mid-2024 at a cost of approximately \$180,000, stabilizing the building, correcting immediate safety hazards, and preventing further damage.

Mr. Picard explained that the building was not suitable for public occupancy. As a publicly owned building, it must comply fully with the Americans with Disabilities Act, including accessible entrances, vertical circulation, fire suppression, and restroom capacity. He explained that prior partial modifications did not meet ADA standards and that reoccupying the building without comprehensive upgrades was not legally permissible.

Director Lieber described the Planning efforts, focusing on long-term objectives. It included developing conceptual plans, estimating renovation costs, engaging key stakeholders, and identifying a feasible implementation strategy. Objectives prioritized safety, accessibility, code compliance, historic preservation, continued public use, and financial sustainability.

Mr. Picard reviewed building code classifications and stated that the building had historically functioned as an assembly space. For maximum flexibility and safety, the most restrictive assembly classification (5B wood building) was assumed in planning. Parking availability was highlighted as a significant asset of the site, supporting its viability for public gatherings.

Director Lieber added that the proposed building additions include house elevators, stairways, restrooms, and support spaces that could not be accommodated within the existing footprint. The plans envisioned first-floor assembly space, second-floor performance and event areas, generously sized lobbies with historical displays, outdoor programming opportunities, and improved parking access. Based on stakeholder feedback on July 9, 2025, additional second-floor space was incorporated for storage, production, green room, and support needs.

Mr. Picard noted that the site can accommodate 111 parking spaces and about 300 people in the building.

Mr. Picard explained that large lobby areas were created to accommodate large crowds during events, shows, or intermissions, allowing patrons to gather, obtain refreshments, and access restrooms designed to handle those capacities. An elevator was included to connect all spaces. At the rear of the building, the final area on the left-hand side was designated a commercial kitchen support space, and the elevator served it as well.

On the upper level, two different floor plans were developed. One configuration provided seating for 82 individual seats in an auditorium-style arrangement, and the other allowed approximately 80 seats arranged with tables and chairs. The floor plan incorporated curves in the center to level the floor, ensuring tables and food service remained stable, and to provide better sightlines and vantage points to the stage.

Following the stakeholder meeting, staff reviewed the needs of each group, including the Historical Society and the Old Town Hall Players. Previously, the Historical Society utilized approximately 1,788 square feet of usable space. Under the preliminary plans, the total space available to them—including lobby display areas and workspace—was approximately 1,565 square feet, a reduction of about 200 square feet that was not considered significant. The theater space increased by approximately 456 square feet. Overall, no group experienced a substantial loss of space. It was noted that, as the plans were still preliminary, adjustments could be made—such as adding 200 square feet—to equalize space if desired, and this context was shared to reflect the design's current reality.

Preliminary cost estimates were reviewed. Renovation and additions were estimated at approximately \$2.6 million, with additional site work at \$550,000, A/E & projected administration at \$250,000, and contingency bringing the total project cost to just under \$3.8 million. Annual operational costs were discussed, including utilities, maintenance, and long-term equipment replacement planning.

It was stated that the renovation would provide an estimated useful life of 45 to 50 years for the building. While HVAC equipment typically has a lifespan of approximately 20 to 25 years, the slate roof was noted to have a significantly longer lifespan when properly maintained. The building's brick masonry and structural framing were found to be in very good condition, with only one rotted board identified in the attic. Based on these findings, staff expressed confidence that the building could be returned to active use within the projected cost range.

Estimated monthly operating costs for the expanded, fully operational building—including heating, cooling, elevators, and increased power usage—were projected to range from \$10,000 to \$15,000. It was clarified that prior operating costs were lower because the building was smaller and less fully utilized. Annual maintenance costs were estimated to range from \$3,000 to \$8,000, recognizing that such expenses would not occur every year. It was recommended that funds be set aside annually to prepare for future major replacements, such as rooftop units at the end of their service life.

Director Lieber acknowledged that the project would require a substantial investment in both construction and ongoing operations. As a result, the need to explore all available funding sources for the City, including options through the City, the CIC, and external partners, was identified. It was noted that certain funding sources carry specific requirements, and careful consideration would be necessary to ensure alignment with the City's intended use of the building.

Following the stakeholder meeting, feedback prompted revisions to the concept plans and additional work. This included an environmental review of the building to identify asbestos and other hazardous materials. Consulted with professionals across Ohio who had experience renovating historic buildings to learn how they identified funding sources and partnerships. This research led to the development of a Request for Concept Proposals (RFCP).

The legislative item before Council was identified as Ordinance 2026-16, authorizing the issuance of the RFCP. It was explained that this process differed from a traditional RFP, as it did not request

firm schedules, budgets, or cost commitments. Instead, the RFCP focused on vision, design concepts, community engagement, and adaptive reuse ideas. Respondents were asked to propose ways to activate the building for civic and cultural use, both indoors and outdoors, in a manner consistent with the project goals previously discussed. The City expressed interest in creative, innovative solutions and potential partnership models to support the project.

It was explained that issuing the RFCP was a non-binding, information-gathering step intended to gauge market interest, ideas, and potential partners who could bring capital and expertise. Director Lieber noted that although concept plans existed, feedback from experienced professionals in historic preservation and adaptive reuse would help determine feasibility and identify areas for improvement. The RFCP process would help reduce risk by identifying challenges early. Overall, the RFCP was described as a prudent and constructive next step in evaluating available options.

Director Lieber pointed out that throughout the building's long history, it has served a wide variety of purposes. These included governmental functions such as a town hall, police facility, and public library, as well as educational uses, including kindergarten classes for a period of time. The building was also used for entertainment and community activities, including an opera house, teen center, roller skating, basketball, and church services. More recently, the building functioned as a museum and theater. The building had never been defined for a single purpose. The current approach was described as preservation through active use, with the goal of inviting the community into the building on a daily basis.

Chair Abens asked if anyone from the audience had any comments or questions.

Larry Phillips, a resident of Terrell Road in North Ridgeville and a member of the Board of Directors for the Old Town Hall Theater, inquired about the timeline for the approval of the request for proposals and the next steps.

Chair Abens remarked that there is no timeframe at this point.

Director Lieber responded that while a deadline for proposal submission would be set at approximately four to six weeks, the timeline for next steps would depend entirely on the substance of the responses received.

Eugene Kleinholz of 7470 Root Road identified himself as a trustee of the Historical Society and a longtime civil servant who served the City for 50 years under eight different mayors. He shared personal history with the building, recalling its use as City Hall and noting his own interactions with the City following military service. He raised the importance of the building's historic significance. Like its role as the Eastern Lorain County Draft Board during World War I and World War II, where local residents departed for service, some never returning, with their names memorialized at the site. He noted the building's reverence and its importance to the community. Mr. Kleinholz stressed that the Historical Society's work required more than display cases, advocating for a dedicated first-floor workspace for workshops and public engagement. He suggested that flexible displays and collaboration—potentially including space for the Chamber of Commerce—could enhance public access and storytelling about North Ridgeville's history. He cautioned against entering into long-term agreements with third parties, expressing concern that such arrangements could be regretted over time, and concluded that the building should remain a shared asset for all citizens, managed collaboratively.

Councilman Paul Wolanski, of 6048 Opal Street, stated that he was a member of the First Congregational Church, located approximately five houses from the site. He suggested that, in the event of traffic or parking overflow, the church's board of trustees and nearby properties such as Liston's might be able to accommodate additional parking, potentially providing up to 100 extra spaces. He also noted that City Hall parking could serve as an option, though it would require a slightly longer walk.

Genevieve Flieger, of 32797 Chestnut Ridge Road in North Ridgeville, addressed the Council and shared ideas for potential uses of the building. She suggested looking at the City of Elyria as an example, where the Arts Council has a permanent home that includes a gift shop for local artists to sell their work and dedicated workshop space for classes, resulting in consistent community use. She noted that the Elyria facility is volunteer-run, keeping staffing costs low while allowing the Arts Council to establish a presence, expand, and integrate more fully into the community. Ms. Flieger also highlighted Elyria's practice of offering temporary space within City Hall to small businesses that have outgrown home-based operations but are not yet ready for a storefront, allowing them to build their brand over a short period before moving into retail space. She stated that this approach supports local business growth at low cost and increases daily foot traffic in civic buildings, helping to justify operational expenses such as utilities.

No further comments from the public

Councilwoman Rogerson expressed appreciation for the presentation and for the Historical Society. She inquired whether the proposal would include a section stating that a dedicated space for the historical society is needed in the Old Town Hall.

Director Lieber explained that, as currently written, the Request for Concept Proposals did not include specific requirements, though those considerations would be addressed in future discussions with potential developers. The intent was to keep the RFCP broad and open-ended to encourage a wide range of ideas. It was noted that if firms were shortlisted and interviews conducted, the City would clearly communicate its goals, including ensuring continued public access to the building and the ability to display historic artifacts. It was further stated that proposals could come from for-profit, nonprofit, or educational organizations, and that no group would be excluded from consideration. The City expressed openness to the creative ideas raised during the discussion and emphasized a desire to avoid imposing unnecessary constraints on the process at this stage, allowing it to unfold naturally.

Councilwoman Rogerson wanted to know whether the Historical Society was told they had a place in the Old Town Hall, regardless of what happens to the building.

Mayor Corcoran stated that nothing was guaranteed at that point; however, the concept plans developed included space for the Historical Society, as referenced multiple times during the presentation. All versions of the plans prepared to date included designated space intended to accommodate their needs.

Councilman Winkel asked whether the Request for Proposals was intended to be based on the presented drawings or whether respondents would be free to propose entirely different concepts.

Director Lieber explained that the drawings were intended to seed creative ideas, demonstrate one concept that could meet building code and accessibility requirements, and show how additions might function in a way that respects the original building. However, the plans were not meant to be prescriptive and were described as conceptual lines on paper. It was emphasized

that other developers could present different approaches, including alternative layouts or uses of the footprint, and that the City was open to considering a range of creative ideas generated through the process.

Chair Abens noted that all that was presented were good ideas, but he would rather not put any limitations in the RFP. He remarked that he is looking for the best use and affordability.

No further comments from the Administration or the Committee.

Moved by Winkel and seconded by Rogerson to send Ordinance Number 2026-16 back to City Council for consideration as submitted.

A voice vote was taken, and the motion carried.

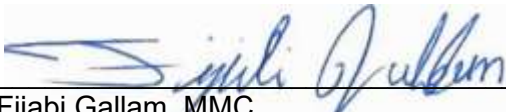
Yes – 3

No – 0

Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 6:29 p.m.

Date Approved: August 17, 2026



Fijabi Gallam, MMC
Assistant Clerk of Council



Outline

- Review of Existing Conditions & Repair Work
- Old Town Hall Renaissance Strategy
- Concept Plans
- Request for Concept Proposals



Existing Conditions Inspection

March 9, 2023



• Building Code/Fire Code Violations



• Accessibility Issues



• Building Envelope and Environment Concerns

"The North Ridgeville Old Town Hall, built in 1883, is a beautiful and important historic artifact of the City of North Ridgeville. The building has a rich history of events and uses and is in fairly good condition. Unfortunately, the building is now at a time in its history that some action needs to be taken to keep it and its users safe." -John Patrick Picard



Photos: March 9, 2023



Repair Timeline



Repair Investment

Item	Cost
Investigation	\$4,800
Roofing	\$38,270
Painting	\$43,475
Electrical	\$5,770
HVAC/Plumbing	\$18,535
Demo/Clean Up	\$29,860
A/E	\$38,970
Total	\$179,680

Stabilized, But Not Restored

What the Repairs Did:

- ☒ Addressed immediate safety hazards
- ☒ Stabilized the building to prevent further deterioration
- ☒ Protected key historic features from damage

What the Repairs Did NOT Do:

- ☒ Did **not** make the building ready for occupancy
- ☒ Did **not** address functional systems (HVAC, plumbing, ADA access)
- ☒ Did **not** prepare spaces for programming or events

Repairs were a short-term stabilization—full renovation is still required to safely and effectively use the building.



Old Town Hall Renaissance

-  Step 1: Define Project Objectives
-  Step 2: Assess Needs and Develop Concept Plans
-  Step 3: Prepare Cost Estimates
-  Step 4: Engage Key Stakeholders
-  Step 5: Create Implementation Plan



Needs Study: Code Review

Building	Use Groups	Implications
• Floor Area 2,788 Square Feet • 5B Wood Framed Construction • Occupant Load: • 540 standing • 100 to 120 actual seating capacity	• Assembly: • A-1: Performing Arts Viewing • A-2: Food and Drink Consumption • A-3: Museum • Others?	• Use most restrictive use for planning • Fire suppression required • Elevator required • Additional stair tower recommended • New restrooms required

Concept Plans

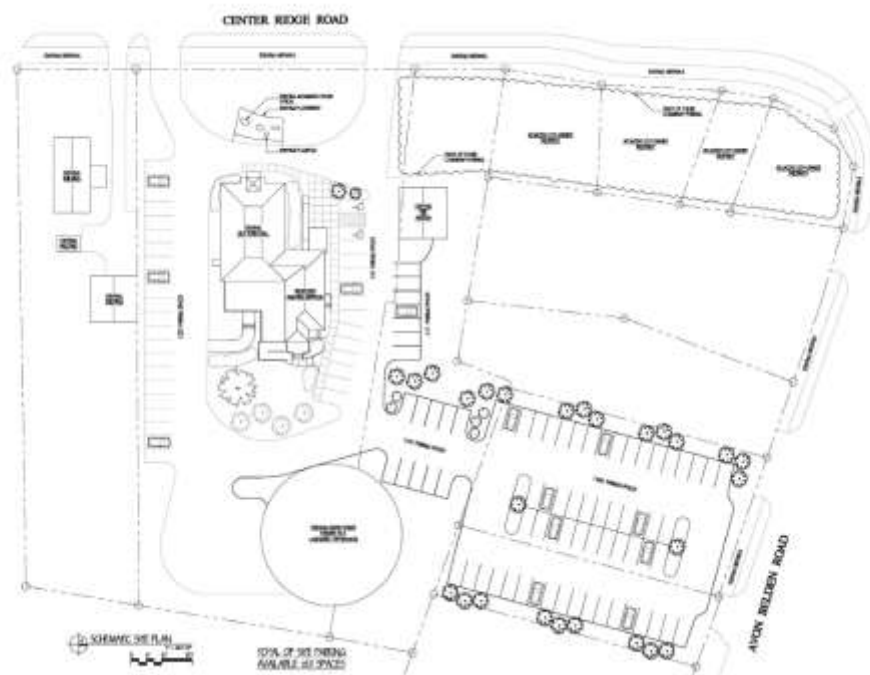


Key Features

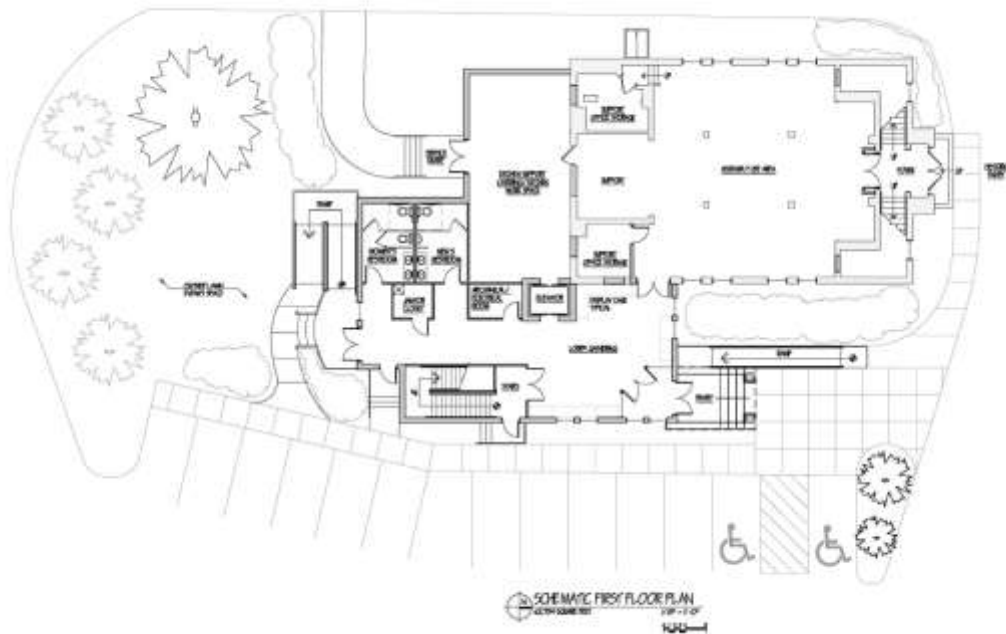
- A two-story building addition containing a catering kitchen, restrooms, elevator, stairs, additional storage area and accessible entrances
- First floor assembly area
- Second floor performance and event space
- Lobby areas with opportunities for curated displays of North Ridgeville history
- Outdoor event and programming areas
- Paved parking lot

Refinements made to floor plans following stakeholder meeting held on July 9, 2025

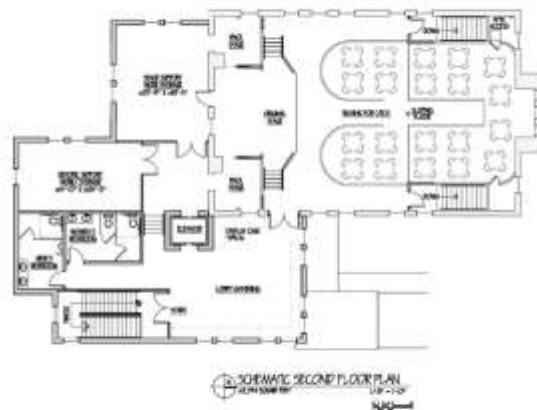
Conceptual Site Plan



Conceptual First Floor Plan



Conceptual Second Floor Plan



Preliminary Cost Estimate

Item	Estimate
Building Addition & Renovations	\$2,634,000
Site Work	\$550,000
A/E & Project Administration	\$250,000
Contingency	\$300,000
Total	\$3,734,000

Note: Cost estimate does not include furniture, fixtures, equipment, etc.

Ongoing Additional Costs

Monthly Utilities

- Estimated at \$10,000 to \$15,000 per month
- Includes water, sewer, electric, gas
- Will vary by use

Annual Maintenance

- Approximately \$3,000 to \$8,000 per year
- \$1.00 to \$3.00 per square foot
 - Low end – simple maintenance needs, general upkeep, minor repairs
 - High end – comprehensive maintenance, significant repairs, preventative maintenance

Potential Resources & Partners

Ohio History Fund Grants

Ohio Department of Development

Ohio Facilities Construction Commission Cultural Facilities Grants

Community Development Block Grant

Ohio Historic Preservation Tax Credit Program

Federal Historic Tax Credits

National Trust for Historic Preservation Grants

Local Foundation & Community Support

Public-Private Partnership

Event-Based Revenue Model

Educational Institution Collaboration

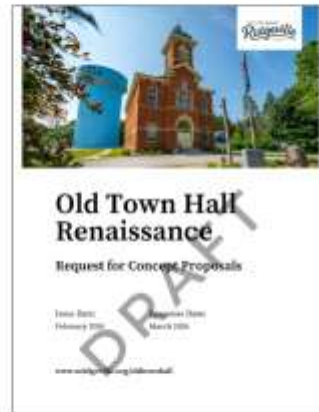
Request for Concept Proposals



Ordinance 2026-16

Formal request seeking concepts from qualified developers:

- Focuses on **vision, design, and community engagement**, not detailed construction or finances
- Demonstrates **adaptive reuse and historic preservation**
- Shows plans for **civic and cultural activation** of indoor and outdoor spaces
- Ensures **consistent evaluation** against city goals
- Encourages **creative, innovative solutions**
- Maintains **transparency and competitiveness** in review process



Why the RFP is the Right Next Step

No commitment to proceed – information gathering only; any agreement will require Council approval

Validate feasibility of concept plans – test assumptions before committing resources

Engage qualified professionals – benefit from specialized expertise in historic preservation and complex projects

Explore options for partnerships – consider public-private collaboration for long-term sustainability

Reduce risk for the City – professional proposals highlight potential challenges early

