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Public Safety & Services Bond Informational Briefings/Tours Announced

The City of Grosse Pointe has set up three informational sessions in June for residents to tour the City's Public Safety and Services facilities on Maumee and obtain information about the bond issuance question on the August 8 ballot.

City officials will make an informational presentation, answer questions and lead a tour of both facilities, starting at the Public Services building in the back of 17145 Maumee on the following dates: Tuesday, June 20, at 7 p.m., Saturday June 24, at 10:30 a.m., and Tuesday, June 27 at 7 p.m. "Everyone is encouraged attend these sessions to learn about the need for improving Public Safety and Services facilities," City Manager Pete Dame said. "But if you cannot attend to see firsthand, the presentation and other background materials are online at www.grossepointecity.org. Residents," he said, "should feel free to contact me at City Hall by phone or email, or to contact any of your elected officials. I am also happy to attend any homeowners group or neighborhood association meeting, or other gathering to share information about the proposal."

The City Council unanimously voted on May 8 to seek voter approval of a bond to fund major building improvements. On the August 8 ballot, City of Grosse Pointe residents will be asked to support the issuance of up to \$12.96 million in bonds to replace Public Safety and Services facilities. If approved, the City would be able to build a critically needed new headquarters for the Police and Fire Department, address building safety and inadequate conditions in the Public Services building, and make basic repairs and renovations to repurpose the existing Public Safety building on Maumee.

Mayor Dale Scrace said, "Having served on the Facilities Committee reviewing this matter for over a year, and as a registered architect, it is clear to me that the existing Public Safety and Services buildings have served their useful lifespans. They are obsolete and too small, and it is time to act." Councilmember John Stempfle concurred: "The Public Safety building was built in 1928 and can't even be modified to fit a new fire engine. The Public Services building was built in 1964 and is inadequate. Both need to be replaced."

The majority of the funds from the bond issue, with an estimated project cost of \$7.5 million, is intended for the purchase and construction of a new Public Safety building at the corner of Mack and St. Clair. This is a site comprising the current location of Alger's Deli and Liquor, the adjacent vacant lot, and the adjacent first house on St. Clair. Alger's owners had been finalizing a sale of their business when they approached the City. Councilmember Chris Walsh, who also served on the Facilities Committee, said, "With the proposed location of a new Police and Fire station on Mack, the visibility and effectiveness of Public Safety is greatly improved. It demonstrates the importance of Public Safety to the community."

Another purpose of the bond, utilizing an estimated \$4.725 million, would fund the purchase, renovation and reconstruction of an existing warehouse located at 4849 Canyon as a Public Services building. "Moving Public Services out of the Maumee site not only solves a space and safety problem," Councilmember Sheila Tomkowiak said, "but it removes trucks and other heavy equipment from a

residential neighborhood and onto a more appropriate commercial thoroughfare. That, coupled with putting Public Safety headquarters on Mack, should have a positive impact on the Mack Avenue corridor in the City and surrounding neighborhoods.”

Approximately half a million dollars of the bond would go toward repair and renovation of the existing Public Safety building at 17145 Maumee. The plan is to relocate Court offices there, improve Court safety, expand records storage, and potentially create a public Community Space from the old Fire station bays. On-site parking would also be expanded.

Judge Russ Ethridge, who has served as the City’s Municipal Judge since 1998, said, “The proposal to repurpose the existing Public Safety Building at 17145 Maumee would address many operational issues by relocating court offices next to the Courtroom. It would also address many serious safety concerns by taking significant steps to enhance the security of the prisoners, public, Court personnel and officers when the Court is in session.” Councilmember Don Parthum, an attorney, agreed, “I am greatly concerned about the safety and security of the Court, the prisoner detention area, and the overall working conditions of the old Public Safety building which do not meet State of Michigan standards. The Court improvements, together with a modern police and fire building on Mack, would directly address these needs.”

The estimated 1.7 added mills estimated to be required to repay the bond equates to a property tax increase of approximately 3.25 percent to pay for the improvements. The current tax bill for a resident of Grosse Pointe in 2016-17, including all governmental bodies was 52.2 mills, (of which less than a third is attributable to City operations). The estimated cost to a Grosse Pointe resident with a median house value of \$250,000 (and a taxable value of \$125,000) would be \$212.50 annually.

Councilmember Andrew Turnbull commented, “With our improved Bond rating we are in the best position to issue bonds at historically low costs. We have needed to address these two facilities for some time, and I can't see the conditions ever being better than they are today.”

Mayor Scrace concluded, “It is hard to ask for residents to raise their own taxes. However, this is a reasonable amount to invest in our community, for improvement that will last a long time. It is important to that we have the proper facilities to provide the top-notch services that everyone values so much.”

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