



## City Council Meeting Minutes Monday, January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023 - 6:00 p.m. Council Chambers, City Hall

**Council in attendance:** Mayor Jo Brown, Councilor Jay Chandler, Councilor Leigh Webb, Councilor Bob Desrochers, Councilor George Dzujna, Councilor Valerie Blake, Councilor Paul Trudel, Councilor Vince Ribas and Councilor Olivia Zink

**Absent:** Councilor Ted Starkweather

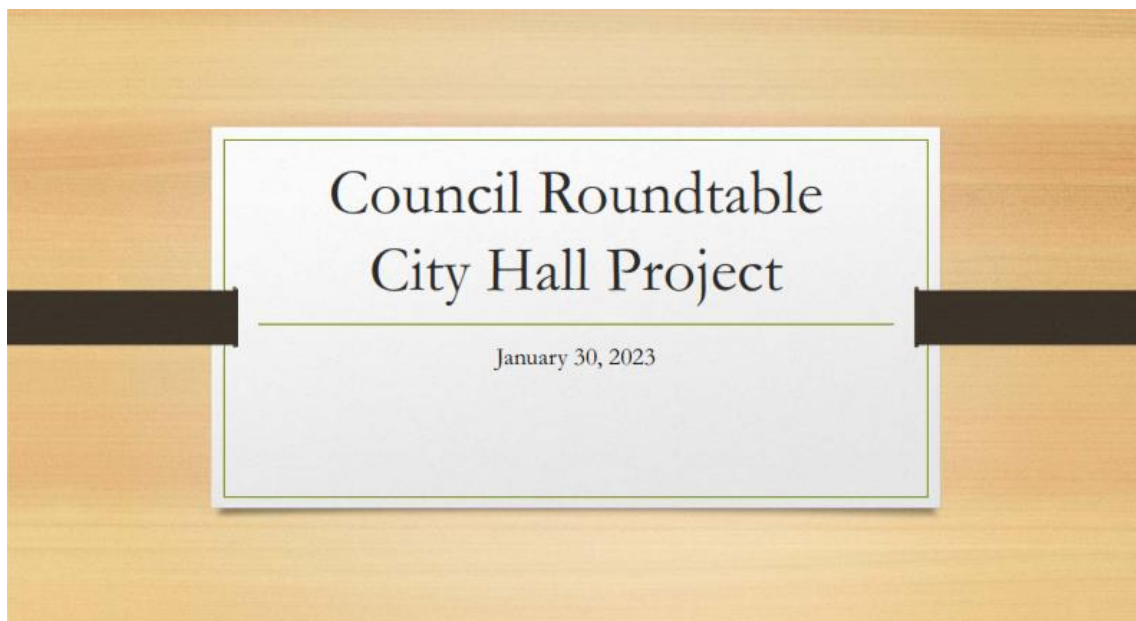
**Others in attendance:** City Manager Judie Milner, Fire Chief Mike Foss, MSD Director Justin Hanscom, P&Z Director Seth Creighton, F & D Consultant Niel Cannon, and members of the public.

Mayor Brown called the meeting to order in Council Chambers at 6:08 p.m.

Salute to the Flag was led by Councilor Ribas.

Mayor Brown stated that this was a workshop to talk about the options for how to go forward with city hall. Nothing has been decided and there have not been any bids that have gone out as of yet. She asked City Manager Milner to start the discussion.

Milner passed out the below PowerPoint handout to the council about City Hall conditions and read from each slide:



## History

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- July 25, 2022 City Council Workshop on Buildings
- City Manager established City Hall Working Group
  - City Staff – Chief Foss, Director Creighton, Director Hanscom, Captain Reale, Deputy Director Marsh
  - City Council Representation
  - Economic Dev Task Force
  - Opera House Representation
  - Heritage Commission Representation
  - Public Representation

## Workgroup

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- Task – Determine the Highest & Best Use of City Hall
- Ground Rules
  - City is example to investors (both current and future) in Franklin
  - Issues are 68 years old – need forward facing solution that will address issues and support use of the building well into the future
  - no idea too crazy – WWP was crazy 6 years ago

## Highest and Best Use

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- Transfer City Hall to Private Investor – mixed use, commercial/residential
- Opera House Takes over City Hall
- Opera House builds new – City Hall for City Functions “one stop shop”

## Highest & Best Use

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- City Hall becomes Art Center or Community Activity Building
  - Move MSD, Rec, Fire, Police to High School; City Hall to PD
  - Public Safety Complex, City Hall to PD
  - Fire/MSD Complex, City Hall to vacate Building Downtown
- City Hall/Opera House shared space
  - Not necessarily “status quo”

## Workgroup Choice

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- #1 City Hall becomes Art Center
- Final Recommendation– City Hall or Opera House Shared Space
  - Community not ready to support Art Center at this time
  - most economically feasible for both entities at this time
  - Not necessarily the same split of space – a lot of wasted space

## Cost

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- Jonathan Halle – Warren Street Architects
  - Pro-bono (thank you Gene & Niel)
  - Prior work with the city
  - Initial/preliminary cost estimate
  - City offices alone – not much difference in cost
- Next Steps for cost
  - Solidify cost estimates with individual sub-contractors



## Costs

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- Cost does not include temporary offices for staff
- Cost does not include lost revenue for opera house
- Grants? Other funding sources? Need to be considered but MAY NOT be received

## Slowing Down – why?

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- Pre-development loan – CDFA
- Grants, other funding options – timing
- One engineer
- Opera House ability to support debt
- Do it right the first time
- .....

## Thought needed

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- Do we want to take on the liability of doing nothing?
- Is city hall something we want to save for city hall business?
- Do we have the appetite to support the debt service that goes with the project?
- Where will we go? – either permanently or during construction
- How much debt can the opera house support?
- How can the opera house operate while under construction?
- .....

## Direction Needed

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- Do we stay, go or renovate? Do we share the building with the opera house?
- Do we appropriate the \$60,000 sale of municipal property for next step engineering?
  - building assessment, code analysis, space needs design, cost estimate of the building
- Do we move forward with financial analysis assistance to opera house for sustainability?
- Do we move forward with grant/other funding sources analysis and applications?
- Do we move forward with a location for temp or permanent “housing” of city hall functions and staff?
- Do we hold a public forum, send a survey, or do some other educational and/or promotional campaign?
- .....

Milner did remind everyone that City Hall does not have an occupancy permit or assembly permit and if no action is taken by August 1, 2023 the fire chief will consider the building unsafe and will write a notice of hazardous conditions, passing the liability to the city.

A discussion about all of the options ensued. The recommendation to keep the building as a shared use for city business and the opera house was favored. There were questions about whether there is time to secure a permit by the end of August and Cannon stated that it would not be possible within that time frame. Cannon stated that if Chief Foss is able to see that there is clear action being taken to proceed with renovations, he may be willing to make an exception or extend the time frame.

Milner stated that the next step would be appropriating \$60,000 from the recent sale of 599 S. Main Street towards the engineering study. This would allow the architect to get bids from all of the subcontractors needed for the entire project, which would then give the city a much better idea of what the total renovation cost will be. This appropriation would be outside of the bond needed for the project.

**Motion - Councilor Ribas moved that the Franklin City Council set a public hearing on resolution 15-23 to appropriate \$60,000 from the sale of 599 S. Main Street towards the City Hall engineering study for Monday, February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2023 at 6 p.m. in Council Chambers. Seconded by Councilor Dzujna.**

Mayor Brown asked if there was any discussion on this motion.

It was decided that the council should consider voting on setting a public hearing at an early workshop meeting in February, so that this first step can be started sooner than later. This would mean that the public hearing could be set for the March city council meeting instead of April.

**7 in favor; 1 abstained. Motion PASSED.**

**ADJOURNMENT:**

**Motion to adjourn was made by Councilor Zink and seconded by Councilor Dzujna.  
All in favor. Motion PASSED.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:38 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa A. Jones  
Executive Secretary