



Crescent Hills
— Civic Association —
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*Our Community, Our Roads, Our Landmarks,
Our Home*

Chris Miller, President, CHCA

Over the summer, Crescent Hills Civic Association (CHCA) members have been assembling facts about the Penn Hills budget, the municipal building and the condition of Penn Hills roads. We made a presentation to Mayor and Council regarding the roads and advocated for more money to be spent on repaving. A summary of that presentation is included in this document.

In addition, seven CHCA residents toured the municipal building to get a better idea of the problems faced by the municipality regarding its headquarters. The municipality wants to abandon, relocate and rebuild. We agree with Mayor and Council that something must be done to remedy the current condition of the building especially for the employees who work there. We do not agree that the only and best solution is to build a new building in a location that is neither central nor on a main street. With our school district having to raise taxes possibly several times in order to cover a huge deficit, we want the municipality to choose the least expensive option in regard to the building. An alternative plan, currently being developed by Crescent Hills' resident and architectural engineer, Chuck McKelvey, will be submitted to Mayor and Council when it is completed. The alternate plan will be posted on our website at CH-CA.org. Look under the "Newsletter" tab for it. We will ask the municipality to hold a special hearing on the two plans and to educate the community on the options, the costs and financing.

Following are three articles addressing different aspects of the municipal building situation. Please join us in our efforts to make sure the best solution is obtained. If you want to help or if you have any questions, please send an email to contact@CH-CA.org.



PENN HILLS MUNICIPAL BUILDING – Historic Landmark **Chuck McKelvey, Earlwood Road**

The current municipal building was built in the 30's and an addition added in the 60's. While presently in very poor condition, the municipal building is a valuable and historic building that should not be abandoned. It is understandable to want to create an all new building to house the police and administration employees, but the building at 12245 Frankstown is more than just office space. The municipal building takes a whole block of space on Frankstown Road. Its very size makes a commanding presence in the heart of the municipality. It is in fact located in the center of the municipality. The Memorial Day parade stops here. American flags fly all along the front of this classic and historic building. The memorials to our fallen police and other leaders of Penn Hills are here. At Christmas time, residents driving by see the decorated tree and holiday lights. Residents come here to kick off the holiday season with light up night. Such activity and sights will be hidden from view at the new location on Duff Road. Few people will see those symbols or feel that spirit of our community.

Penn Hills has two brand new beautiful buildings serving our elementary and high school students. The municipal headquarters, like these schools, will also be out of sight and out of the main thoroughfare. Penn Hills does not have much in the way of a center city and the Municipal Building on Frankstown Road has served that function. It is our main street.



PENN HILLS MUNICIPAL BUILDING: Build or Renovate? **Mark Lantz, Springdale Drive**

At this time the Penn Hills Council and Manager are proceeding with the design and construction estimates for a new municipal building at the site of the former Hebron School on Duff Road.

Working with only estimates from their construction consultants, municipal officials have determined the cost of a new building on Duff Road to be around 11-12 million dollars and the remodeling of the existing building with additional space added to be around 8 million. In both cases they have not provided the taxpayers with hard cost estimates or how the improvements will be funded.

Members of the CHCA, guided by the Code Enforcement Manager John McCafferty, toured the Municipality Building in August. The Municipal Manager, Moe Rayan, graciously answered all questions but admitted that much has yet to be determined about costs and funding.

The building looks much better on the outside than on the inside. The original building (that section on the right side) and constructed in the 1930's, provides approximately 40% of the existing space. That section is in very poor repair and space is not well configured. The left-hand section of the municipal building was constructed in the 1960's. The Police Department is located here. The renovations needed (roof, windows, mechanicals, flooring, walls and ceilings) would still cost millions less than construction of a new facility.

Except for the costs, our initial review tended to follow the administration's recommendations. However, upon considering the historical and geographic values of the current building and the lower costs associated with remodeling, we recommend a phased combination of demolition of the older section of the municipal building and a total renovation of the newer section. This new and remodeled structure can provide all the new space that the administration feels is needed.

OUR ROADS
Andrea Getsy, Crescent Hills Road

In June of this year, CHCA President Chris Miller and Code Enforcement Chair, Mark Lantz, made a presentation before Penn Hills Mayor and Council urging them to use an anticipated budget surplus (anywhere between \$2.5 to 6 million) on repaving roads. The municipality plans, however, to use any surplus on building a new municipality building. This is a summary of that presentation which can be found at our website at CH-CA.org. The facts for the presentation came from a report by Gateway Engineers and commissioned by the municipality for \$62,000. The report dated January 2009 stated that the majority of the 134 miles of roads owned by Penn Hills needed to be repaved. Every road was examined and a rating called OCI (Overall Condition Index) between 0 to 100 was assigned. The overall rating for all of Penn Hills roads was 56. An OCI between 20 and 60 means the road needs to be repaved and below 20 means reconstruction is required. The report warned that spending only \$200,000 per year on repaving would cause the OCI to drop an additional 11 points in five years time. Crescent Hills Roads were rated at 43.30. Since then, 2 of the 9 Crescent Hills roads have been repaved and one is scheduled for this year.

A visual inspection of our roads today looks like they may have dropped those 11 points and even more. That is perilously close to needing reconstruction which is estimated to be five times more costly than repaving.

The report recommended an annual budget of \$2.25 million just for resurfacing in order to stay at the rating of 56. It costs approximately \$225,000 to repave one mile. The Penn Hills budget has a separate line item for resurfacing and another line item for in-house road/street construction, about 50% of which goes to resurfacing.

YEAR	REVENUES in Millions	RESURFACING Expenditure
2010	\$24.4	0
2011	\$26.5	\$202,719
2012	\$30.4	\$266,704
2014	\$34.8	\$620,000

The figures to the right are from the “resurfacing” budget only and these are the numbers presented in our June report.

There has been a significant increase starting in 2014 and continuing in 2015 for road resurfacing. But in five years time, approximately 7 miles of roads were resurfaced when the recommendation was for 50 miles. The municipality asserts that money from a different section of the budget is also used for resurfacing but these amounts only add another 3-4 miles of paved roads to the total. While we agree with the municipality that they are heading in the right direction, taxpayers are waiting 20-25 years to get their roads repaved. When members of CHCA addressed Mayor and Council about how little is being budgeted for the roads, we were told that they cannot afford to spend \$2.25 million a year on roads and that the last two years’ expenditures shows they are making improvements.

This council takes a “pay as you go” philosophy. They reject taking out bonds for repaving. We agree with their position. We commend them for their diligence and stewardship in this regard. But the slow pace of increase means that roads will deteriorate to a state that requires complete reconstruction and that is not diligence. The chart to the right shows the percent of the budget recommended vs. the percent actually budgeted under the category “resurfacing.”

YEAR	% of Budget Recom'd	% of Budget Actual
2010	9.22	.00
2011	9.11	.82
2012	7.4	.88
2013	6.8	.56
2014	6.56	1.8

We understand that Penn Hills has not been in a financial position that it could adopt the recommended yearly expenditures. But it can and should devote a higher percentage of its budget on its roads. It is our position that the municipality should take the least expensive alternative in regard to the municipal building, and to use the savings on repaving the roads.

BUILDING BLIGHT! WHAT CAN WE DO!
Sylvia Lynch, Spring Grove Road

Code violations show that municipalities, who support programs to fight blight, are often the very landowners whose properties are blighted. These two photos show blighted properties. The first is the school district’s building, which was the former Penn Hills library. This is the sight people see when they are going to Linton School. The second is



an abandoned home in Crescent Hills. Many complaints have been made in regard to the overgrown weeds and grass on this property. Another picture is in your mind and that is of the old municipal garage. You passed it on your travels on Frankstown Road where it sat empty for many years, surrounded by high weeds not high enough to hide the decaying structure.

Our current municipal building may suffer this same fate if abandoned by the municipality. Even as an occupied building, not enough money has been budgeted over the years to keep it maintained. Take a walk around the building and see small trees growing in the gutters. The roof leaks causing water damage every time it rains.

The fact that a large block on Frankstown Road may become a blighted area is not only a Crescent Hills problem but a community problem. Talk to your friends in Penn Hills. We need to work together to keep up the community.

