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## Group's alternative plan for Penn Hills municipal building gets public hearing Feb. 15

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BY KELSEY SHEA | Friday, Feb. 5, 2016, 8:57 p.m.  
Penn Hills leaders and a residents' group will meet this month to discuss proposed plans for a new municipal building.

The public hearing, for which members of the Crescent Hills Civic Association petitioned council, will be at 6:15 p.m. Feb. 15 in council chambers at 12245 Frankstown Road in Penn Hills.

Penn Hills officials announced in 2014 that they planned to upgrade or replace their current municipal building on Frankstown Road. They said they planned to use the municipality's surplus, which is estimated to be more than \$5 million. Council members have since said that the preferred plan is to build a new complex on the Duff Road site of the former Penn Hebron school building. Council in January approved a \$237,000 contract with Ritenour and Sons Construction Co. for removal of asbestos and demolition of the former school building.

Members of the civic association have spoken out against that plan at several meetings and have asked municipal leaders to spend money on roads instead of a building project. Upon touring the existing municipal building, members of the civic association agreed that the building was in disrepair and proposed an alternate plan.

Their alternate plan is to build a new EMS building on another site and demolish and reconstruct the existing municipal building in two phases on the existing site, according to the civic association's website.

A letter from Municipal Manager Mohammed Rayan, also posted on the group's website, said he suspects the alternate plan will be more expensive, dangerous and time-consuming. He said it could also compromise emergency response times.

Association member Andrea Getsy said the group is looking for an open process and public dialogue in council's decision-making process.

"Penn Hills Municipality has many good reasons for building new but we want to see the evidence, and not just assumptions, as to why renovating would cost more than rebuilding," she said in an e-mail.

Municipal leaders said they feel they've been very open in the planning process.

"We have been so extremely transparent in this situation," Mayor Sara Kuhn said. "Everything that they have ever asked of us, we have provided."

She said Rayan has met with citizens, taken them on tours of the existing municipal building, let them view documents and answered their questions.

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