

PRESS RELEASE March 29, 2021

New Hope Borough Addresses an Inherited Development Issue

New Hope is issuing a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for companies that can provide architectural and engineering design capacity to guide the Borough's construction of a new parking garage.

The garage responds to the unanticipated long-term consequences of past development decisions that were made during periods of limited local economic growth. The cumulative impacts of these projects approved in the past have generated traffic snarls with visitors cruising in search of parking and major developers in need of stable off-site sites for valet parking.

Over the past ten years, projects have been completed with approvals that did not require that their needs for parking would be met completely on their premises. Visitor traffic has also increased. The result is a parking nightmare that, if not addressed, will severely and negatively impact our residents and visitors.

The current council inherited many developments, including the Riverhouse that was approved conditionally twelve years ago, the Logan Inn expansion, the Playhouse and Playhouse Deck development, the Ghostlight Inn, and Stella's. These businesses have opened their doors and need convenient and reliable off-site parking for them to survive, let alone thrive. The size of the garage – and thus its total cost – will depend on the demand for parking space expressed by the operators of the new large businesses.

Their expressed need and willingness to take out long-term leases to pay for parking spaces will shape the garage and its financing. In order to better serve the community as a whole and small businesses throughout the borough, public parking will also be provided in the garage. Under no conditions, however, will Borough Council borrow any funds that cannot be paid for through long-term lease arrangements that cover the costs of repaying without burdening the taxpayers of the borough.

Council's ad hoc garage committee has met with some of the new and expanding businesses to determine their potential needs for parking space and willingness to enter into long-term leases. Those consultations are ongoing and involve the number of parking spaces, usage plans, means of limiting access to reserved slots and other matters. Once the committee has a firm handle on needs and demand, the next step will be to engage consultants specializing in garage design and construction.

The public parking spaces are expected to generate additional revenues for the Borough. That will be a source of funds that we will hope will enable Council to continue its now seven-year practice of not raising taxes for years to come.

Prior to any final decisions on the plans for the garage siting and size, public meetings will be held to present plans and options and obtain citizen input. The first of these will be when Council reviews the responses to the RFQ and makes decisions about which firms will be invited to respond to a Request for Proposals for the design services needed for the scale of garage that is required to serve the unmet needs of the retailers and large developments in the borough.