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KAREN A. WOLF



**BOROUGH ADMINISTRATOR**

ROBERT S. HOFFMANN

1 MUNICIPAL PLACE  
EMERSON, NJ 07630

TEL 201-262-6086  
FAX 201-262-0938

## BOROUGH OF EMERSON

emersonnj.org

March 6, 2018

Tonight, the Governing Body and those who are here in the Council Chambers will view a presentation from the Axis Architectural Group. Their presentation will be posted on the Borough website, weather permitting tomorrow, Wednesday, March 7th. If the closes Borough Hall tomorrow, it will be posted on the Borough website by Thursday afternoon, March 8<sup>th</sup>.

The presentation tonight is the next step on a journey that began in 2016. In 2016 the Governing Body authorized the preparation of an RFP for architectural services. On November 1, 2016 eight (8) architectural firms made presentations to the Mayor and Council in open session. After that meeting the Governing Body selected four (4) architectural firms to make second round presentations. From those second round presentations the Axis Architectural Group was selected as the firm that best envisioned our needs going forward.

The architects have been tasked with the responsibility of looking at and costing out options that make sense based on the Borough's current and future needs. Borough Hall was opened in 1939. It is now 79 years old. Borough Hall is 20 years younger than our oldest employee, beloved Borough Public Health Nurse Kay Hodges. We have approximately 4,000 square feet of office space and a total of 7,600 square feet of space when the Council Chamber and basement is included.

The Governing Body in 2018 is following the same methodology that the Governing Bodies in the mid-1930's followed. To quote Yogi Berra, it is déjà vu all over again. Eighty (80) something years ago, the Borough of Emerson had outgrown its former location. A new building was needed. It was fortunate that President Franklin Roosevelt had started the WPA which stands for Works Progress Administration. The WPA was designed to put people to work, to teach them a trade, and to improve the public good. The WPA played a large role in the creation and building of this Borough Hall. The WPA created structures that were utilitarian in nature. This meant that the same design could be used to build structures for many different purposes. The same design that was used in Emerson for our Borough Hall could also be modified and used as an office building, a garage, or some type of mixed use facility, such as with garages on the bottom and apartments above. The Governing Bodies in the mid-1930's made decisions that have affected Emerson residents for 79 years and counting. They made good decisions.

It is now time to evaluate and ultimately make decisions that will affect how Emerson is able to deliver cost effective services for the next 80 years. Tonight, you'll see and hear about several different proposals. Each proposal will have a cost associated with it. At the end of the presentation there will be the opportunity to ask questions of the architects. If the architects can't answer the question it will be written down and they will research and then answer the question at the March 20<sup>th</sup> Council meeting. If you have questions for the architect and don't ask them tonight please email me your question. My email address is [administrator@emersonnj.org](mailto:administrator@emersonnj.org). Please email your question(s) by Friday, March 9<sup>th</sup>. This will allow adequate time for the architects to research the questions and be able to respond at the March 20th Council meeting. Now let's sit back and listen to the presentation of options from Steve Lazarus, Ken Shier and Piero Gabucci of the Axis Architectural Group, our partners in this process of evaluating and determining what options are best for Emerson now and in the future.

**Presentation by Architects**

### "THE FAMILY TOWN"

## Closing

Over the past 35 years Governing Bodies have evaluated the need to make improvements to Borough Hall. In the 1980s there was discussion about moving Borough Hall to another location. In the early 1990's, under the administration of former Mayor Harvey Truppi, the Governing Body at that time again looked at ways to improve Borough Hall, or to move it. In 2013 the then Governing Body commissioned an architectural needs assessment which indicated that Borough Hall would require space that is triple the size of our current municipal building. The 2018 Governing Body is beginning this evaluation for several reasons including:

1. The three boilers in this building will have to be replaced in the not too distant future.
2. The electrical capacity of the building has been maxed out.
3. The flat roof that is stage right has begun to leak and is at the end of its useful life.
4. The Cupola requires significant work.
5. The slate peaked roof is also in need of repair.

When Borough Hall was designed there was no such thing as ADA requirements. Computers were in their infancy. When Borough Hall opened in 1939 there were two (2) jail cells in the basement. In 2018 the Borough has one holding cell that is covered in plexiglass so those being held can't spit on Officers. One could make the argument that Emerson had more crime in 1939 because two (2) jail cells were constructed and now we have one. It should also be noted that the space for the Police Department does not meet current requirements.

In 1939 the Council Chamber was across the hall in the area now occupied by the Detective Bureau and Municipal Court office. Many of you know that space as the former Construction office. The Construction Office was moved at the end of December 2017 to the first floor in the old police garage area.

We learned yesterday, Monday, March 5 that the Emerson Board of Education also held classes in Borough Hall in the late 1950's while an addition was being built at the Villano School.

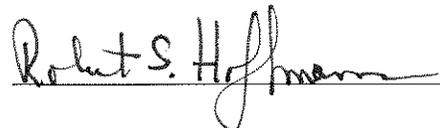
In the next year it is anticipated that the Ambulance Corps will have to be relocated. The developer for the central business district, as part of their contract with the Borough of Emerson, has agreed to contribute funds towards the completion of an Ambulance Corps or Public Safety facility. They have also agreed to construct that building or act as the General Contractor.

By 2020 the Borough will be able to reduce its debt because the Emerson Woods will be paid off. It is the Borough's goal to keep the current level of debt payments so that the improvements to Borough Hall, may be funded without increasing municipal taxes.

There are several misconceptions which should be cleared up with this presentation. Number one, it has been stated that Borough Hall is a historic structure. That is not accurate. Borough Hall has never been a historic structure. It may be loved by some and lamented by others but it is not historic. In 2001 the then Governing Body authorized the preparation of an application to the State of New Jersey Historic Preservation Office to determine if this building is historic. On September 5, 2001 the Borough received a letter from Robert W. Craig, the Principal Historic Preservation Specialist for the State of New Jersey Office of Historic Preservation which stated: "The Emerson Borough Hall was built during the 1930s with a Colonial Revival design, an important style, but the quality of the design is not architecturally significant." As stated earlier, Borough Hall is a building that maybe be loved by members of our community but it is not historic. It is utilitarian.

The evaluation that the architects have completed and discussed tonight will provide the Governing Body, the professional staff and the residents of Emerson with the opportunity to ponder what type of public building should serve the needs of Emersonian's for the next 80 to 100 years. Whether it's an addition to the current Borough Hall or a new building, we will have the opportunity to create a place that is a focal point for our community. A facility that is attractive. A facility that is sustainable. A building which in the future may be the focal point of our 21<sup>st</sup> Century Family Town.

It should also be pointed out that the current Borough Hall was not designed with energy efficiency in mind. It has had two additions and when first built had no central air conditioning. The room that we are in tonight was originally a recreation space that included a stage for use by summer theaters and other recreational activities. Tonight's meeting is the next step in the effort to keep the residents of Emerson informed and engaged. No decisions will be made tonight. The purpose is to evaluate options and gain input from all interested parties. Thank you for your attention as well as your thoughts regarding the type of structure that should serve Emerson's needs for the next 80 years. Tonight, you are participating in discussions that will have an impact on Emerson residents into the 22<sup>nd</sup> Century. We are paying forward what our parents and grandparents have instilled in us by their thoughts and deeds.

  
Robert S. Hoffman