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Lakewood City Council
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Noticed 06/11/25

PUBLIC NOTICE – COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Committee of the Whole will meet Monday June 16, 2025 at 5:30 p.m. in the Auditorium of Lakewood City Hall at 12650 Detroit Avenue. The meeting is open to the public.

The meeting will be livestreamed on the City's website at the following link:

www.lakewoodoh.gov/councilvideos

PUBLIC COMMENT PROTOCOL (Updated 4/2025)

The public is invited to comment on agenda items by submitting a written comment in advance of the meeting using the eComment platform available [HERE](#). New users must create an eComment account. Committee Chairs may also accommodate in person public comment.

The agenda is as follows:

Approval of the minutes of the April 28, 2025 Committee of the Whole.

Communication from Mayor George regarding City Hall Space Study. (*referred to COW 4/21/25*)

Pursuant to Ohio Revised Code [Section 121.22](#) (G), a motion to enter executive session will likely be made to consider the purchase of property for public purposes.

Sarah Kepple, Chair
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Individuals with disabilities who require accommodations for participation in meetings must request accommodations at least 3 business days ahead of the scheduled meeting. Contact Michelle Nochta at (216) 529-5906 michelle.nochta@lakewoodoh.net.



MEGHAN F. GEORGE
MAYOR

12650 DETROIT AVENUE • 44107 • 216-529-6600

April 21, 2025

Dear President Kepple & Members of Council:

A public dialogue began last year regarding the space challenges and modernization demands within our nearly 70-year-old City Hall, particularly those faced by our police department. After conducting additional research and analysis, the Administration is now prepared to continue this conversation with City Council. Included in this discussion will be answers to many of the important questions posed by Councilmembers at our previous meetings.

We will present our multiple scenario findings conducted by our architecture and design professionals, Weber Murphy & Fox (WMF), and walk through the anticipated costs associated with any on-site approaches for modernization and expansion work. We will also explain why such work will not fix the overarching spatial constraints plaguing many departments, especially our police department. We will also discuss the logistical challenges involved, as interruptions to the operations of the police, dispatch, jail, and/or courts is not a workable option during any construction project. Understanding this, the City focused on finding a dual solution, expanding space with minimal impact on the operations of Lakewood's justice system, and doing so in the most efficient and cost-effective manner.

In partnership with WMF, after performing the analysis, it was determined that an expansion of the police footprint within this building could only be accomplished through the displacement of other City departments. After discovering this, we also reviewed current operations and the disjointed layout and customer facing departments that now operate on multiple floors in this City Hall and extend to the City Hall Annex across Detroit Avenue. The Administration believes that we can both solve the problem of space challenges for our police department while realigning other City operations to result in better experience for anyone conducting business with the City of Lakewood.

The Administration conducted a thorough analysis of several potential relocation options for various administrative departments. As a built-out city with few options, the City was creative in seeking possible locations, but the options were few. The process ultimately determined that the south building of the historic Board of Education site on Warren Avenue just south of Detroit Avenue provided a unique opportunity to meet the City's needs. Its location at the heart of Lakewood's downtown and near the intersection of two main public transit lines (26 and 83) make it highly convenient for our community to access. (Coincidentally, it also sits within a block of the City's first City Hall from a century ago). The site is a historically significant structure whose use will align with Lakewood's focus on historic preservation and adaptive reuse. The layout of the building will allow it to serve as a welcoming and highly efficient operational hub for City administrative services that will better serve our citizens and visitors alike.

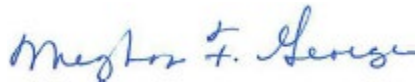
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Concurrent with this consolidation downtown, the Police Department will be able to expand within the current City Hall building without impact on their work and operations. Judge Neff and the Lakewood Municipal Court will also have this opportunity to expand their space to ensure the highest levels of security and efficiency for staff and daily court traffic (see attached). The City will also be able to sell the City Hall Annex Building on Detroit Avenue to unify all tax and finance personnel at one site and use proceeds from the sale to invest in the new Warren Road City Hall location.

This City Hall building has served us well for seven decades. But the City's needs have grown and evolved, and we must address them with solutions that best serve this City and its citizens for the next seven decades and beyond. We look forward to this robust discussion and ask that you assign this communication to the Committee of your choosing.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mayor F. George". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mayor Megan F. George
City of Lakewood



LAKWOOD MUNICIPAL COURT

12650 DETROIT AVENUE • LAKEWOOD, OHIO 44107

PHONE: (216) 529-6700 • FAX: (216) 529-7687

TESS NEFF
JUDGE

April 8, 2025

Dear Mayor George,

Thank you for sharing your administration's vision to move all the city departments to another location within the City of Lakewood. Your goal to free up space in the building primarily for the Lakewood Police Department to expand appears necessary. Particularly in the detective bureau. My observation is their current office space is cramped with no privacy to conduct their important investigations. The court too would welcome having additional space on the first floor exclusively for the court's use. As you are aware, the court, the clerk's office, all court staff, workstations and office space, and the hearing rooms are located on the first floor. It is overcrowded. We do not have full access to all the areas located on the first floor, including in the main lobby. The court is in dire need of more functional space for various important reasons.

First, the importance of security and safety is a priority that is necessary to protect the members of the court and visitors to the building, including all three levels. These issues are directly impacted by the numerous individuals that come to the courthouse daily. During several days of the week the number of people entering the courthouse can exceed 100. The court lobby frequently is congested. This creates potential security risks with so many moving components.

Further, the lobby also has two newly installed public kiosks as resources and for check-in purposes. Often people stand and wait to use a kiosk because there is insufficient seating. Adding to the congestion, immediately upon entering the lobby from the main court entrance, is the Probation Department and Magistrates Offices on the right. To the left is the Clerk of Council office area which includes a conference room. The probation staff have daily appointments with individuals under court supervision. These mandatory appointments add to the number of people passing through the court doors. In addition, a city staff member has a large desk in the lobby that occupies valuable space. If that desk was removed it would allow for additional public seating, which is more manageable for the security bailiffs (all retired LPD officers) to maintain proper safety measures.

Second, the court magistrates, who are appointed judicial officers, share office space that is connected to the probation department on the first floor. This is problematic on several levels. The defendants appearing for meetings with their probation officer have direct access to the magistrates' offices. There is no secure separation or privacy for the probation officers or magistrates. This mixed-use space is highly inappropriate for confidentiality and safety reasons. If the opportunity presents itself and you would consider it, the court would graciously welcome the Clerk of Council area which could

serve as additional office space for the magistrates. This would resolve the issue of probation officers and magistrates having to share the same office space.

Third, additional space on the first floor will alleviate the magistrates from having to share offices with one another. Currently, there is inadequate space for each magistrate to occupy their own office. This situation disrupts their work when conducting research and writing court reports.

Fourth, there is only one courtroom for use and typically I am in session. The magistrates conduct daily hearings, which are required to be recorded. There is one formal hearing room for their use. Access to one formal hearing room causes a backlog in cases. The reason is because magistrates must take turns using the hearing room when multiple hearings are scheduled at the same time. The lack of another hearing room causes inefficiency not only in scheduling the cases but also hearing the cases. Parties are often required to wait in the public area until the room is available.

Fifth, as I mentioned above, magistrates are judicial officers appointed by a judge. Due to the lack of parking spaces inside the secure garage they are required to park in the public lot. This gives cause for concern. Often the magistrates "run into" a party or defendant while walking to or out of the building. Like a judge, magistrates make difficult decisions that can create a potentially unsafe or upsetting situation if a person becomes angry or disagrees. I have the comfort of knowing when I come to the court, I am fortunate to rely on the safety provided by parking in the garage. Ideally, it would be much safer if the magistrates had a parking space inside the garage. If the city moves forward with relocating its offices, this may open garage space for the magistrates to park.

I appreciate you seeking my input about the current space arrangement and some of the problems associated with that space. The possibility of the court having the ability to expand its space within the confines of the first floor would greatly improve the working and safety environment.

Thank you,



Judge Tess Neff