

Virtual Public Meetings Held to Discuss County Courthouse

The Monroe County Commissioners, in conjunction with the Judiciary, are working on plans to renovate, modernize and build an addition to the County Courthouse. These improvements are a high priority for the County and the Courts and are the result of many years of careful study that consistently demonstrated a need for both courthouse expansion and modernization.

Given the importance of this project to all County residents and business owners, the Monroe County Commissioners and Court officials held three virtual public meetings on May 12, May 16, and May 20, 2020. Due to the National Emergency declared in response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, and to ensure the health and safety of all Monroe County citizens, the meetings were held remotely using a virtual meeting service that allowed citizens to participate from their homes or other safe locations. All meeting attendees were also provided the means to offer written questions or comments so each could contribute as if in a live, in-person setting.

The meetings, the fourth, fifth and sixth addressing courthouse improvements and expansion, were held to provide the public, and in particular the residents and business owners within a 1 mile radius surrounding the current courthouse who are the most directly affected, with information about the need to improve and expand the Monroe County Courthouse in Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania. Led by the three Monroe County Commissioners and President Judge Margherita Patti-Worthington of the 43rd Judicial District, the virtual public meetings also provided a forum for discussions about the project from among the public who attended the three meetings. For those unable to attend any of the three meetings, the presentations and discussions were recorded and posted to the Courthouse Expansion website: (www.monroecountypa.gov/Dept/CourthouseProject).

Monroe County Chairman of the Commissioners Sharon S. Laverdure welcomed the attendees and moderated each meeting. As Moderator, Commissioner Laverdure described how the virtual meeting would be conducted and how

attendees could offer questions or comments following the presentations. Commissioner Laverdure also introduced each speaker, fielded questions from the public, and ensured that all persons who had questions or wished to offer comments and input were provided the opportunity to do so. The meetings are a further example of the County's commitment to inform and engage elected officials, stakeholders, and the public about this important undertaking.

In addition to Commissioner Laverdure, other project team members participating included:

- John R. Moyer, Vice Chairman, Monroe County Commissioner
- John D. Christy, Monroe County Commissioner
- Margherita Patti-Worthington, President Judge, Court of Common Pleas of the 43rd Judicial District
- Enrique Maciá, Project Manager, CGL Companies
- Chris Gehm, Project Executive, WH Lane Construction



Historic Monroe County Courthouse

Need for Courthouse Expansion Discussed

Located at Seventh and Monroe Streets in Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania, the historic Monroe County Courthouse was built in 1890 and in 1934 an identically-sized addition was built as a Public Works Administration project. In 1979, both portions of the Monroe County Courthouse were added to the National Register of Historic Places. Also in 1979, an addition immediately adjacent to the historic courthouse was built at a time when there were two judges and the caseload was considerably less than today. The historic courthouse and addition comprise approximately 37,953 and 49,348 square feet, respectively. For the past 40 years, the courthouse has served the community well, however, the volume of cases appearing before the Court has also grown significantly with seven judges now assigned to the courthouse to handle the caseload. As a result, the Courts, and the agencies and departments that support it, have been forced to use spaces not designed as work areas.

Departments and Agencies

- Judiciary (courtrooms and hearing rooms)
- Self-help
- Custody Conciliation
- Sheriff
- District Attorney
- Prothonotary
- Domestic Relations
- Public Defender
- Court Administration
- Probation

Commissioner John R. Moyer addressed the audience informing all that the need for an expanded courthouse was first identified in 2008 and in the 12 years that followed, three separate studies by three different organizations all reached the same conclusions and recommendation: the courthouse is not meeting the needs of Monroe County and needs to be modernized and expanded. Also, delaying the improvements and expansion will only worsen an already urgent situation. With that, the Monroe County Commissioners and the Courts have joined together to plan and design renovations to the historic courthouse and the 1979 addition and to construct a new addition. Assisting with the planning and design of the improvements is a team of specialized consultants led by CGL Companies.

Among the reasons for moving forward is to provide the additional courtrooms and office space to function effectively and efficiently. However, improving the safety and security of

the public, staff and judges is crucial with the current design not providing for the separation between the public, juries, offenders, and judges that is so important to safety and security. Commissioner Moyer added that the new courthouse will incorporate improved signage, locate high-traffic departments on the ground floor, and with the recent and planned staff relocations (including to 701 Main Street), development of the new courthouse will not increase the overall number of staff working in the building.

Project Goals

- Provide a safe, secure and welcoming environment for visitors, staff and others
- Maintain the presence of the justice system in downtown Stroudsburg
- Preserve the historic courthouse and the National Register-listed interior spaces
- Enhance the civic experience in Stroudsburg
- Meet the growing needs of the court including future growth
- Enhance and improve the public's access to the justice system

Commissioner John Christy spoke next, recounting the time and effort county officials devoted to identifying and selecting the team best qualified to assist with courthouse planning, design, and construction management. CGL Companies was selected from among three highly capable and experienced architectural firms, each with substantial courthouse design experience. Based on its highly successful experience delivering public school renovations (while occupied) and new construction in Monroe County, W.H. Lane was selected to oversee courthouse construction.

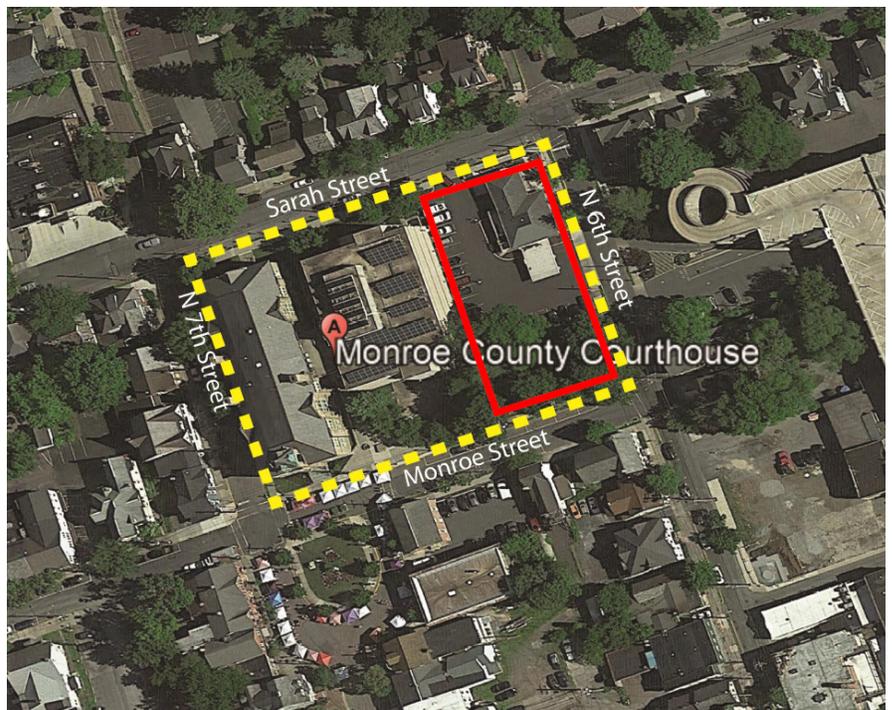
President Judge Margherita Patti-Worthington, representing the Judiciary, spoke next. She welcomed the attendees, reminding all that similar meetings are planned in the months ahead to continue sharing information and providing forums for the public to ask questions, offer comments and receive answers. She then described how the volume of civil, family and criminal cases in Monroe County has grown since the last courthouse expansion in 1979, requiring additional judges, courtrooms, support staff, and offices. Monroe County's court system currently has the highest volume of cases among all Fourth Class county courts in Pennsylvania and recently had its seventh judge seated to help address the caseload. In addition, the courts in Monroe County face more serious criminal cases with the highest number of jury trials among Fourth Class county



Historic court room to be preserved

courts in the state. President Judge Worthington also reiterated the public safety and security concerns described by Commissioner Moyer, reinforcing the high priority given to the planned renovation and expansion project.

Enrique Maciá, Senior Vice President with CGL, is leading the consultant team in developing plans for the courthouse improvements and expansion. Working with the County Commissioners and Court officials, the CGL team is responsible for space programming; architectural design; site, civil, structural, and mechanical engineering; historic preservation planning; fire protection and security systems; cost estimating; and public information among other topics. Using a presentation (available at Courthouse Expansion website www.monroecountypa.gov/Dept/CourthouseProject),



Location of Planned Courthouse Expansion

Mr. Macia reviewed the overall project goals and shared information concerning many aspects of the planned development including the approximate size of the addition (63,661 square feet), its location (adjoining the courthouse Annex), and current plan for the new courthouse (with attention to the building's exterior appearance, new landscaping and sidewalks, and a redesigned public plaza) among other features.

Using computer simulations, Mr. Maciá was able to describe how the courthouse addition would be situated on the site, its height relative to the historic courthouse and other buildings in the area, window treatments, façade materials and color palette, among many other details.

Chris Gehm, Project Executive with WH Lane Construction, addressed the construction phase and the importance being placed on minimizing disruptions and inconveniences to the immediate surrounding neighborhood and the borough as a whole. Most concerns involved the disruption to traffic flow on the surrounding streets, particularly 6th Street and Sarah Street. Mr. Gehm is working with county officials to make available a vacant lot to replace parking spaces lost during construction. Mr. Gehm also shared information concerning the measures to be implemented to ensure public safety during construction, securing on-site and off-site areas where construction equipment and materials would be stored, and following borough regulations regarding work days/hours and noise control.



View of courthouse addition from Monroe Street



View of courthouse addition from 6th Street



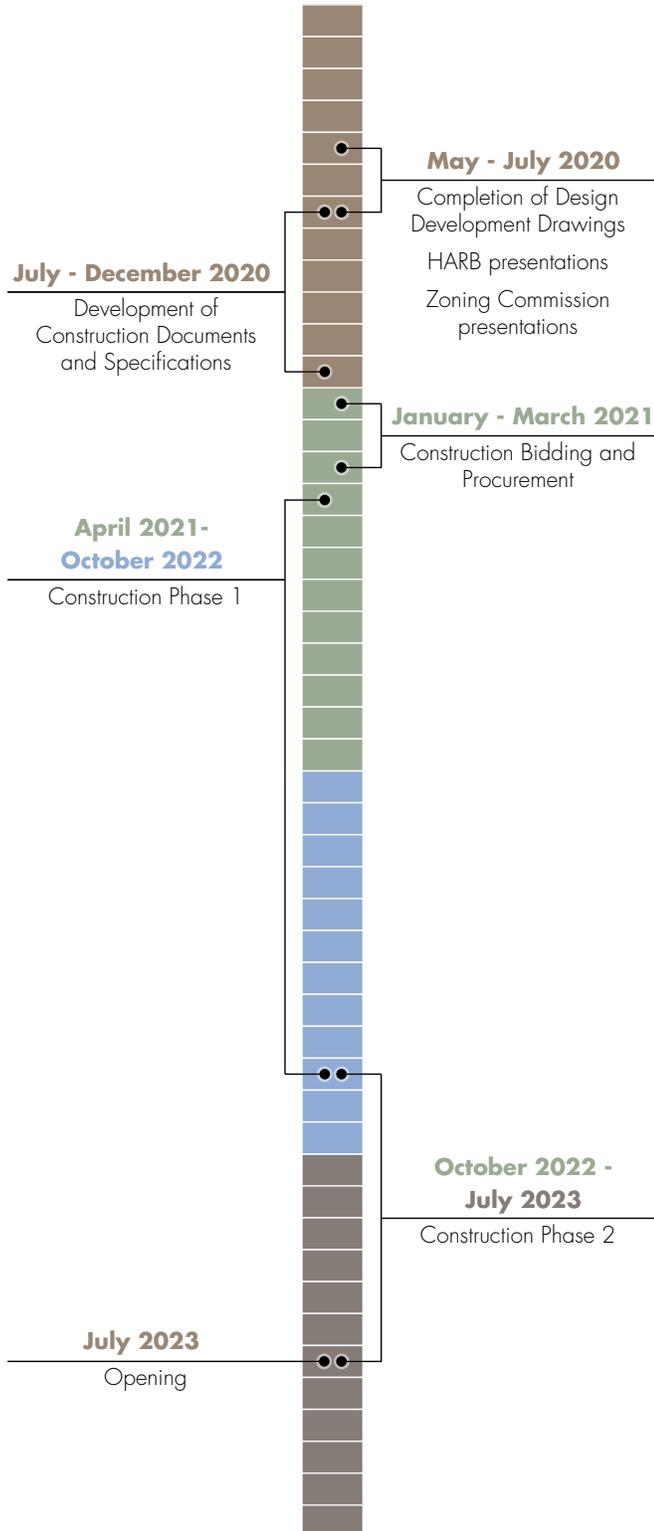
View of courthouse addition from Monroe Street



View of courthouse addition from 6th Street & Monroe

Anticipated Project Schedule

The current schedule for completing courthouse design, applying for local permits and approvals, seeking construction bids and initiating construction is shown below. The schedule will be regularly updated as the work progresses and milestones are reached.



Questions and Answers

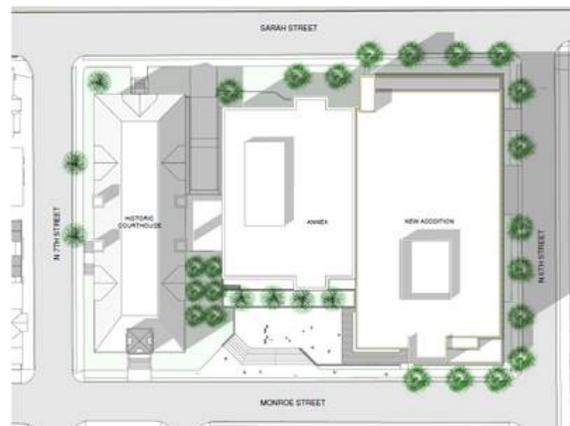
With the conclusion of the presentations, the meetings were opened for questions and comments from the audience in attendance. It was also an opportunity for County Commissioners, Court officials and consultant team members to hear ideas and suggestions concerning the planned courthouse and to ensure that topics of local importance are not overlooked during the planning, design, and construction phases.

Among the concerns voiced by community members was the limited capacity of 6th Street and its use as the primary access route to and from the new courthouse addition. This is especially a concern during the construction phase when underground utility installations could disrupt normal street operation and parking spaces are lost to construction equipment and material staging. Another concern expressed was the need to acquire private property for the project, thereby removing land from Stroudsburg’s tax rolls and reducing property tax payments to the city. These and other questions were addressed during the meetings and with each meeting recorded, are available to the public at the Courthouse Expansion website: (www.monroecountypa.gov/Dept/CourthouseProject).

Speaking for the entire team, Commissioner Laverdure expressed appreciation for those who took the time to participate at the virtual public meetings. *“The constructive comments and questions we received will help as we move forward with planning and design of an improved and expanded courthouse.”* She also reiterated plans to continue with public engagement activities during the months ahead.

Join the Courthouse Email List

For those interested in being added to the Courthouse email list to directly receive announcements, newsletters and other project-related materials, please send your name, address and email address to Robert Nardi at: robert.nardi@wsp.com.



Site plan showing historic courthouse, annex and planned addition



View from Monroe Street of Historic Courthouse, Annex and new courthouse.

Upcoming Activities

The Monroe County Courthouse project is moving forward with these activities expected in the months ahead:

<p>June 2020</p>	<p>Continue preparation of design development drawings of courthouse expansion.</p> <p>Continue engaging stakeholders and public in the courthouse planning process.</p> <p>Look to Monroe County Courthouse website for information, announcements, and upcoming activities.</p> <p>Publish Newsletter Vol. 4.</p>
<p>Future</p>	<p>Complete design development drawings of courthouse expansion.</p> <p>Undertake presentation(s) to permitting and approval authorities (Planning Commission, Zoning Hearing Board, etc.)</p> <p>Continue engaging stakeholders and public in the courthouse planning process.</p> <p>Look to Monroe County Courthouse website for information, announcements, and upcoming activities.</p>

Interested in Learning More?

For additional information visit www.monroecountypa.gov/Dept/CourthouseProject or contact:

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