



Village Hall Frequently Asked Questions (a work-in-process)

Why not make Village Hall Virtual; Bricks and Mortar are so yesterday?

Government is meant to be done out in the open and in front of people. Electronic or Virtual meetings have never been permitted. If a member could not attend a meeting, they could observe by phone or video but they could not vote. Virtual meetings were permitted by NY State in order to permit government to operate during the COVID-19 pandemic.

On September 12, 2022, Governor Hochul ended the Executive Order that permitted electronic or virtual meetings. Therefore, all meetings subject to the Open Meetings Law must be in person.

Why not digitize all our records and eliminate the need for storage?

The fact is that NY State defines the record retention policies of a municipality. That definition is contained in a 400+ page manual of archival needs. Some records, like important parts of your property file, are considered permanent files and cannot be destroyed. Some records, like payroll, are required by law to be kept for 53 years. So, the storage needs of a municipality are significant and subject to law.

Digitizing our files is a complex, multi-year project. Your building files contain all permits, surveys, blueprints etc. have to be scanned by hand in order to be digitized. Implementation involves intricate plans of the organization, automation, streamlining, and transformation in order for your records to be reliably retrieved. Further, many municipalities with digital records provide residents with an electronic Kiosk to review their records; this takes space.

What we can, and are doing, is (a) beginning the process of digitizing our building files and (b) preparing to incorporate more *original* digital records into our program *prospectively*. This can reduce the growth of paper records significantly, however must be done in a *specifically secure manner*; for example, PDF does not qualify as an official government digital record. There are initial costs associated with digital records as well as ongoing costs for data management and space for resident access. Digital is not free.

Can paper files be stored offsite?

There is a frequent need to access the files by the building dept or the staff. Realtors and residents who are doing renovations, building or selling their homes also find it necessary to have access to your property files in the village office. Having these files offsite is inefficient to accommodate the needs of residents.

Is locating a Village Hall within the Village permitted?

Yes. This was obviously contemplated by the Village leaders of the past as Village code, in Section 140-3 Permitted Uses states:

§ 140-3 Permitted uses.

No building or structure shall be erected, used or maintained nor shall any building, structure or premises be altered or remodeled nor any lot used for other than 1 or more of the following uses:

D. A Village Hall or other buildings necessary in connection with the administration of the affairs of the Village.

How often are meetings held? How many people attend each of these meetings?

On average, 40 meetings per year are held in Village Hall. These 40 meetings span across several boards: Board of Trustees, Zoning and Appeals, Architectural Review, and Justice Court. Although the Justice Court meets bi-monthly, and the Zoning and Appeals and Architectural Review Board on a need basis, the Board of Trustees will have several meetings outside of their monthly sessions, which would include special sessions.

Outside of regular meetings among the Village boards, often times Village officials meet with specialists or Village staff to conduct normal Village business. This would include the following:

- Staff meetings with the Board Chairpersons to review short form items submitted to the Village for the Chairpersons approval.
- Building Inspector meetings (Up to 3 times a Friday) with residents and architects to address building concerns or questions.
- Meetings between the Mayor and Board members with community and neighboring Village's officials, as well as vendors.

Typically, our meetings can have about 15-20 people in attendance.

To put some perspective on the activity in Village Hall, millions of dollars of resident construction is planned, reviewed, and approved in Village Hall generating thousands of dollars in fees for the Village. Further, hundreds of thousands of dollars of Village sponsored capital work for the Village is planned, arranged, negotiated and executed through Village Hall.

Would we break our lease?

No. Beginning on August 1st of 2022 we extended our current lease for the next three years. A search and move of this nature takes time and the current lease, gives us the comfort of time.

Would there be space to hold community events/meetings?

Yes. The Village Hall would include an open space where we could host community events and a place where gatherings can be held.