

October 02, 2014 2:37PM

## **Township Supervisor's View: Purchase of Exchange St. building created a mess we're trying to clean up**



The purchase of the building located at 201 E. Exchange Street by the previous Freeport Township administration is nothing less than a travesty and a conundrum beyond logical or ethical consideration. The voters and taxpayers of Freeport were circumvented in the initial purchasing process, but utilized their fundamental rights of democracy and cast their votes to remove the previous administration.

During my campaign, I ensured the voters of Freeport that, if elected, I would reform the township from the inside out; this message was consistent with every individual on my ticket. Because we pledged to clean up this mess with honesty, transparency and integrity, it has cost our current administration valuable time and money.

Our current board voted to leave the 201 E. Exchange building on July 7, and voted during a special meeting held on Sept. 22 to relocate at 524 W. Stephenson. This decision was not derived out of antagonism towards our veterans nor driven by any sort of political retribution. This decision was accelerated by past and present revelations regarding the building's purchase, its history of structural problems, and the inability of the previous administration, with the exception of Trustee Nickee Bender, to act fiscally appropriate on behalf of the voters and taxpayers.

We, however, have not and will not continue this policy of deception and unwise decision making as it relates to the spending of taxpayers' dollars without care or purpose. We are on course now to move forward as soon as possible to resolve this matter.

The issues that influenced our decision to investigate the building purchase by the previous administration are as follows:

- The purchase price was \$376,723. The appraisal determined that the Fee Simple Market Value was \$252,000 — a loss of \$124,723 to the taxpayers right from the start.
- Issues with the building were revealed during the July 13, 2012, inspection. These issues included water damage (from condensation), mold, and evidence of animal infestation (under the concrete slab).

– The building inspection was completed on July 13, 2012. The building was purchased Nov. 30, 2012, therefore both organizations knew about the problems with the building months before the purchase was finalized.

– The foundation for the 2007 building addition was poured 1 inch higher than the original side, which caused a crack in the foundation. This crack is now a heaving/buckling issue. Go to [http://freeporttownship.org/?page\\_id=351](http://freeporttownship.org/?page_id=351) to view the 2007 inspections.

– We can find no evidence or documentations that show the mold remediation work was completed for the entire building and re-inspected.

– In addition, a build-out was done that cost taxpayers more than \$40,000 for the interior of the building. (Tables, chairs, filing cabinets, etc.)

The following is an in-depth look into what we have learned about the 201 E. Exchange Street building:

– The safety of our staff, clients and veterans could be at risk if the mold problem resurfaces because of the heaving/buckling floor, which was not rectified and has only gotten worse.

(One of the EPA's instructions for mold remediation is to first find and eradicate the source of moisture. The heaving/buckling in the floor is a moisture source that was not fixed.)

– The heaving/buckling floor inside the structure would cost approximately \$60,000 to 85,000 to repair; this would put us out of the building while the work is being completed. The interior walls would have to be torn down as the walls were placed on top of the cracked areas. The estimated cost would only cover the repairing of the floor, not the rebuilding of the walls.

– Rotted wood sill under the building's support beam presented costs too exorbitant for the Township to bear.

– Animal infestation under the building remains likely due to a hole in the building's foundation. This point of entry was noted in the 2012 inspection (the hole is also a point of entry for water).

*Patrick Sellers is Freeport Township Supervisor. Coming Saturday: The intergovernmental agreement made between the township and VACSC.*