

# Montgomery County Court Facility Consolidation



MONTGOMERY  
C O U N T Y NY

# How It Started

## Municipal Consolidation & Efficiency Competition

- In February Montgomery County was announced as 1 of 6 finalists for \$20 million state prize
- Through teamwork and collaboration with municipalities and various stakeholders, County submitted an extensive application on June 28



# Our Findings

## *Security is a paramount issue*

- Many courtrooms in the county do not have holding cells and law enforcement security is not always available.

COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE IN SEARCH OF 18-YEAR-OLD ESCAPEE

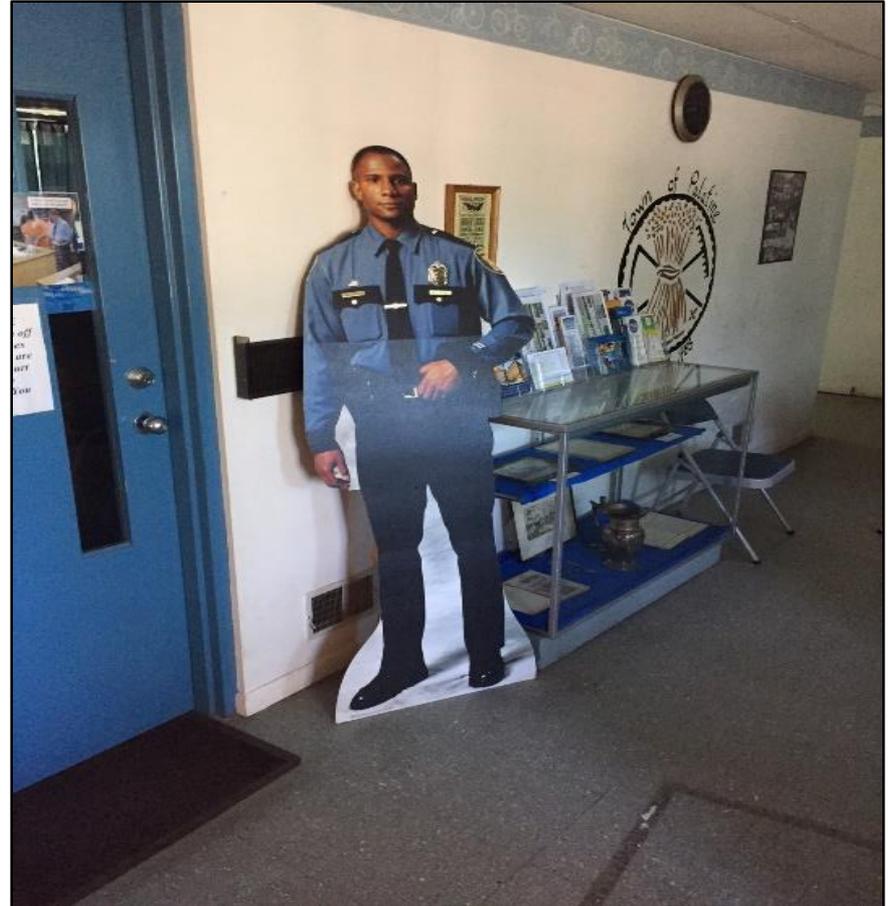
Posted by Recorder News | Jul 27, 2017 | Local News | 0 ● | ★★★★★

**The Leader-Herald**

**Police looking for escaped prisoner**

LOCAL NEWS

JUL 27, 2017



“Security” in the Town of Palatine.

# Our Findings

- Most facilities that are used for courtrooms are far too small.
- All courtrooms serve a dual purpose as council/trustee meeting chambers.
- The fire capacity of many courtrooms are exceeded on regularly.
- People appearing in court must wait in line outside or wedge themselves into an overcrowded courtroom.
- Chambers for judges are generally unavailable.
- There is little or no privacy for attorneys to meet with clients.



# The Need

## Current State of Municipal Courts in Montgomery County (10 Total)

Category	Survey Findings
Dimensions	Minimum 432 sq ft and Maximum 2400 sq ft
Capacity	Minimum 15 people and Maximum 120 people
Prisoner Accommodations	Only 1 facility has a holding room for prisoners
Video Cameras	6 municipalities have video cameras
Metal Detectors	4 municipalities have metal detectors
Security Personnel	Only 1 municipality has dedicated security personnel
Parking	Only 1 municipality has reserved parking for judges

# The Need

- It is too expensive for communities to solve the issues of security, prisoner detainment and courtroom size or comply with OCA standards.
- A single centralized court facility could solve all of these problems.
- Prisoner holding cells will be constructed and the arraignment process will be brought into alignment with state policy.



# Cost Savings

*The Consolidated Court Facility will create significant long-term property tax savings for residents of Montgomery County.*

- Cost efficiencies are attributable to three primary categories: [1] avoided building costs; [2] reduced utility costs; and, [3] attenuating personnel costs.
- Our cost estimate calculated how much it would cost for seven municipalities to build new court facilities.



# Cost Savings

Municipality	OCA-compliant square footage	Low End Savings	High End Savings
Town of Mohawk	7,090	\$2,127,000	\$2,481,500
Village of Canajoharie	7,090	\$2,127,000	\$2,481,500
Town of Glen	7,090	\$2,127,000	\$2,481,500
Town of Charleston	7,090	\$2,127,000	\$2,481,500
Town of Minden	7,090	\$2,127,000	\$2,481,500
Town of Canajoharie	7,090	\$2,127,000	\$2,481,500
Town of Palatine	7,090	\$2,127,000	\$2,481,500

TOTAL AVOIDED COSTS	\$14,889,000	\$17,370,500
MEDIAN AVOIDED COSTS	\$16,129,750	
ESTIMATED BEECH NUT COSTS	\$2,727,000	\$3,181,500
MEDIAN ESTIMATED BEECH NUT COST	\$2,954,250	

ESTIMATED COST SAVINGS	\$13,175,500
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# Court Facility Consolidation

*Montgomery County plans to construct a shared municipal court facility as part of its plan for the new municipal building at the former Beech -Nut plant in Canajoharie, NY.*

- The court facility will enable municipalities to share space, supplies, and staff, while at the same time, allow them to administer their individual courts. To date, seven municipalities have committed to the initiative.
- The facility will make everyone's court experience safer and more dignified.
- There will be dedicated spaces for jury deliberation, client/lawyer conference rooms and clerical offices.



# Public Defender Arraignment Requirement

- The State is requiring a public defender to be available at every arraignment.
- The County submitted a grant proposal to the state that would hire four new public defenders to meet new requirements. The proposal is to hire four half time attorneys each at a salary of \$43,000. To eliminate any cost to the county for employee benefits and withholdings \$54,000 would be needed for each attorney, which would require \$216,000 annually for all four.
- Currently, this would require coverage for every single court simultaneously.
- Approximately 600 off hours arraignments are conducted in the County each month .
- A consolidated court facility would allow for more efficient planning and reduce staff costs.

# Getting There—Next Steps for Programming and Building Rehabilitation/Design

- Building Condition Analysis of former Beech-Nut office building on Church Street to determine overall suitability and investment requirements.
- Assessing future court needs for municipalities in western Montgomery County.
- Working with Office of Court Administration local elected officials and local magistrates to determine:
  - Size and number of courts
  - Rotating courts schedule
  - Judges chambers
  - Centralized security
  - Holding cells
  - Attorney /client conference areas
  - Parking and cost estimates



# Procedural Considerations

- Most of New York's towns and villages operate a court. Together, the State's nearly 2,200 town and village justices handle almost two million cases per year.
- An increasing number of municipalities are reviewing their court operations and finding that voluntary cooperation and collaboration among them may help make the most of limited resources and improve efficiency.
- Municipalities in western Montgomery County intend to keep their own elected judges, but share a single court facility.
- No home rule legislation is necessary to merge multiple courts, but keep multiple justices.



# Procedural Considerations (Ctd.)

- Participating municipalities recognize that shared-facility agreement will not change the identity of the courts.
- Each court will still maintain a separate identity and staff as if they were continuing to meet in separate facilities.
- Puts the County at the forefront if there is a shift to district courts.