For Immediate Release

Town Facility Study Group Releases Interim Findings:
Police & Court Facilities are Inadequate; Town Hall needs Significant Alterations to Meet Safety, Security, Accessibility and Functionality Standards

The Town Facility Study Group, made up of a diverse group of volunteer members of the Manlius community, released its interim findings after five official meetings and tours of the Manlius Police Department, Town Hall, and Court.

Summary

Since 1999, the Town of Manlius has completed multiple studies regarding its police and town hall facilities. These studies consistently found challenges related to accessibility, safety, and adequate space with these facilities. The Town Board has rejected past renovation proposals, including a $39 million proposal in 2025 to build a combined police-town hall facility.

The Town Facility Study Group, established by the Manlius Town Board, convened in June 2026 to review these efforts and ensure that any changes to Manlius' facilities reflect community priorities and proceed in consultation with the public.

The Study Group is committed to hearing diverse opinions and soliciting input from residents, police officers, elected officials, and town employees. In evaluating current town facilities and considering future options, the Study Group is committed to five priorities: cost effectiveness and fiscal responsibility, legal building requirements, accessibility, safety, and adaptability.

The Study Group believes that the Police Department and Town Hall must provide safe, accessible and functional facilities that are appropriate for serving the public. Based on its tours and review of existing studies, the group identified a number of conditions at each facility that warrant attention.

Town of Manlius Police Department
1 Arkie Albanese Avenue
Manlius, NY

The Manlius Police Department facility occupies space rented from the Village of Manlius. It is outdated and inadequate to meet the needs of our town and the police officers who serve it. After touring the facility, Study Group members described it as "old," "small," "insufficient," "outdated," and "dangerous." A brief history details the evolution of the current police facility:

In 1980, the Village of Manlius purchased the former Manlius Elementary School to house the police, library, and village offices. The village converted six former classrooms for the small village police department. In 1985, the Fayetteville, Manlius, and Minoa Village Police Departments were

consolidated into the Town of Manlius Police Department, which was “temporarily” placed in the former Manlius Elementary School.

Forty-one years later, the Manlius Police Department still occupies the same Village of Manlius facility. The Town of Manlius paid $1.48 million to the Village of Manlius from 2010 to 2025 for use of the facility and currently pays an annual rent of $104,120 to the Village.[1]

Some spaces have original chalkboards and asbestos floor and ceiling tiles. The 65-year-old bathrooms still have child-sized toilets. Classrooms and small administrative offices are jerry-rigged into victim interview rooms. Cables and wires crisscross the ceiling and floors. Officers work within arm’s reach of sometimes dangerous suspects held behind bars in the booking room. The main hallway is jammed with file cabinets, storage cabinets, and large secure safes holding some of the department's patrol rifles and other duty-related equipment.

Evidence is stored in one of the former classrooms with chain link fence walls dividing the room. Additional storage is placed in old bathrooms and small closets throughout the department. Paper records must be kept indefinitely. Some paper records are stored in the back parking lot in large storage containers.

Locker rooms for officers are small with limited toilet and shower facilities. The smaller women’s locker room is at capacity, making it difficult if not impossible to hire additional female officers.

<u>Key problems with the current police facility include</u>:

- Overall lack of space, including inadequate space for evidence, storage, interview rooms, officer training and rollcall, and impounded vehicles
- Holding cells are within arm’s reach of staff with no separate holding cells for juveniles as required by law
- Child-sized bathrooms built to child-sized scale
- Maxed out and outdated locker rooms
- HVAC system does not allow control within a normal temperature range. No zones for heating/cooling creating high heat or cold within areas.
- Interview rooms, used with victims, witnesses, and or suspects, are not soundproofed
- Absence of ADA-compliant ramps, doors, or bathrooms
- Absence of sallyport entrances for the secure transfer of prisoners from outside to holding areas
- Insecure record storage
- Asbestos tiles in floor and ceiling tiles
- Lobby seating is limited with no privacy

[1] From 2010 to 2015, the Town spent $69,296 in maintenance costs at the police facility. From December 2009 to May 2025, the Town spent $275,382 in maintenance costs at Town Hall.

Manlius Town Hall
301 Brooklea Drive
Fayetteville, NY

The Town of Manlius has a population of 33,712 residents according to the 2020 U.S. Census. Population has increased approximately 75% since 1960 when the Town had 19,351 residents (1960 U.S. Census). The Town includes the three villages of Fayetteville, Manlius, and Minoa. Approximately 63% of the Town's population lives outside the villages (21,168). However, the Town provides various services to all Town residents regardless of whether or not they live within one of the villages.

The Manlius Town Hall was built in 1962 and expanded and renovated in 1987. Since the 1987 expansion, no general renovations or expansion has taken place. The Town Hall contains the major departments of the Town including the Town Clerk, Assessor, Comptroller, Planning and Development, Receiver of Taxes, Recreation, Trash & Brush Collection, and Town Manager. The Town Supervisor's Office is also located in the Town Hall. The Town Court is located in the lower level of the Town Hall and has several concerns listed separately below.

The Town of Manlius Highway Department is located in a separate facility on Clemmons Road in Minoa. It has recently undergone renovations and is not part of the current facilities study.

After touring the Town Hall and Court, Study Group members described it as "unsafe," "awkward," "inflexible," "repairable," and "outdated."

Key problems with the Manlius Town Hall include:

- Accessibility: The Americans with Disabilities Act (1990) requires accommodations for persons with disabilities. Non-compliance with the ADA potentially exposes the Town to civil and criminal liability. Existing issues include non-ADA-compliant door handles, inaccessible bathrooms, non-automatic doors, high counter heights for transactions with the public, and no elevator or wheelchair accessible path between floors. (Note: While ADA non-compliance concerns are also present and listed under the Police Department and Court, the greatest number of Town residents are likely to engage the Town when paying taxes, applying for a passport, securing a permit, or renewing a dog license in the main body of Town Hall.)
- Safety/Security: The building configuration of the Town Hall does not sufficiently separate staff and employees from publicly accessible spaces. Safety concerns persist as employees cannot lock office doors from the inside. Doors use physical keys (not keycards or codes), and there are no barriers to prevent unrestricted public access to employee and official work and meeting space. This is of special concern when Court is in session and those involved in the criminal legal system may wander into offices. Service windows use flimsy plexiglass and fire grates held up by wooden two-by-fours, and employees have added black tape over

interior windows for safety and privacy. With substantial amounts of money passing through the Receiver of Taxes office in the Fall (school Taxes) and winter (Town/County Taxes), security is a paramount concern.
- Space, Functionality, and Maintenance: Private meeting spaces and flexible workspaces are needed for sensitive discussions with residents. These currently take place in the open, such as when residents apply for tax exemptions or discuss assessments. Town staff and Town Board members need space to meet with residents or conduct work sessions when the main Board room is unavailable.
- Electrical cords/data cables traversing floors and ceilings create safety hazards
- Absence of a fire sprinkler system puts staff, residents, and facility at risk of injury or damage in the event of a fire
- Storage spaces are needed for records for the Clerk's Office, Planning & Development, and Recreation Department. Currently storage overflow is placed in outdoor storage containers. The town rents offsite storage facilities for the Recreation Department costing $1,320/year.
- HVAC system is a mixture of different systems, including broken radiators, that need replacement or repair

Courtroom
Lower Level of Town Hall

New York State guidelines recommend a minimum of 1200 square feet for a Courtroom. Manlius' Courtroom is 900 square feet which is further reduced by space used for storage. With over 100 or more persons present for a typical court session, seating within the Courtroom is inadequate. The overflow spills out into the corridor and often outside the building. Additional concerns specific to the courtroom include:

- No separation from other offices. There is no barrier between the Courtroom and other Town staff, creating safety and security concerns for Town employees
- No holding facilities: The general public attending Court is not separated from persons in custody.
- No jury facilities: Courtroom does not have a jury box for trials or a designated room for jury deliberations.
- Police Department and Court are Separated: Persons in custody must be transported from the Police Department holding cells in the Village of Manlius to the Town Court on Brooklea Drive. Arraignments and general police/court matters would be more efficiently handled if the facilities were located together.

Next Steps

This is not the end of the process. The Study Group seeks to inform the community about its findings and invite the public to learn more about the condition of the Police Department, Town Hall, and Court. In September, Study Group members attended the three village fairs with collages and

educational materials. This Fall, the Group will establish an online survey to solicit more input from the Manlius community, and create videos to allow more members of the community to see our existing facilities. The Study Group will issue additional findings over the next several months.

At this time, the Study Group is not issuing recommendations to solve the problems identified above. We need additional community input and conversations as we consider how to move forward.

Learn more: Resources

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