

PUBLIC HEARING
LITCHFIELD BOARD OF SELECTMEN
Tuesday September 29, 2026 ~ 7:00 P.M.
Litchfield Intermediate School, Litchfield, CT

First Selectman Denise Raap called the in person Public Hearing of the Litchfield Board of Selectmen to order at 7:00 p.m. D. Raap read the call, the Board of Selectmen of the Town of Litchfield will hold a public hearing on September 29, 2026, at Litchfield Intermediate School, 35 Plumb Hill Road, Litchfield, CT to present and discuss potential redevelopment options for the Bantam Annex and to give members of the public an opportunity to share their views and suggestions regarding the options.

D. Raap introduced TLBA Architecture to present the potential redevelopment options for the Bantam Annex. TLBA representatives reviewed work undertaken since 2024 to evaluate the Annex and Town Hall and identify strategies for improving municipal space. The Bantam Annex, designed in the 1950s by architect Marcel Breuer, was noted for its modular design, efficient use of space, and natural daylighting. The building was reported to have significant deficiencies, including deterioration of the exterior masonry, windows, doors, sidewalks and parking areas; a failing roof with active leaks; aging mechanical systems and an oil-fired boiler; underground water and heating-oil tanks; and asbestos associated with the original radiant heating system. Annual operating expenses were reported at approximately \$160,000.

Town Hall was described as structurally sound following prior improvements, with its primary deficiencies being limited meeting and conference space and inadequate records storage. TLBA reviewed the existing distribution of municipal functions between Town Hall and the Annex and noted the need for secure archival storage for Land Use records.

TLBA reported that numerous concepts were evaluated and ultimately narrowed to four primary redevelopment options. **Option 1 – Complete Renovation for Municipal Use** would provide a comprehensive renovation of the Bantam Annex to retain municipal offices and existing public uses within the building. The estimated cost was approximately \$32.8 million, including a 15% construction contingency. Proposed improvements would include upgrades to the building envelope, insulation, windows, roof, mechanical systems and electrical infrastructure, as well as potential full electrification and rooftop solar.

Option 2 – Phased Renovation would address the building through a multi-year capital program, including improvements to the roof and building envelope, municipal office areas, Parks and Recreation and community space, residential areas, and the Post Office. It was noted that phasing would allow expenditures to be spread over several years but would increase the overall project cost due to construction inflation.

Option 3 – Affordable Housing Conversion: Selectman Jeff Zullo presented a proposal to convert a portion of the Bantam Annex into approximately 14 affordable/workforce housing units while retaining Town ownership of the approximately 10.5-acre property. Under the proposal, the Litchfield Housing Authority would lease the residential portion of the building and pursue State funding for the conversion, while the Town would retain responsibility for the property and continue to maintain public uses, including the Post Office and gymnasium. The proposed housing component would include 11 one-bedroom or studio units and three two-bedroom units. J. Zullo noted the potential to address local housing needs while reducing the Town's financial responsibility compared with a full municipal renovation. The Director of The Housing Authority, Jim Simoncelli, reported significant demand for affordable housing, including closed waitlists and estimated four- to five-year wait times, as well as challenges faced by local employers in attracting and retaining employees.

Option 4 – Demolition/Deconstruction would involve demolition of the existing Bantam Annex and restoration of the site. The estimated cost was approximately \$950,000, including hazardous-material abatement, demolition and site restoration. It was noted that demolition would require the Town to identify alternative permanent locations for municipal departments and community programs currently housed in the building and could require additional historic review and approvals.

The Board also discussed the Borough of Bantam Planning and Zoning Commission's regulations concerning the property. In September 2025, the Bantam Planning and Zoning rezoned the approximately 10.5-acre parcel from residential to Municipal Use and established a maximum of four affordable housing units. TLBA reported that limiting the housing component to four units would result in a substantially higher cost per unit and would not provide the economies of scale associated with the proposed 14-unit configuration. The Housing Authority explained that, under the 14-unit proposal, it would seek funding through the Connecticut Department of Housing's Development Engagement Process, although responsibility for certain roof and building-envelope improvements remained to be determined.

Public Questions and Comments

Wendy Westcott, Bantam Borough resident and Bantam Planning and Zoning member, spoke in support of the zoning restriction, noting that Bantam is geographically limited to approximately one square mile and contains an estimated 375 to 400 housing units, including approximately 36 Housing Authority units. She stated that, when naturally occurring affordable housing such as accessory apartments, multifamily conversions, and older housing stock is considered, an estimated 40% to 50% of Bantam households are low- to moderate-income. W. Westcott further explained that the Borough's Plan of Conservation and Development limits residential density to address traffic congestion, infrastructure limitations, and municipal service demands.

Josh Silver, Morris resident and housing advocate, stated that Connecticut has the lowest ratio of available housing units to households in the nation. He noted that Morris and Litchfield have experienced among the lowest five-year housing production rates in Connecticut and argued that workforce housing located near village commercial centers can reduce regional commuting traffic and support local businesses.

David Wilson, a longtime Litchfield resident and former Town Treasurer, cautioned against phased financing, questioning whether borrowing incrementally over five years would be more economical than bonding the project at once.

Gary Gilman, a lifelong Litchfield resident, emphasized the importance of the 10.5-acre Bantam Annex property and its municipal infrastructure. He expressed concern that the Town lacks a finalized, funded plan for future municipal office space and noted that Region 20 school buildings must be formally declared surplus before becoming available to the Town.

Marty Connor, Chairman of the Litchfield Inland Wetlands Commission and former Land Use Administrator, expressed concern regarding inadequate meeting space and emphasized the need for dedicated rooms to accommodate large site plans, public hearings, community members, and recording equipment.

Barbara Putnam, a 40-year Litchfield resident, expressed concern about relocating Land Use staff and records to temporary modular offices behind Town Hall, citing past departmental moves that resulted in disorganized and inaccessible public records.

Michael Lyn Cappello, Litchfield Park & Recreation/Social Services Director, emphasized the Annex's active use, including eight classrooms, three Social Services rooms, the full gymnasium, before- and after-school programs serving more than 50 children daily, and the Town Food Pantry. She disputed the characterization of the Annex as underutilized and emphasized the importance of its recreational and human services to the community.

John Buonaiuto, Bantam resident and Bantam Planning & Zoning member, relayed concerns from Fire Chief Ryan Litwin regarding emergency access to the Annex. He noted that the property has a single vehicular access point on Doyle Road and stated that any high-density reuse would require a secondary emergency access road and an additional municipal fire hydrant.

Kirsten Rand, representing the National Trust for Historic Preservation, opposed demolition of the Annex, emphasizing Marcel Breuer's architectural significance. She cited the Philip Johnson Glass House in New Canaan as an example of adaptive municipal arrangements protecting historic properties and noted that residential adaptive reuse can be consistent with historic preservation guidelines when significant architectural features are retained.

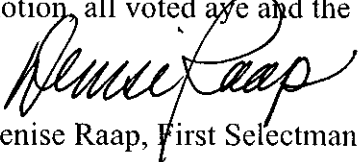
Suzanne Ribando, representing the Litchfield Arts Council, and Patricia Peiffer, resident, noted that Bantam is a State-designated Connecticut Cultural District. They advocated for the Annex to remain a cultural, artistic, and civic asset and expressed concern that increased housing density or temporary modular offices could detract from the area's character, commercial investment, and heritage tourism.

Paul Devan, inquired about Phase I environmental assessments, potential soil contamination from underground storage tanks, and construction contingencies. TLBA confirmed that the \$32.8 million estimate includes a 15% construction contingency and \$250,000 for targeted hazardous materials abatement.

Raz, Public Works Director and Town Engineer, described significant infrastructure concerns at the Annex, including aging mechanical systems, asbestos-contaminated radiant heating pipes embedded in the concrete floors, and two aging air handlers nearing failure. He noted that temporary portable offices could provide a lower-cost interim solution while a long-term plan is developed and cautioned that delaying necessary work could increase costs.

To conclude, J. Zullo stated that the future of the Annex will ultimately be decided by public referendum and emphasized the importance of incorporating community input to develop a proposal with sufficient public support.

Adjournment J. Bongiorno motioned to adjourn the hearing at 9:14 p.m. J. Zullo seconded the motion, all voted aye and the motion passed.


Denise Raap, First Selectman