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City Selling Building To Nonprofit Agency

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NEW BRITAIN -- The common council has approved a deal between Mayor Timothy Stewart and the Human Resource Agency of New Britain to sell a city-owned building to the nonprofit for \$325,000.

For nearly two decades, the agency has leased space from the city in what was once the Benjamin Franklin School, at 180 Clinton St. But as the building has aged, the cost to the city of maintaining it has exceeded the amount of rent paid by HRA. The organization pays about \$58,000 in rent, but maintenance costs nearly \$88,000, Stewart said.

"That puts us in the red \$30,000-plus a year, and it doesn't make sense," Stewart said Wednesday. "To me it is a benefit to the city to shed those costs and the liability of a piece of property that we don't even occupy ourselves. But also, it will create some additional tax revenue for the city."

The mayor and agency Executive Director Rocco Tricarico have been negotiating the sale for nearly a year, they said. To make the agreement happen, the agency secured nearly \$10 million in state grants and local funding to renovate the building.

"The New Britain taxpayers have basically subsidized that property for years," Tricarico said Wednesday. "We think it is time that we stepped up and purchased the building and give some tax relief to the town. We also owe it to the families, to our clients, to really create a state-of-the-art facility."

As part of the sale agreement, the nonprofit would remain tax-exempt while it renovates the building but would then be placed on the tax rolls for at least 25 years.

The agency, founded in 1964, helps families climb from poverty. It serves more than 15,000 people each year.

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