

Senior Center expansion Steering committee
Feb 6.2008

Attending: Peter Ashton, Ann Chang, Jean Fleming, Mike Gowing, Herman Kabakoff, Paulina Knibbe, Gena Manalan, John Murray, Barbara Tollone

Meeting call to order 7:10 a.m. by Paulina

Minutes of the previous meeting was accepted as written.

Opening discussion was whether we should ask for a feasibility appropriation at the April town meeting or wait until a future meeting. Paulina outlined the timing issues of each option, and explained the time lag between the time money is appropriated and the time it is available to use. It was the consensus of the group to ask for a feasibility appropriation in April and that the request would most likely be included in a capital warrant article. The appropriation would then be available for the following three years before reverting to the general coffers. Peter moved the motion to request \$100,000 for feasibility study in a separate capital warrant. The motion passed unanimously.

Herman asked if the warrant would be ready for the next fincom meeting next week. John didn't think it would be ready yet, but thought the committee assignment of warrant articles could go forward.

Site Committee –

Mike reported on the site committee's activities. The committee established a set of criteria used to rank the suitability of available parcels, and focused on town/school owned land for their first pass. Using this method, they were able to winnow the number of potential parcels from 60 to 10. The Towne School has been removed due to parking issues and progress on using that facility for Affordable Housing. The CPC is currently considering creating hiking paths in the land near Conant. Paulina will notify the CPC that the parcel is also being considered for a Senior Center. The Morrison land has been removed due to conflict with extensive plans by the Morrison Re-use Committee. After the town/school owned lands are assessed, the committee will analyze long term lease possibilities, and land purchase possibilities

There is a bit of confusion as to school land that may be available, so it was recommended that the decision be put in writing as to whether the land is available for other purposes or not.

The committee also has a written paragraph or so of the analysis of each property, and why it passed or failed the set of criteria.

Function Committee:

Gena reported on the function committee progress. The committee has developed a preliminary set of guideline question to be used by the facilitator during the focus groups. It was decided that the best information would be garnered by open ended questions. It was thought that if the questions were too specific, they would start to close down the scope of the responses. They ended up with 8 broad questions, and they received additional questions for possible incorporation from Paulina and Mike. Those will be discussed in the next meeting.

The group also discussed the organization of the focus groups. They are going to try to reach three different constituents of the community. Our focus at this point is to contact the Chinese school, the commission on disabilities, and a general public group. For the general public group, the town clerk was able to provide a list of citizens between the ages of 55 – 65. They may be able to use this to identify users of the center in the near future.

Finance Committee:

Peter talked about the work of the finance group to date. The group is waiting for a few more numbers from town hall to flush out the financial data.

Peter then made a report of the changing age demographics in town. Peter had a graph of the annual senior (60 and older) population from 1988 – 2000. There was some missing data for the year 2001-2005. Jean said that she could get that data to Peter. Peter's data show a dramatic increase in percentage of seniors as compared to the general population. This increase is due to the fact people are living longer, and housing for seniors (55+ and older) has increased over the last 8 years. One chart Peter showed was that, regardless of the people making the projections, the large increase in 60+ population accelerates in the year 2010.

Paulina thinks we want to build a network so that senior will want to stay in town, and to do that, the town has to provide social services and a community center.

Mike asked if it were possible to have an overlay bell curve for town meeting presentation.

Regionalization:

Paulina addressed the regionalization question. Of the towns contacted, Concord was not interested, Maynard did not respond, and Boxborough showed some interest. but could not be ready for any kind of April action. The only town in the Boxborough survey that showed any potential interest in regional services for seniors was Stow. Paulina will make further contact with them

Partnerships:

Paulina discussed two potential partnership opportunities. One is with Michael Rosenfeld in West Acton. He is planning a multiuse development and might be interested in incorporating a senior center in the development. He will be present at a March committee meeting. The other possibility is with the Dragonfly Theater, a non-profit organization. If a senior center and theater were adjacent facilities, common assets might be shared successfully, such as parking.

Meeting adjourned 11:55 a.m.

Meeting schedule:

Next meeting is set of Feb 27, 2008

Town Hall, rm. 204, 7:10 am

Submitted
Gena Manalan