

NOV 19 2008

SENIOR CENTER EXPANSION STEERING COMMITTEE MINUTES of 10/15/2008

Meeting in the Faulkner Room 0715 to 0835

Present: Paulina Knibbe (Chair), Gena Manalan, Steve Ledoux, Barbara Tallone, Mike Gowing, Jean Fleming, Herman Kabakoff, Steve Baran and Doré Hunter.

The meeting opened with a by a report from Mike about the progress of the 'remodel' option.

With regard to the option to expand the existing building, Mike discussed his meeting the Ann Sussman of the Design Review Board. The DRB has been offered as a sounding board only since none of its architects which to participate.

The stated goal of the 'remodel' option team is to pull together, by December, the topics to present to the Steering Committee as to alternatives, including costs and configuration. Expansion of the existing building was briefly discussed with reference to whether or not the Audubon Hill land should be used for parking expansion (questionable and expensive). Jean doubted whether it would be practical to eliminate the drive in order to get extra spaces and force front door entry. It was said that we could do 106 spaces but there is doubt whether the building interior could support that many folks. There are 39 spaces currently, serving 5,200 square feet of space, 7,600 square feet is hoped for in an expansion mode. Herman and others indicated that such would only provide a poor cost-benefit, and only accommodate 5 years of expected user growth.

The discussion then turned to the prospects for constructing a new building Senior Center in another location. The Committee was reminded by Barbara and Mike that the three options that have were identified in January are 1) Next door to Town Hall (468 Main Street), 2) NARA Park, and 3) West Acton behind Sawyer Automotive with access off Arlington Street. The 'new center' teams' recommendation is the Arlington Street site.

The third option, development of an existing commercial building (at 100 Discovery Way), has been laid on the table while the Committee has explored to some degree the other options. Now that the Committee wishes to have a public presentation of the various options in concept form in January 2009 (necessary if any action is to be requested of Annual Town Meeting in April) it is felt that it will be necessary to develop something in the way of a gross description of what the goal may be. Steve indicated that he has kept those folks involved in the commercial informed as to what the Town is doing, and noted that the next step toward a commercial option would be to open negotiations in regard to a potential lease. The Discovery Way owner is said to have offered to do conceptual sketches of a potential layout. Herman noted we should take advantage of that offer. Those present seemed in agreement that we should certainly do so.

Jean wondered if, given impending budget cuts and the state of the State and National economy, we should continue forward with the project. Paulina responded that if we

don't do a presentation to the interested Townspeople in January or February 2009 we will lose any opportunity to make a meaningful presentation to Town Meeting in April. So she recommended that we keep going on a development of options path, even if we later have to shelve the project for some period of time. Gena, Mike and Barbara all spoke in favor of continuing to move forward. Gena emphasized that the Committee need to receive guidance from the folks in Town as to how we should proceed and a public presentation is necessary in the near term in that regard. Steve stated we should emphasize that we will not be asking for building funds in April 2009.

Herman agreed, observing that in the current situation the option for acquisition of commercial space is the best at present given the surrounding situation, but it will change for the worse when and as the economy improves again. He therefore feels there is some urgency in getting back in touch with the owner/broker and show renewed interest. Herman would apparently not oppose inclusion of the necessary funding for a commercial option in the Operating Budget, if something else could be dropped so as to include it. There also seemed to be some interest in pursuing a lease with later option to purchase. In response to Paulina's question to the writer, Doré agreed with Herman that the economic situation may make the Discovery Way space potentially advantageous and he agrees we should get back in touch with the owner/broker as soon as practical.

The Committee had a broad ranging discussion about how to proceed and concluded that the best course of action is to continue to develop these three proposals so that they can be presented to the town at one or more public sessions. At that point, the committee can make a recommendation to the Board of Selectmen about which, if any, of these proposals to pursue (now or later).

The discussion then shifted to what needs to be done to prepare for a public presentation in January. It was suggested by Doré that there be two presentation sessions, aimed at drawing different citizens, perhaps one at the Senior Center and one in the Faulkner Room, are necessary. It was stated that inexpensive sketches, proof of concept level should be professionally, but cheaply, produced for each of the alternatives (existing building expansion, new construction, and use of existing commercial space) and that one possible layout should be developed as a proof of concept for each option. The committee decided to proceed with hiring professional help to prepare the materials for the public input sessions.

Jean pointed out that the presentations must include an exposition of what the needs are and why this project has been undertaken, in addition to description of the various options. Mike agreed that the Committee has to present the relevant statistics in that regard. Paulina discussed what needs to be done immediately to be ready for presentations in April. Jean discussed the mechanics of getting an appropriate article in the pending COA Newsletter. Mike raised a question of compliance with the Open Meeting Law by the sub-committees and was reminded that such must comply with the law re notice and have a quorum to make decisions.

The Committee agreed to proceed with hiring an architect to prepare proof of concept level drawings and layouts for the three options. The goal is to have these in hand in December so that the Finance Team can develop cost/benefit analysis for each option. Two public input sessions will be held in late January so that the public can provide input on which, if any, of these proposals should move forward at that time.

Third Draft of these Minutes

Respectfully submitted, Doré Hunter

Approved by the Committee at its 19 November 2008 Meeting

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "D. Doré Hunter". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underlining the name.