

**CHARGE
SENIOR CENTER STUDY COMMITTEE**

The Board of Selectmen does hereby establish a Senior Center Study Committee to evaluate options for the relocation or renovation of the Senior Center. The Committee shall determine future programmatic needs of the Senior Center and the corresponding space needs and evaluate the feasibility of renovating the current center, leasing a facility, or building a new building on Town or privately owned land.

The Committee shall consist of nine members:

- A member of the Board of Selectmen
- Two members of the Council on Aging
- The Council on Aging Director
- The Municipal Properties Director
- Five At-Large Members

The following knowledge, skills and abilities are being sought for the At-Large members: statistical analysis; fund-raising; grant-writing; real estate experience; and public relations. In addition, diversity of membership is being sought, including seniors, soon-to-be seniors, and younger adults with children in the schools. The Committee will provide periodic updates to the Board of Selectmen. The Board of Selectmen shall disband the Committee when the task is completed.

September 11, 2015

Board of Selectmen
472 Main Street
Acton, MA

A Senior Center is a place in the community where older adults can gather for socialization, exercise, nutrition, support and other services. Acton's senior population is the most rapidly growing segment of the town's population currently with over 4,500 seniors and projected to grow to over 6,000 in ten years. With a rapidly growing population of seniors living at home, Senior Centers provide a vital set of resources to support and enable this trend. From Acton's perspective, this *Aging in Place* trend is a positive development and one we should support. Like ethnic diversity, age diversity can provide a tremendous amount of benefit to a community – historical perspectives alone are something we should strive to keep in town. Without an investment in this population in the form of a new Senior Center, we risk losing this important cross-section of our town and the important contributions they make to our community.

As established and charged by the Board of Selectmen, the Senior Center Study Committee (SCSC) held its first meeting on March 11th to:

- Evaluate options for relocation or renovation of a Senior Center
- Determine future programmatic and space needs of a Senior Center
- Identify, if appropriate, land or space for leasing or building a new Center

Over the course of the past seven months, the committee has met frequently as a large group and also in smaller working groups to develop the data and plans to answer our charge. We've made a significant amount of progress and have come to a consensus on some of the key points after a series of committee votes in early August. They are:

- Renovation of the existing Senior Center on Audubon Lane is not feasible and thus relocation is the best course of action
- Of all of the available space in town, the town-owned Arlington Street property (5 acres of buildable land) is the most appropriate for building a new Center – this included consideration of the Quarry Road property as well as the Route 27 Walker property recently acquired by the town.
- At the request of the Town Manager, we have decided to pursue a new building that would include not only a new Senior Center, but also space to accommodate the Nursing Department, the Veteran's Officer and the Community Resource Coordinator.
- Although the charge to the Committee has been to focus on a Senior Center exclusively, given the concerns expressed by some attendees at our meetings, the committee voted to name the center an Adult Community Center that would be dedicated to Senior Center programming from 8:00am – 5:00pm. Some members of the committee also believe that the existing Senior Center could be used for other community or recreational uses, but leaves that decision up to the Selectmen.

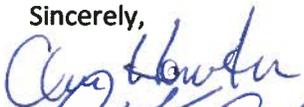
At the most recent SCSC meeting, the Selectmen representative and the Chair reported on a meeting that they attended with proponents of a Community Center approach, including several of those who have been attending our committee meetings on a regular basis and another member of the Board of Selectmen. It was reported that that group is politically well connected and may stand in the way of any effort to create a standalone Senior Center. The committee is aware that at least one Selectman has been meeting with the Community Center group and is supportive of their goal, which causes concern to us regarding the objective of this committee.

Committee members responded by expressing real doubts regarding the future of the Senior Center given that there appeared to be strong opposition to a Senior Center only approach and several members stated that they believed that it was currently impossible to give direction to the architect without knowing exactly what the Selectman wanted the SCSC to do. Several committee members expressed frustration that despite the votes that had been taken, the SCSC always seemed to be coming back to square one and debating the issue of whether the Senior Center should also be a Community Center or not.

Therefore, at the last meeting on August 28th the Committee voted to cease work at this time and not to move forward with giving any direction to the architect given the ill-defined and conflicting views being expressed including from the Selectmen. As a result, the SCSC is now seeking clarification and support from the Board of Selectmen regarding the committee's charge and whether it should focus exclusively on a Senior Center approach (including space for the other human services departments) or whether to include aspects of a Community Center in the charge as well.

We hope to be able to discuss this letter and our concerns at your upcoming meeting on September 28th.

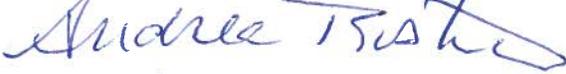
Sincerely,












Senior Center Study Committee

To the Acton Board of Selectmen:

September 19, 2015

We respectfully request that the Board of Selectmen modify the charge, membership, and name of the Senior Center Study Committee to allow for the study of options for a more inclusive community center, in addition to options for a new senior center.

The idea of a "Community Center" — rather than a more narrowly conceived "Senior Center" — has inspired informal discussions in Town for a number of years. During the summer of 2015, Marge Kennedy began advocating for a Community Center as a means to address the isolation and stress issues experienced by all ages, as reported in the Acton-Boxborough United Way Needs Assessment Study. Others, who see additional potential benefits that a Community Center might provide, have joined this discussion. We believe that approval for funding from Town Meeting would be more likely for a more-inclusive facility, given that previous proposals for a stand-alone senior center have been defeated.

When some of us attended Senior Center Study Committee (SCSC) meetings, our intent was not to undermine or derail their deliberations, but to open up a conversation about expanding the vision and plans to reflect a more-inclusive concept. We want to increase opportunities for more, and more-diverse, members of the Acton community to get better acquainted by sharing space and activities.

And we would like the next attempt to bring a proposal before Town Meeting to meet with success.

We agree that it is important that any center for Acton residents include on-site offices for Acton Nursing Services, the Community Services Coordinator, and the Veterans Services Coordinator.

We share similar hopes with members of SCSC in terms of the kinds of programming we would like to see provided in a larger, more-accessible, and user-friendly facility. We differ primarily on the age diversity of those to be served in such a facility.

We believe that any center to be designed and built, and any programming to be offered, should provide opportunities for intergenerational experiences, certainly during evening hours and preferably during daytime hours, as well. Implementing such plans will involve decisions about what spaces and/or time slots are shared and what kept separate, how to allocate responsibilities for maintenance and oversight, and whether or not to charge fees for activities.

As for types of programs and activities to consider, Debra Simes made these specific, though not necessarily comprehensive, suggestions in a letter to the editor in the *Acton Beacon* in 2007 — one example of the long-standing nature of this idea.

- Create a multi-age, multi-function center.
- Locate it in a village center, both for proximity to other resources and for potential access via local transit services.
- Create spaces for various functions: class/activity rooms to accommodate art, small construction, textile, etc. projects; kitchen/dining/café areas; private meeting rooms; larger meeting/performance/function space; lounge/hang-out space(s); exercise/studio space(s); administration office space; tech/computer studio; games room (board games, ping-pong, et al.); space where music is/can be a focus (to include perhaps a sound system with digital docks, acoustic instruments, etc.).
- This can work for everyone: Elders could have some "senior only" spaces and programs, and broader options for contact and activity, while non-seniors could enjoy the blessings of contact with our most-experienced citizens. Disconnection is real for all ages in town: Why not create a center in which those of any age (or any other attribute) have built-in opportunities to meet, learn, laugh, work, and co-create? Why not support the precious heart of community — our connections with one another?

Please note that we're not asking for a swimming pool, nor for child daycare, nor for teen activities other than some programming of interest to and/or involving youth and adults alike. Some examples might be: presentations to high school students and their parents; adult tutoring of students and/or student tutoring of adults, e.g., in technology use; musical jams; cross-generation book groups, etc. Nor are we suggesting that we duplicate programs and activities already sponsored by Town departments, community organizations,

schools, or local businesses. In fact, we believe that a critical step re: programming is a comprehensive evaluation of what is available elsewhere in town. We imagine that a Community Center might provide additional space for some offerings of such groups, as well as be broadly welcoming of people and ideas that build relationships — and therefore, community — across boundaries.

We recognize that the development and implementation of plans for a new building serving the Acton community will require many discussions and the working out of many details. We strongly believe that pursuing a facility that serves a broader spectrum of the Town's population will better serve the Town in the longer term.

For all of the above reasons, we respectfully request that the Board of Selectmen formally endorse the inclusion of this perspective in the ongoing study.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Marge Kennedy, 6 Church Street
Ann Chang, 8 Billings Street
Debra Simes, 109 Concord Road

Articles on these two websites describe the benefits of intergenerational centers:

<http://www.legacyproject.org/guides/intergenbenefits.html>

<http://www.gu.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=71wHEwUd0KA%3D&tabid=157&mid=606>
(Paste link for this website into internet address bar for best results)

Lisa Tomyl

From: Janet K. Adachi [jkajeg@msn.com]
Sent: Monday, September 21, 2015 8:46 AM
To: Board of Selectmen
Subject: Fwd: Senior Center

FYI. Can't tell if other BOS members received the same note individually.

Janet K. Adachi
jkajeg@msn.com

Begin forwarded message:

From: gilyn1961@verizon.net
Subject: Senior Center
Date: September 20, 2015 12:14:47 PM EDT
To: jkajeg@msn.com

Dear Ms. Adachi, I strongly urge that the Board of Selectmen respect and retain the original charge to the Senior Center Study Committee. Respectfully, Lynne Osborn