

**TOWN MEETING SENIOR CENTER REVIEW COMMITTEE
JANUARY 27, 2017
MINUTES**

Chairman John Amaral called the meeting to order at 8:00 AM in the Town Hall.

Members present: John Amaral, Peter Cunningham, Mihran Keoseian, Annika Nilsson-Ripps, Halsey Platt, and Greg Sheldon
Members absent: Gary Green
Advisors present: Town Manager Mark Haddad
Advisors absent: COA Director Kathy Shelp

Chairman Amaral distributed the list of items discussed at the Committee's meetings on January 12, 2017 and January 23, 2017 (see attached).

Wetlands Issues

The Committee identified several tasks and action items including the upcoming meeting with the Conservation Commission on Tuesday, February 14, 2017 at 7:15 PM in the Town Hall. The Conservation Commission meeting is an informal discussion about both sites (the existing Senior Center and the Prescott School) and wetlands issues under the jurisdiction of the Conservation Commission.

Mr. Keoseian requested that Committee members read the "GELD Post Mortem" report prepared by Town Manager Mark Haddad, Land Use Director Michelle Collette, GELD Manager Kevin Kelly, and Conservation Administrator Barbara Ganem in 2013 regarding the two-year permitting process for the new GELD facility on Station Avenue. Mr. Keoseian will distribute the report electronically. *(Note: Collette and Ganem are both now retired.)*

Mr. Cunningham noted that the GELD project resulted in the appointment of a Wetlands By-law Review Committee that recommended amendments to the Wetlands By-Law and Regulations. Town Meeting subsequently adopted the amendments to the Wetlands By-law, and the Conservation Commission adopted the amendments to the regulations.

Chairman Amaral said Stan Dillis of Ducharme and Dillis Civil Design Group will attend the February 14, 2017 Conservation Commission at no cost to the Town. Mr. Dillis has expertise in wetlands permitting and other regulatory issues. The Committee expressed its thanks to Mr. Dillis for his willingness to attend the meeting.

Secondary Access Issues

The Committee discussed options for a secondary access road from Prescott School to Broadmeadow Road as recommended by the Fire Chief and the Police Chief.

Chairman Amaral said he would provide the most recent traffic data for Main Street as requested by the Fire Chief. Mr. Cunningham said he asked Rick Sargent, owners of Moison's

Ace Hardware, about the easement from the Prescott School property to the Moison's property. Mr. Sargent said the easement is for emergency vehicle access only and not for patrons. The Planning Board required the emergency vehicle access during Site Plan Review.

Mr. Sheldon questioned whether the requirement for a secondary access to Broadmeadow Road is for emergency vehicles and evacuations or for use by the general public. He asked if access through Moison's would satisfy the requirement for emergency vehicles. Chairman Amaral will ask for clarification from the Fire Chief and the Police Chief about the secondary access and possible use of Prescott School for an emergency shelter. Chairman Amaral, Mr. Keoseian, and Mr. Sheldon will meet with the Fire Chief and Police Chief prior to meeting with the Conservation Commission on February 14, 2017.

Council on Aging (COA) Chairman Gail Chalmers said the Senior Center must also have enough green space for outdoor activities and the vegetable garden.

Timeline and Report to Spring Town Meeting

Mr. Keoseian said he would distribute a revised timeline to Committee members in order to meet the deadline for the April 24, 2017 Spring Town Meeting. He asked that Committee members send any comments on the timeline to him. Mr. Sheldon will assist with the revisions to the timeline.

The Committee discussed its report to the Spring Town Meeting as required in the Committee charge. Mr. Platt expressed concern that greater planning may be needed and the Committee may not be ready to make a recommendation to Town Meeting. He said the Selectmen must consider the broader planning issues raised in the letter to the editors from Bob Pine. Mr. Cunningham said the Committee has a responsibility to the seniors to make a recommendation at some point rather than spending more taxpayer money and time on strategic planning. He noted that cost is a big issue to the taxpayers and to the seniors.

Strategic Planning

Mr. Keoseian said he is an advocate of long-range planning provided it is done on a data-driven, factual basis. The COA and the COA Feasibility Study Committee have worked to address fact-based problems and to find solutions to the problems. The current Senior Center is used by the community now. He asked why locating the Senior Center in the Town Center should be essential when there are many other factors to consider such as costs, traffic, and programming needs.

Selectman Anna Eliot said the Board of Selectmen would be discussing strategic planning at its meeting on Monday, January 30, 2017. Chairman Amaral asked if the Selectmen will discuss town-wide strategic planning or planning for the senior center. Selectman Eliot said the discussion is about strategic planning in general.

(Ms. Nillson-Ripps arrived.)

Mr. Sheldon said there are several million dollars at stake in this decision. He suggested broadening the discussion from the three sites included in the COA's Request for Proposals (the existing senior center, the Prescott School, and the Country Club). He urged the Committee to look at other possible sites. He said the Committee should focus on the following issues at its next meeting:

- Location of the new senior center
- Project costs
- Fiscal impact on the Town
- Collateral benefits to the Town
- Challenges and mitigating strategies

Ms. Nillson-Ripps suggested adding programmatic needs. Mr. Sheldon agreed.

Mr. Sheldon and Mr. Keoseian will work together on preparing the above discussion items prior to the next meeting. Committee members agreed that they should focus on the three identified sites included in the COA's Request for Proposals at this time.

The Committee discussed the challenges in meeting the deadline for the Spring Town Meeting. The Committee will present the information it has gathered in order to meet its charge to report to Town Meeting. The support of the majority of the Board of Selectmen and the Finance Committee is needed for the project to move forward.

Chairman Amaral said there are many questions to be addressed by COA Director Kathy Shelp when she returns. She will be able to answer the questions about programming and intergenerational uses.

Ms. Nillson-Ripps said she has witnessed polarization in the senior citizen community. The two sides are not being heard by each other. Some seniors would prefer a multigenerational facility while others do not. She cited Bob Pine's letter to the editors as an example. Mr. Keoseian said he disagreed with the term "polarization." He noted that the Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs says intergenerational centers do not work well. Chairman Amaral encouraged people to attend one of the information sessions on February 15, 16, 17 or 18 and to attend the "Coffee and Conversation" forum moderated by June Johnson on Saturday, February 25, 2017 at 9 AM at the Senior Center.

Mary Jennings of the Friends of Prescott said the previous Prescott Reuse Committee prepared a report on the needs of the townspeople from pre-kindergarten through seniors. The recommendations included the schools and public library. She cited the Rodenbush Center in Westford as a good example of an intergenerational center. The senior center could fit into intergenerational center.

Ms. Jennings said the Senior Center may not be large enough for the forum on February 25th. Michelle Collette said it is important for people to RSVP. If necessary, the program can be moved to the Country Club.

Becky Pine of the Friends of Prescott added that the previous reports done by the Prescott Reuse Committee are available on the Town's website. Additionally, the Groton Community Foundation prepared plans to construct a community center at the Groton Country Club in 2004 with private funding. She said the Committee should not ignore those plans and ideas. The Committee should be looking at all options and sites.

Chairman Amaral said the Committee does not have time to look at 20 sites and a variety of options. The Committee is looking at the three sites in the COA's RFP because that is consistent with the charge and scope.

Chairman Amaral said the land on Farmers Row was approved for three house lots with sewer connections. He said the Committee will reach out to the Lawrence Homestead Trust regarding this property. *(Note: Chairman Amaral disclosed that he was the real estate broker for the Lawrence Homestead Trust when the Town acquired the lot on Farmers Row for the new Center Fire Station.)*

Sue Lotz of the Friends of Prescott said the COA has done an excellent job in planning for the new facility and sharing information with the public. However, the forum on February 25th is different and more expertise may be needed to broaden the conversation. She said she would love to use all three floors of the Prescott School building.

Action Items

Chairman Amaral summarized the action items:

- The Committee will meet with the Conservation Commission on February 14, 2017 at 7:15 PM.
- Chairman Amaral will meet with the Police Chief and Fire Chief to discuss public safety concerns including the access road and evacuation center.
- Mr. Keoseian and Mr. Sheldon will work on the revisions to the timeline and the topics to be addressed at the next meeting.
- Mr. Cunningham will explore other funding sources such as State grants as discussed at the recent MMA Annual Conference.
- Ms. Nillson-Ripps will work with the GIS system to identify other potential sites.
- Chairman Amaral and Mr. Cunningham will set up a joint meeting with the Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee to discuss the project.
- Chairman Amaral will ask contractors to look at the cost-to-construct numbers provided by architects Reinhardt Associates.

Michelle Collette noted that the cost-to-complete numbers must be based upon Means Catalog pricing and prevailing age for public construction. Town Manager Mark Haddad confirmed that this is a requirement of MGL Chapter 30B, Uniform Procurement Act.

Mr. Cunningham moved to seek construction cost estimates from general contractors. Mr. Platt seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Dates to Remember:

- February 13, 2017 – Committee will meet at 8 AM
- February 14, 2017 - Committee will meet with the Conservation Commission at 7:15 PM
- February 24, 2017 – Warrant articles for the Spring Town Meeting must be submitted
- February 25, 2017 – Coffee and conversation forum at the Senior Center at 9 AM
- February 27, 2017 – Possible meeting with the Board of Selectmen
- April 24, 2017 – Spring Town Meeting

Article for Spring Town Meeting

Mr. Cunningham moved to submit a placeholder article for the Spring Town Meeting. Mr. Sheldon seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Becky Pine asked where information could be found on the Town's website. Mr. Cunningham will ask the IT Department to set up a page of the website for the Town Meeting Senior Center Review Committee.

Meeting adjourned at 10 AM

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle Collette
COA Feasibility Study Committee Member