

Sterling Senior Center Building Committee

Butterick Municipal Building - COA Room

August 27, 2015 - 6:30 pm

MINUTES

Present: Chair Maureen Cranson, Kevin Beaupre, Robert Bloom, Ronald Cote, Richard Maki.
Absent: Michael Padula. Weymouth Whitney. Selectman John Kilcoyne. Town Administrator Michael Szlosek. SMLD Manager Sean Hamilton. Council on Aging Board members (Sign in sheet). Joseph Curtin. Brian Pierce. Attorney Paul Novak representing Mr. Pierce. See Sign In sheet for others in attendance.

Open Meeting: Chair Cranson opened the meeting at 6:30 pm. Ms. Cranson stated that the purpose of the public meeting was to comply with the request of the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) that the interested parties convene, discuss and agree upon as many of the eight issues raised by Mr. Pierce as possible prior to returning to the ZBA.

Remarks by SMLD Manager Sean Hamilton: Mr. Hamilton spoke about lighting plans for the parking lot of the Senior Center indicating that he would recommend "Dark Sky"-compliant, downward-facing lighting. He recommended Lexington LED outdoor luminaire lights that are dimmable, such as that in operation at the SMLD office. He also recommended that programmable controls for timing the hours of illumination be installed inside the Senior Center so that the parking area could be darkened after the hours of building usage thereby minimizing light pollution. When asked, Mr. Pierce said that the installation of the equipment "sounds reasonable".

Hours of Center Operation: Mr. Pierce has requested that the hours of operation extend from 8 am to 5 pm daily and not be open on any Massachusetts or federal holiday. Mr. Cranson explained that currently the hours are from 7 am to 3 pm daily with some late afternoon and occasional evening hours. Use of the building following the conclusion of Senior Center activities is not in the purview of the Building Committee or the Council on Aging. Mr. Szlosek said that the BOS has control of public buildings and they would decide who may use the building and under what conditions. Prohibition of building use on holidays was generally seen as not an unreasonable request, but the BOS would make the final determination. Selectman Kilcoyne said that the public was told from early in the approval process that it was a "senior center with community usage". He stated that he and other voters would likely not have approved the project without the expressed use by the community beyond the operational hours of the Senior Center. He concluded that community usage would "not be every night", that the BOS will receive requests for use of the facility, and, operating only from "8 to 5 is not going to happen."

An audience member asked for a written agreement maintaining the closing time at 9:00 pm. to which Mr. Kilcoyne said that some functions would go beyond 9:00 pm and suggested that 10:00 pm would be more suitable. Concern was expressed by an audience member that boards and committees change membership and that having written hours of operation for evening events would ally concerns of some neighbors.

Ms. Cranson stated that the use of alcohol is not allowed in municipal buildings and repeated that the BOS sets the policies for use of public buildings. Discussion continued about the closing time. SCBC member Kevin Beaupre felt that 10:00 pm would be an acceptable closing time. Ms. Cranson said that she has operational templates from other Centers to use as a model for Sterling.

SCBC member Robert Bloom said that Sterling is “space-starved” and that any board or committee has a right to use the building with other groups having to receive permission from the BOS.

Following further discussion, chair Cranson asked for volunteers to work with the COA to draft language that would be passed to the BOS for their consideration in the establishment of public usage policies and requirements. Ms. Bloom, representing the COA, exchanged contact information with several volunteers from the neighborhood.

Attorney Paul Novak, representing neighbor Brian Pierce, said that the ZBA is the “exclusive board” to set the hours of operation and distributed documents identifying the hours of operation of sixteen other centers purporting that Sterling had the longest hours extending to 12:00 pm on Fridays. It was pointed out to Mr. Novak that 12:00 pm was noontime, not midnight as initially implied.

Another neighbor was also concerned that the hours of non-Senior Center use could change over time and that he didn’t want to have the facility available for rental. Ms. Cranson responded by reading from the slide prepared for the Town meeting that states, in part, that the facility would be available for community uses.

Mr. Szlosek, referring to the need for extending the hours past nine o’clock, said that the facility needs to be clean for the next morning for Senior Center use and that some time needs to be provided for clean up following building use by others.

A neighbor suggested putting the language found in the public slide presentation addressing use of the building into writing so that neighbors would know what to expect.

Mr. Pierce spoke about the need to have municipal buildings closed on holidays citing sports events that take place on school grounds where participant parking, noise from outdoor loudspeakers and individuals sleeping on the ground are objectionable. He wanted no auctions held at the facility.

Defending occasional late hours of meetings, Mr. Curtin said that his past involvement with Little League required meeting from 7:00 to 11:00 pm and suggested that some board meetings could run into the late evening hours. Ms. Cranson stated that she foresaw no use of the facility for auctions.

Mr. Beaupre spoke about limiting function to 9 or 9:30 pm. Mr. Kilcoyne said he would like to see community usage hours “with certain (occasional) exceptions”.

It was agreed that the language on the presentation slide would be used by a group of volunteers including representatives from the COA to craft verbiage addressing the details and times of public use of the building. Ms. Cranson said that use of the building by the seniors on a Sunday afternoon hasn’t happened, but she could envision a senior Christmas party. A final remark by a neighbor continued to express concern of late night use and the presence of “out-of-towners” using the building.

Driveway access to Boutelle Road was discussed next. Ms. Cranson reported the she had spoken recently with the police department, fire department and the DPW, all of whom were now in agreement that no driveway on Boutelle Road was necessary. The fire department did request

that a hydrant be placed in the approximate area of the originally proposed driveway. Eliminating the driveway also mitigates the concerns of neighbors that vehicle headlight would be directed toward their homes as cars exit the senior center parking area.

Placement of trash receptacles: Everyone seemed aware of continuing issues with early morning noise associated with trash removal from dumpsters at the school. Ms. Cranson said that the SCBC never said dumpsters would be placed in the 12 x 12 foot pad that is bordered by an eight-foot fence. Rollaway plastic containers would be used and would not be visible behind the fence. The building architects have already been asked to provide the Building Committee with information about locating the pad on the south side of the structure prior to this meeting.

There was discussion about provisions for a vegetative screen along Boutelle Road. Ms. Cranson advised the audience that the SCBC has already asked the architect to detail an improved landscape border and expects to see a proposal at their next meeting. Whether the suggested use of arbor vitae, in place of blue spruce, may depend upon the recommendations of the landscape architect and associated cost factors, summarized Ms. Cranson. More information will be available on Tuesday. Neighbors spoke about using Colorado spruce similar to those at the Chocksett School. Plantings along an earth mounding along Boutelle Road and the possible cost of plantings was mentioned. The SCBC would like to see the recommendations from the landscape architect before making a decision.

Placement of the construction trailer was a point of disagreement between the SCBC and Mr. Pierce. Pierce is of the opinion that the trailer can be moved onto an area near the Center's parking lot and that such action is both feasible (considering electrical and cable connectivity) and relatively inexpensive. Ms. Cranson responded that movement at this time was not a possibility and that the only available space was within the paved parking lot. The inconvenience is seen as short term given the target completion date in February. However, Ms. Cranson will talk with the general contractor to seek his suggestions.

Discussion of limiting parking lot lighting to no later than 5 pm: Again, with consideration of community usage of the building beyond Senior Center operations, safety factors would demand adequate lighting until the activity concludes. There was mention of programmable features on lighting to automatically extinguish lights at a certain time and also use of motion sensors to provide timely illumination. Unplanned for additional expenses are associated with such energy management tools. A neighbor reminded those assembled that there was up to a 30% dimming feature with the lighting suggested by Mr. Hamilton. A general discussion also turned to building security and potential vandalism that related to darkened building areas. Future construction of a van garage was also mentioned, but that would depend upon new matching funding that may be available through Montachusett Area Regional Transit.

Mr. Cranson concluded by saying that the SCBC did their best to provide a relatively low-lying building without gables and cupolas in keeping with the school neighborhood. Several general questions about known usage of the building by Town boards, potential as a voting site for a single precinct, use of the current Senior Center space and the number of occupants were addressed.

Adjournment: Following a successful motion by Mr. Beaupre, with a second from Mr. Bloom, the Senior Center Building Committee adjourned at 8:10 pm.

Respectfully submitted by
Richard H. Maki
Richard H. Maki, Clerk