

# Sterling Senior Center Design/Building Committee

Butterick Municipal Building

February 16, 2012

## Minutes

**Present:** Kevin Beaupre, Jack Chandler, Maureen Cranson, Richard Maki, Peter Watson, Weymouth Whitney. Ex. Officio members: Terri Ackerman and Karen Phillips. **Visitors:** Ronald Furmaniuk, Russell Philpot.

**Opening:** The meeting was opened at 6:34 pm by Maureen Cranson. A tentative agenda was distributed followed by copies of reports from the Site Selection Committee and the Friends of the Sterling Seniors, Inc.

**Introductions:** Members introduced one another and, by consensus, the group agreed that future meetings would begin at 6:30 pm in the Sterling Senior Center.

A wide-ranging discussion began regarding the importance of having a seventh committee member to broaden the experience base of group and to avoid future tie votes. Beaupre expressed the concern of two potential members (both from the Site Selection Committee) as well as his own and stated that they felt that the Sterling Selectmen paid “no attention” and “wasn’t listening” to their report and that they were not eager to participate at this time. He acknowledged a difference of opinion relative to some of the five recommendations of his committee and the response by the COA board. Other members offered their views concerning the building size and Cranson mentioned that a “minimum” of 5,000 square feet was detailed in the Site Selection report. Beaupre added, “Where does the 1835 (building) fit in?” Ackerman said that Phillips (COA Director) had put together her figures based on specific program needs and Cranson reminded the committee that Northborough had originally asked for 18,000 square feet and eventually settled on 14,000 sq. ft. Similarly, Westminster had originally proposed 12,000 sq. ft. and was now proposing 8-10,000. Chandler reminded the group that, “We’ve got to be able to sell” the final project to the voters. That included, he continued, an understanding of future on-going operational expenses.

**Nomination of Officers:** The committee discussed the interest and availability of several members and ultimately selected co-chairpersons, Maureen Cranson and Jack Chandler. The motion to elect the co-chairpersons was made by Maki and seconded by Watson. **VOTE: YEA = 5, NAY = 0, ABS = 1.** In a following motion by Chandler and seconded by Watson, Richard Maki was nominated as secretary. **VOTE: YEA = 5, NAY = 0, ABS = 1.** The secretary will be responsible for posting future meetings with the agenda developed by the chairpersons.

**Discussion of Site Reports:** A brief discussion concluded with agreement that there were differences of opinion about the merits of various senior centers and their building footprint. Chandler suggested that members “get out and visit” other senior centers. Referring to the “recommendations” of the Site Selection Committee, members heard remarks that “lots of these things (recommendations) could start soon” or were already in progress. Another member stated that the “recommendations” could be happening in parallel with what the Design/Building Committee was doing.

Phillips mentioned that the COA participation report generated by the *MySeniorCenter* software was approved by the COA board recently and will be forwarded to the Selectmen as requested. Further comments occurred when the “recommendation” of the position of a future Outreach worker was discussed. Ackerman indicated that the position was under discussion and that assigning a grade level to the job description was “moving forward”, although not yet resolved.

The subject of pursuing grants was responded to by Phillips, who described three grants either received or awaiting final status. The largest grant (\$3,333) was awarded to the COA to establish a formal linkage between senior and local law enforcement. The focus is to minimize scams targeting the elderly and will engage other community resources in the preparation of preventive programs and educational materials. Sterling was one of three communities in the state to receive the grant (from MassALFA, an umbrella organization for two hundred assisted living facilities in the Commonwealth). Two other grants have been applied for and the COA is awaiting further notification. They include a small (\$330) grant from MassDOT and MART that will purchase a GPS unit for van drivers intended to be helpful on senior visits to area communities; as well as a survey of current ridership aimed toward improving future transportation services. The third grant application was to acquire a touch-screen computer for use by seniors with limited dexterity on keyboards. Chandler and Beaupre indicated that they understood the limited possibilities of securing successful grants, but were interested in encouraging as much grant writing as possible. Phillips described her appreciation of the efforts of *Oriol Health Care* in providing Sterling seniors with an exercise class at no expense to the Town. Mention was also made of the \$4,000 contribution from the COA toward the cost of a future outreach worker.

Selectman Furmaniuk, speaking as an individual, opined that the increased availability of senior-related numbers was a good “starting point” and that he was not fixated on the end numbers at this time. He encouraged the COA to “figure out needs”, to work on a “parallel path” (progress on the “recommendations” and to move ahead with the design and building process) suggested by BOS chairman Philpot, and that he wanted “to hear” about future progress by the committee. He offered to help the committee by placing issues encountered by the committee on the BOS agenda to further assist the Building Committee.

Chairman Chandler addressed the future need for defined objectives. Phillips responded by listing three areas: (1) Addressing the recent DCR letter concerning groundwater issues in the area of the proposed building site. (2) Beginning work needed to secure an OPM (Owners Project Manager) required by the state. (3) Continue steps toward the design and construction of a building. Beaupre recommended frequent updates to the Selectmen by Ackerman and a quarterly presence before the BOS by the Building Committee. Furmaniuk suggested that the committee refrain from using construction cost estimates because of their uncertainty at this early stage in the building process. Publication of different numbers now only serves to “confuse the public”, he said, and the committee should wait until the “final numbers” can be accurately determined.

Phillips explained that she had “place holders” inserted into the Town warrant addressing expenses for the OPM and architect. Cost estimates for the OPM were between \$35 - \$85,000. Architect fees are typically 15% of construction costs, so assuming a \$2M building, the fee would be approximately \$300,000. Ackerman stated that the warrant deadline was March 19, 2012. Beaupre suggested that the DCR issue be investigated first and that a Special Town Meeting could be held in the fall when actual costs are known. Phillips added that at least one steel frame manufacturer includes architect drawings as part of their service. Ackerman indicated that the OPM needed to be determined first. Chandler agreed that money for a certified OPM was a priority. Ackerman discussed using the RFQ process to allow the committee to conduct interviews of OPM candidates to better select a suitable Manager. She volunteered to get the process started. Phillips reminded the committee that the DCR letter was dated January 9, 2012 and that contact with the DCR should begin as soon as possible. Beaupre suggested contacting Jim French to seek his advice in dealing with the DCR issue.

**Individual Committee Visions for the Building:**

The various recommendations and letters were referenced and discussed. Each group indicated specific future needs that they felt should be addressed in the future building. Cranson said that none of the visions were “written in stone”, but features such as exercise rooms, a full kitchen, room for Town voting, tournament pool and appropriate amounts of storage space were some of the items addressed by various groups. Cranson and Whitney will get the names of architects experienced with senior centers. Chandler felt that it would be helpful if we could get architect(s) to come in and talk with us with an eye to saving money.

**Site Visitations:**

Cranson suggested that we visit some other sites in towns somewhat similar to Sterling. As a first step, morning visits by members will include Barre, Sutton, and Holden. Members will meet in Sterling and drive to two senior centers during a future morning (March 1<sup>st</sup> and March 8<sup>th</sup>). The visits will be posted to ensure agreement with Open Meeting Laws. Whitney encouraged the members to remain focus on our mission to build a new senior center and be able to explain to others why we need a center.....a project justification.

**Next Meeting:** March 1, 2012 at 6:30 pm in the Senior Center.  
Tentative agenda items include:

- Discussion of sites visited
- Update on the DCR issue
- Report on possible architects
- Demonstration of *MySeniorCenter*
- Possible additional topics to be added to final posting

**Adjournment:** The Building Committee adjourned at 8:28 pm following a motion by Watson, seconded by Maki. **VOTE: YEA = 5, NAY = 0, ABS = 1**

Submitted by:

**Richard H. Maki**  
Richard H. Maki  
Secretary

Minutes approved: 22March2012