

History of the proposed new Senior Center for Sterling

The feasibility study was started in 2003.

\$20,000 was appropriated at the annual town meeting May 16, 2005. (The COA asked for \$40,000 but was cut to \$20,000)

The town entered into an agreement with MRPC for the completion of a senior center feasibility study.

In the fall of 2005, a questionnaire was sent to all Sterling residents over 60 years old. We never received the written results of this survey.

MRPC attended Selectmen's meeting March 2006 because 3 sites were needed and none were being offered. At the meeting, Twin Oaks, the railroad bed off 62, and the land behind Clinton Savings Bank were discussed. MRPC, along with Clare Fisher and Karen Phillips drove around looking at these sites. MRPC dismissed Twin Oaks, as they stated the building would have to be torn down and rebuilt, which they felt was cost prohibitive. The railroad bed looked good, but after further investigation it was revealed that someone else owned some of the property. The land behind Clinton Savings Bank was found to be less land than previously thought and too small to build anything.

Then Tim Bragan approached the COA about the Old Church. This appeared to be a win-win situation, as the building is an eye sore and would look better if owned by the town.

Since no other sites were available, MRPC put out a bid for architects to look at the Old Church and to draw a free standing site. There was not a lot of money for the architects.

The architects looked at the Old Church. While this was happening, the Sterling Inn went on the market (January 2007). It was decided to look at the Sterling Inn for a center. At the annual town meeting in May 2007, an extra \$4,000 was appropriated for the architects to look at the Inn. The contract was amended for the Inn rather than a free standing site.

In June 2007, the architects turned in the study to the town. They did a beautiful job and felt that both sites, the Old Church and the Inn, would both be feasible for a new center.

In July 2007, the architects were asked to come to a Selectmen's meeting to talk about the study. They did a good job explaining the pros and cons of the 2 sites. The selectmen did not like the idea of the Old Church, mostly due to parking issues and septic concerns. The Inn was discussed at length. The major issues surrounded the cost of maintaining the building, as well as some people wanting the building to remain as an Inn. At the meeting, Ms. Peeso offered her property on School Street to sell to the town for a senior center. After a preliminary look, there were 3 potential problems: 1) the building would be close to wetlands; 2) there was no way to accommodate enough parking; 3) there were major septic issues.

COA
Senior

In January 2008, Ron Picchieri approached the COA about building a senior center on his property on Worcester Road. He was going to build and rent some space to the senior center. After several discussions, the COA voted in February 2008 not to go further with this site.

The COA board did ask the Selectmen about the land behind the tennis courts.

BNUC approached the board in May of 2008, suggesting renting the Hope Chapel. When called by the COA, the church knew nothing of this suggestion and stated that the building is in use all of the time.

Run down of sites looked at:

1. Twin Oaks – not feasible?
2. Old Church – no longer available
3. Railroad bed – not available
4. Land behind Clinton Savings Bank – not big enough
5. Sterling Inn – still for sale
6. Peeso Property – too many problems/not feasible
7. Worcester Road – no longer available
8. Land behind tennis courts – unknown
9. Hope Chapel – not available

We have spent \$24,000 up to this point.

On October 28, 2008, the COA Board was invited to a joint meeting with the department heads to discuss a possible new senior center.

The first discussion was over whether the building should be a Senior Center or a Community Center. Currently, only about 13 out of 290 communities have built a Community Center versus a Senior Center (according to the EOEA). Upon speaking to at least one Senior Center with this model, the 2 problems were lack of room for expansion and sharing the space with kids. The 1835 Town Hall is currently used as a Community Center. Most liked the example of the Holden Senior Center. It is a Senior Center but other town departments and other entities use it on off times. It is also a polling place. The COA Board who were present agreed that the building should be available to Town Departments on off hours. Someone also mentioned that a Community Center calls for more staffing and more time scheduling and more oversight. The consensus was that a Senior Center made more sense.

The second discussion was on whether the Senior Center should be tied to affordable housing. There are not many of these options in the state either, but the main problem has been that people who live in the affordable housing feel that the space is theirs and are not welcoming to other people in the community.

In January 2009, members of the BOS and the COA did a site walk of Twin Oaks. In March 2009, the BOS requested that an appraisal be done of Twin Oaks. The FinCom approved transferring \$3500.00 from the reserve fund to pay for this appraisal.

On March 25, 2009, a walkthrough of Sterling Inn was completed.

At the Special Town Meeting on May 11, 2009, the town approved transferring \$3500.00 from Article 12 ATM May 12, 2003 to the FY09 Reserve Fund (to repay for the appraisal), and further to transfer \$46,500 from Article 12 ATM May 12, 2003, for expenditures in connection with a potential new Senior Center, or take any action in relation thereto. This money is currently available.

The total money spent up until today has been \$27,500.00.

Population: The town of Sterling will have 1622 seniors (people over 60) in town by the end of the year. According to the town clerk, there are 8060 people in town, which means the seniors currently comprise 20.12% of the population. According to the state, in 2005, Sterling was ranked 43rd in the state for adults aged 40 – 60. The boomers are here and are knocking on our door.

Current space: The Senior Center is currently located in the basement of the Butterick Municipal Building. We have a large room, which by fire code holds 50 people. We have an office, which holds 3 people. The Senior Center also has a kitchen which is used daily for the lunch program. These rooms afford us 1846.25 square feet of space. We do have some storage under the stairs and in cabinets down the hallway, as well as use of the storage room next to the office, where we have a table and chairs.

Needed space: The Executive Office of Elder Affairs recommends 5 – 6 gross square feet per elder. This would call for a building of at least 8100 square feet. The two sites, which were looked at by the architects, had slightly less space (6838 square feet for the old church and 6977 square feet for the Sterling Inn). They had some difficulties fitting our programs into the smaller space. We would conclude a building with less than 6800 square feet would not be advised. We need a room that can hold at least 100 people (preferably 150). *The number of 5 – 6 square feet per elder came about due to extensive surveying of COA directors more than 10 years ago. The numbers have borne out since then. For example, within 3 months of completing their new center about 2 years ago, Hopkinton quintupled their unduplicated count of seniors and began running out of space. If you build it, they will come.*

Current programs/events: The Senior Center is open 5 days a week (excluding holidays). On Mondays we have weekly coffee hour and art classes. In the afternoon, we have various speakers from Clinton Hospital, local businesses, etc. On Tuesdays, we have weekly exercise classes, game day with dominoes and bridge, and an arts and crafts class. On Wednesdays, we use the van to take seniors shopping. On Thursdays we have yoga and line dancing weekly. We also have a Jazz concert on the 2nd Thursday of the month, blood pressures on the 1st Tuesday of the month, an Elder Keep Well Clinic with an RN on the 3rd Thursday of the month, a SHINE counselor monthly to answer insurance questions, USDA food distribution on the 4th Tuesday of the month, and a book club on the 4th Thursday of the month. Throughout the year we have various performances, sponsored by the Cultural Council and the Women's Club as well as special weekend luncheons. We also offer a flu clinic every year and AARP tax assistance. The

Senior Center also delivers Meals on Wheels daily and has a congregate meal site daily. We also have a pool table and a large screen TV with DVD player.

Future programs: With the baby boomers coming, we need space to have new programs to attract the younger seniors. Some thoughts have been an outside bocce court, podiatry clinic, support groups, an outside sitting area, a covered entryway for inclement weather, a room for the boutique, a small exercise room, a shower, and a room that can hold 2 pool tables.

Design Considerations for Senior Centers from the Executive Office of Elder Affairs

Parking spaces if	Van or emergency access. Allow 1 parking spot/100 gsf.: fewer you have excellent public transport. Minimize parking "islands!" Consider: covered ramp, enclosed (lit) entryway. Lighting for parking, walkways....
Entry, Enclosure Maintain /Vestibule Assisted/automatic delivered	Enhance visibility, identification of center. Energy conservation. even lighting transition (from exterior to interior). doors are valued amenities. Consider <i>separate</i> exits for home meals, durable equipment loans.
Waiting / security). Reception slots	Use for groups awaiting departure. Sign-in/registration (and High/low reception area/countertops to include horizontal cubby for public info brochures, flyers and handouts. Coat storage .
Display Area /	Consider enclosed bulletin board, display rack, and/or cork strips in hallway for public notices, volunteer recognition.... Display sensitive materials (e.g., elder abuse brochures) in lavatories. Shop(pe) sales?
Recreation & line Assembly be <i>advance.</i>	Multi-use space: meals, presentations, assembly, exercise/fitness, dancing, etc. Chair mix (with & w/o arms); interlocking chairs may be required for public assembly. Test chairs (with live seniors!) <i>in advance.</i>
Auditorium/ be Main Room based sides of throughs.	Noiseless (prefer ball-bearing hinges on large) doors. Space should be divisible (60/40 or 1/3rds) with an overhead, divisible sound system on your (soundproof) partitions. Locate floor plugs/jacks on both sides of partitions—near center of wall. Provide for natural exits, pass throughs.

dollies, etc.	(Automate) curtains, partitions. Storage closets for chairs,
Stage	Ramp access. Consider storage , toilets, wheel-in shower, dressing room/s.
Dining	Avoid institutional feel (round/folding tables [wheeled legs], colorful decor, "café" canopies, and adequate space for wheelchairs & service). Consider: access to outdoor areas. Consider "picture rails" at 7-8 feet above floor.
Kitchen	Refrigerated, dry and temporary storage . Ventilation for dry food storage: 2" from walls, 6" from floor and ceiling: plastic DIY shelving is OK. Use a "pass through" for serving/food return. Restaurant style appliances, sinks, dishwashers. Sep-a-rate clean // soiled dishes, utensils. Use <i>Food Service Manager or professional chef (not an engineer!) for kitchen design consult.</i>
Classes lockers. Arts & Crafts pottery/kiln.	Multi-use space: adult education, training, rehearsals, music, sink/s, Seasonal and other storage(!) Dedicated space: computers,
Lounge and <i>Occupational</i> Furnishings Consider samples.	Quiet spots; conversation, cards, reading. Use a <i>Physical or Therapist</i> to design/suggest supportive (read: firm) furnishings. washability, #250 capacity. No protruding legs; elders to test
Lavatories	Typically, twice as many women attend senior centers as do men. Locate "handicapped accessible" lavatory/ies near function room, along lengthy corridor, near front entrance &/or elevators. Consider assisted doors, emergency call devices in lavatories. Use contrasting wall color behind commodes!
Fitness/Rec. Allow	Consider cushioned floor in exercise room (& storage for mats). (some) visibility for passers-by. Consider walk-in shower/s.
Supportive Day Care	Allow 50 SF per participant. A walk-in shower and washer/dryer (and hairdressing sink!) may be helpful. Consider keyed doors, digital recording.
Site movement	Encourage walking (e.g., to lavs) that pass activities. Use translucent/ clear panels in solid doors to reduce collisions.

Consider interior blinds for support groups/programs. Use mini track lighting behind (deep) handrails/ chair rails. Consider: wide corridors to allow *two* wheelchairs to pass.

Building Services Corridors "short, wide, eventful." Carpeting should have color changes near (the) walls. Consider (recessed) benches; mini-lighted railings. Fixtures to be operable with a *closed* fist. Provide separate HVAC controls in computer, exercise rooms. Lockers for volunteers. Locate defibrillator near telephone jack (for automatic dialing when case is opened.) → The fire department signal should **not** be near the plate that opens the automatic doors! Suggest two-hour firewalls in section/s of multilevel building and extra soundproofing if "noisy" activities are near "quiet" ones.

Administration space. Staff, board meetings/special functions; individual (private) consult space.
Use of glass/blinds/curtains to allow seeing "through" rooms. Computer/ copier accessibility. Separate lavatory for admin staff... & frig/microwave break room, esp. in an administrative wing. Intercoms. Supply **storage**.

Outdoor Rec. Consider: fitness path, wheelchair garden, stretching stations or quiet areas.

OTHER

Maximize space possibilities through floor-ceiling (movable) partitions. **Design for ultimate use of five to six (gross) square feet (SF)** per elder (**more SF** in towns with fewer than 1000 seniors, a little less **SF** for 6000+ seniors). **Add up to 1 SF** per elder for self-prep kitchen, supportive day programs. If you can't build to these guidelines, "stub" utilities and specify reusable windows in area/s that are logical for future expansion. If you build it, they will come.

Up to 30% of designed space for may be needed for **storage!** (*Don't skimp!*).

Review the number/spacing of outlets: use *commercial*, not home, specifications!

Automate curtains, drapes, partitions – especially if you have no janitor!

Design logically for ease of use. Include someone from your Disabilities Commission on your building committee.

A **building committee** should include engineers, architects, interior designer professionals, as well as someone familiar with adult/supportive day care. Your building committee is NOT your fund raising committee.

Ask architect for a list of current/recent projects and permission to speak with the principals at those sites. A project manager/clerk of works is strongly advised. Document all changes, understandings and/or assumptions as they occur respect to design re-work.

Senior-Ctr-BASIC DESIGN-CONSIDERATIONS--EXPANDED: Elder Affairs JUNE07/rev/EHS with thanks to numerous COA directors.

Special, Non-typical or Occasional Uses Found at Senior Centers in Massachusetts

Supportive Day Care (or Adult Day Health – medical model) Standalone/integrated space.

Fitness Center (uses equipment that may require initial assistance with operation)

Arts & Crafts (particularly a kiln and dedicated storage/lockers)

Woodworking

Small household items repair workshop

Private counseling and group support

Computer training (may need separate cooling system in room)

Greenhouse

Kitchen for "cooking for one"—or large scale ovens;
also café style enclosure (low bookcase/planters & awnings)

Durable Medical Equipment Loan "closet"

Pool/table tennis

Bowling Alley (in community center)

Diving/swimming pool (in community center)

Video production

Stage (accessible)

Gym (with Park/Rec or community center); Lockers; Showers – wheel in type.

Police sub-station (bicycle or regular patrol—good for elder abuse reporting issues, scams & related matters, RUOK telephone reassurance calls)

Other health & human service agencies (can be for profit...), or
"Friends of COA" space (rental)

Resale Shop(pe)

Library (lending, including videos: may be good for outreach)

Walking trail

Emergency Support (heating/cooling—"homeland defense"; use as emergency shelter?)
(defibrillator)

Breakfast services (e.g., "coffee shop" – run by COA)

Physical exterior spaces (e.g., dining, raised bed gardening)

Aquarium (good in conjunction with supportive day/adult day programs)

Senior-Ctr-DESIGN-CONSIDERATIONS--EXPANDED: Elder Affairs OCT

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