

Sterling Senior Center Design and Building Committee

Butterick Municipal Building - COA Room

January 31, 2013 6:30 pm

MINUTES

Present: Jack Chandler, Maureen Cranson, Ronald Cote (6:34), Richard Maki, Peter Watson and Weymouth Whitney. **Ex Officio:** Terri Ackerman and Karen Phillips. OPM Frank Kennedy, and invited members of the current and past Finance/Capital Committees including Patrick Fox (replacing Robert Brown), John Kilcoyne (7:08), Larry Pape, and John Potter.

Opening Meeting: Co-Chairman Cranson opened the meeting at 6:32 pm.

Approval of Minutes: The minutes of January 24, 2013 were approved as written following a motion by Mr. Whitney and a second by Mr. Watson. Vote: YEA = 5, NAY = 0, ABS = 0.

Information Sharing/Discussion: Mr. Cote spoke about his recent visits to four senior centers (Hopkington, Milford, Northboro and Sutton) and described his impressions of aspects of those facilities gained by observation and discussion with center directors. Mr. Kennedy distributed floor plans for Erving, Sutton and Westminster (currently at 60% design completion), adding that a temporary shelter was part of one design and that HVAC equipment could be located in attic areas and not consume floor space.

Meeting with Financial Representatives: At 7:05 pm, Ms. Cranson introduced the members of the current and past Finance/Capital Committees. The focus of the fifty-minute discussion mainly centered upon how the design and construction of a future senior center would be funded. Mr. Kennedy led the exchange and began by distributing a copy of a proposed timeline that would culminate in 102 days at the ATM. He spoke about being guided by the programming and functions and suggested that space usage be maximized by multiple use of rooms wherever possible. Kennedy described a future "high-low" budget that would help to filter down needs and costs. He identified the present stage of progress as "pre-programming" wherein the Committee would examine all expected room use.

Mr. Kilcoyne stated that the general consensus was that we can put up a new building with primary usage by the seniors and other community uses, including by the Recreation Dept. (Selectmen preferred a senior center). He indicated that the FinCom had previously recommended capping the cost at \$1.5 million. He described that cost as being feasible and, in his opinion, offered the best chance of passage at the ATM. When he mentioned Sutton (~5,300 sf), Kennedy remarked that the project was built in the mid-90's for approximately one million dollars, but that inflation and construction costs have since risen. Mr. Kennedy shared plans for Erving, Sutton and Westminster and spoke about private fundraising efforts in Holyoke that raised about \$500,000 towards a \$5.3 million project. Significant government grants were described as unlikely funding sources for Sterling.

Mr. Pape shared a news story describing a current, voter-approved plan in Westminster to build a 7,400 sf senior center at a cost of \$2.5 million. He continued with remarks concerning:

- the need to consider total costs including annual operating costs,
- any personnel impact associated with the new center,
- the importance of having the support of the FinCom and Capital Committees,
- identifying grant opportunities applied for,
- calculating any tax impact and the cost to the average homeowner,
- the determination of how the funding will be accomplished and how the new debt fits into existing and known future obligations,
- the possibility of a 20-year bond and advised the Building Committee of the importance of coming in with the most accurate numbers possible,
- the possibility that funds could be drawn from “liquid” and other accounts and replaced by invested funds that were derived from bonding, and,
- taking advantage of the current low borrowing rates,

Mr. Kilcoyne added that the current debt service is declining, but capital funds are also. Mr. Pape noted that it was his opinion that a combined facility including the Recreation Dept would be easier to “sell” to the Town. Pape indicated the importance of the “Friends” of the Sterling Seniors raising some money to support the project. Kilcoyne wants to limit taxpayer’s exposure and questioned whether it could be done for \$2 million. He spoke of Westminster (\$2.5 million/7,400 sf) and said we have a similar population with other favorable comparisons factors with Sterling. He added that the more data presented to the FinCom, the better. Pape reiterated the need for “hard” numbers.

The Building Committee is scheduled to meet with FinCom on February 12, 2013 and will present the best available data at that time.

The FinCom and Capital Committee representatives concluded their questions and left at 7:55 pm.

Following a brief recess, the Building Committee resumed with Mr. Kennedy asking about the Grenier construction estimate of under \$1 million submitted by Mr. James Simpson of the Site Committee. The Committee explained the bare-bones estimate, lack of prevailing wages, and other factors. Kennedy stated that a municipal building should stand for 50 years and, simultaneously, be the best value for the Town (and the lowest cost is rarely the best value in the long run). The Committee shared the perception that some past Town projects reflected a bad history and that they were determined to do it right.

Mr. Whitney suggested that we have a moratorium on future guests and devote Committee time to getting the job of determining the size and costs of the project done.

Mr. Kennedy indicated that a multi-purpose building increases usage after the seniors typically have left. Ms. Ackerman discussed how operating expenses might be handled if other community uses of the building became significant.

Looking at Erving's floor plan, Committee members noted missing an exercise and computer rooms. They discussed the function of a lounge area and the possibility of partitioning the main dining room for two functions while leaving the dining area available. The advantages of having a lower floor with a bulkhead for storage for random outdoor maintenance equipment was presented by Mr. Whitney. Kennedy noted that the kitchen in Sutton was not provided with a service area and that he was not in favor of the "spoke and hub" design used in Westminster because it was necessary to go through one room to reach another. Mr. Watson left at 8:43 pm. In continuing to look at pre-programming uses, Kennedy suggested that attic areas of buildings with pitched roofs could accommodate HVAC and sprinkler systems. He asked members to think about how we might "bump out" the Erving and Sutton designs to accommodate our space needs and how the building might be enlarged in the future, if necessary. The Building Committee reviewed in depth the size of the multipurpose room in consideration of multiple activities at one time, large function dining events, daily lunches, and activities requiring lots of space such as exercise programs.

Action Items for Next Meeting:

- Maureen/Terri to get confirmation on FinCom and Capital meetings
- Maureen to distribute the requirements for voting space
- Dick to speak with Town clerk for a recap on voting requirements
- Karen to distribute the SF of the current SC, including upstairs rooms
- Frank to get specific information on Northborough's MultiPurpose Room

The Committee agreed to hone in on room and space needs at the February 7th meeting.

Adjournment: A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Cote and seconded by Mr. Maki at 9:10 pm. Vote: YEA = 5, NAY = 0, ABS = 0.

Respectfully submitted by

Richard H. Maki

Richard H. Maki, Clerk