

Town of Brookfield
Facilities Planning Committee
Meeting Notes
November 17, 2011

In attendance: Betsy McIlvaine, Chairman; Carol Howe, Bryan Chnowski, Kathy VanDuzee, Dennis DiPinto, Jay Wahlberg, Tom Tedesco, Howard Lasser, Art Colley, Angelo Rodriguez, Anita Barney, Secretary

The meeting was called to order at 5:04 p.m. by Betsy McIlvaine.

Public Comment – none

Additions to the agenda: none

Approval of minutes from October 28: A motion to approve was made (D. DiPinto), seconded (C. Howe), and passed, with one abstention (K. VanDuzee).

Old Business:

Meeting schedule – This group will meet on the third Thursday of each month at Town Hall at 5 p.m.

Proposed ending date for committee deliberations: Howard Lasser estimates a spring date for completion of our work, but will confirm with selectmen.

Additions to projects list: Carol Howe suggests adding a Teen Center to list. Dennis DiPinto replied that a Recreation Center/Field House would encompass a teen center, and stand-alone teen centers don't usually succeed or pay their way. Ridgefield has a teen center; we should look at theirs. Jay Wahlberg wants to add the Four Corners area to the list, since anything that goes on there has potential to affect this committee's work. The Town is planning a survey about the Four Corners district. Howard noted that the Town will invest intellectual capital, if not financial capital.

Do we have a financial threshold? Should we only consider items over a certain amount? Howard stated we should focus on large structural facilities to contain the size of the "shopping list". Things like sewer hookups should go in the annual budget.

Dennis stated that the recreation project is actually the Town Park and Cadigan, not just Cadigan. Our oldest synthetic field is five years old; life span is 7 – 10 years. Only the surface carpet gets replaced, not underlying parts.

Schools: Art Colley noted that the town should eliminate the portable buildings at Huckleberry Hill School. The school building itself is very dated. It still has electric heat, and needs a new roof, drainage system, and gutters. Enrollment will have an impact, especially upward. Art stated that the Board of Education might be looking at

reconfiguring the district, since Huckleberry enrollment is up and Whisconier is down. There are eight classes in portables at Whisconier.

Angelo Rodriguez provided a list of Board of Ed needed improvements. Jay Wahlberg replied that these should be included in town capital budget.

Maintenance building behind the high school needs work.

Assets that could be disposed of: All assets are currently used except the few that are unsafe and locked (tennis courts).

HVCEO building – does rent cover expense and depreciation? Tom Tibolla said the building needs new roof. The Town also owns Historical Society building, which is in the same situation.

Senior Center: the art room ceiling has maintenance issues.

Cadigan Park stays on the projects list. The current town administration will bring it back for a vote. Still River Greenway: most of the cost is covered by federal money; remainder could be covered by referendum. The tennis courts will be on Dennis' list.

Current/ revised list:

- Field House & Rec Center (w Teen Center) – including new fields
- New Library/Community Center
- Synthetic field – replacement of existing fields
- School refurbishments, especially Huckleberry

Original plan for a Recreation Center called for using Mystery Acres. The property is land-locked and has issues with flood plains – only 40% of property is buildable. Mystery Acres anchors the southern end of Four Corners. Now that the Rt. 7 bypass is open, there are more possibilities for the area.

Betsy stated that it's time to start looking at costs. Earlier cost projections are no doubt out of date, and we need current cost estimates and a timeline. Can we afford all at once, or one at a time? The town has to consider time and costs involved in the management of major projects.

Questions about future use of library building were raised. Howard would like to see it combined with The Brookfield Theatre for the Arts to make an arts center. Dennis could use it for Parks & Rec. classrooms, but not for a gym. The previous library director envisioned expanded parking on the property. The Library's investment fund paid for the property next door to the library; if it is sold, the money goes back to the investment fund.

Kathy VanDuzee noted that there is a big need for arts education for youth. We need to provide for post-secondary education and recreation, especially for special education needs. Kathy expanded youth commission from 5 to 15 to get kids involved.

A suggestion was made that we ask a representative from the Substance Abuse Coalition about addressing the need for a teen center.

In order for any of these projects to succeed, we need support from advocacy groups for each project.

New Business: Add this committee to Brookfield web site. Betsy wants town residents to know about these meetings. We will post minutes and agenda. Betsy will meet with Jay to discuss what goes on the web site as a way of involving the community. We will post meeting information on Brookfield patch.com.

The next meeting will be December 15. Art is to compile a cost estimate for reconfiguration of schools; Dennis for P&R; Anita for library. Then we will make plans on how to proceed with funding and a timeline. We also need to look at locations – if the library goes on the existing field on the municipal campus, we need to find new locations for fields. This committee could consider what to do with the current library building.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:00 p.m.

Meeting notes submitted by
Anita Barney