



TOWN OF NEWTOWN
Town of Newtown Community Center Commission
Special Meeting February 13, 2016
MINUTES

The meeting was called to order at 12:13pm by Brian Hartgraves

Present: Andy Clure, Brian Hartgraves, John Boccuzzi, Sean Dunn, Carla Kron, Brian Leidlein, Sheila Torres, Kinga Walsh, David Wheeler, Bill Buchler, Rob Cox and Nicole Hockley.

Also present: Geralyn Hoerauf, Municipal Buildings Strategic Planning Committee, Curt Symes, Committee on Aging

The meeting continued at 12:22 pm after a short break.

Voter Comment: Joe Kearney, 9 Daniels Hill, explained the challenges of accomplishing something that will satisfy everyone, and asked the Commission to consider a plan "D". He expressed his opinion on the size of NYA's facility, in relation to ideas for the Community Center; due to the fact that people are leaving this town and the state. Ken Lerman, 55 Main Street, wanted to attach to NYA as an add-on, stating NYA loses more and more revenue every year. Raymond Baker, 14 Fox Run Road South, wanted to understand the grounds of the G.E. donation. He was concerned that people were voting on the Community Center just because the money was there. Mr. Baker also advised to Commission to move in stages as to not tap into tax payers dollars. John Christensen, 3 Phyllis Lane, explained the strain that hockey/ice sports families have without an ice rink in town. He strongly believes an ice rink would serve as a great draw from other towns, bringing revenue. Curt Symes, 36 Lake Road, asked the Commission to give attention to add-on's, and to look at the original plans that were created in 2013. He also spoke on behalf of the Commission on Aging, stating that their current Senior Center is unsafe for many reasons. They would like to create a satellite facility with the Community Center, and would need about 8,000 square feet of dedicated space to hold activities and equipment. Paul Esposito, 11 Queen Street, came as a Newtown Resident, also as the coach for the High School Hockey Team. 300 families in Newtown participate in hockey or ice-skating, so he thought it would be a welcomed feature. Elizabeth Lincoln, 34 Echo Valley Road, said that the biggest mistake would be to under-build. She stated the importance of an aquatic center not only for swimming events but therapy and safety classes. Having a 'sheet' would allow ice sports as well as a platform for performances, graduations, dog shows, and other events.

Minutes: Ms. Kron moved to accept the minutes from January 28th, Ms. Torres seconded, and there were no comments. All were in favor.

Communications: Mr. Hartgraves and Mr. Clure visited the new Newtown Ambulance Facility on Keating Farms Road, to get a sense of their use of space. The footprint was about 9,000 square feet, and the total square footage of the building was about 14,500. Mr. Clure did not think that amount of space is big enough for the Community Center. He wanted the group to take into consideration the amount of space that stairwells and elevators take up. He proposed keeping the building on one level to utilize space and to make it easily accessible. The Commission tried to find common ground between dividable rooms and set rooms with specific use. Members felt that having the largest room limited to 2,900 square feet would not be big enough, comparing with NYA and the community center in Ridgefield. Ms. Torres gave an example if the space were to be used for a banquet type setting; the Gymnasium at the Edmond Town

Hall is approximately 5,000 square feet; with tables and chairs is allowed up to 296 people by the Fire Marshalls standards, or 600 people with chairs running auditorium style. Ms. Walsh explained how quickly square footage would add up with ‘small’ changes like expanding hallway width. Mr. Cox wants to create a ‘hub’, not just a place for meetings, since there are multiple locations in Newtown to rent a room for meetings. Mr. Wheeler wanted to create a division between food/banquet spaces from exercise or science-oriented rooms. The group expressed a mutual want for the space to be as close to 18,000 square feet as the budget would allow. This large sized building will hopefully encompass but not be limited to the Aquatic Center, a large banquet style room, and many multipurpose rooms for meetings, the arts, and athletic courses. Commission members thought aiming towards 13,000 sq ft (as some preliminary plans did) was too limiting for their grand vision.

Business: Mr. Cox is afraid that the survey did not reach enough people from different ages, to which Mr. Boccuzzi explained that the public had plenty of time and notice to participate if they wanted to. Ms. Kron thought that the seniors of Newtown have been neglected and need a better facility. Mr. Leidlein said that the public’s reaction to the costs shows a need to look at the long term financial commitment from tax payers. Mr. Wheeler pointed out misconceptions, including: self-sustainability does not mean profitability and square footage does not meet program capability. Ms. Walsh jumped in reminding everyone that one building will not be the end all be all for every event or program that happens in Newtown. Ms. Hockley asked the group to remember that not every person is sporty, so discussing mainly sports and not therapy and resiliency needs is doing a disservice to the people. Mr. Leidlein asked the group to think about what is non-negotiable. Mr. Dunn added that once the proposal leaves the group, the Board of Selectman can do what they want with it, but it will still be documented as the Commission’s recommendation. A discussion about feasibility studies and referendum votes was occupied with mixed opinions.

Action: Mr. Dunn made a **Motion to spend \$37,000 to have a sports authority group do a feasibility study for both the aquatic center and ice rink and have that no impact or delay to the proposal.** Mr. Wheeler Seconded. The motion was approved by 9-2 vote with one abstention. Mr. Wheeler made a Motion to make a final recommendation based on the concept of an aquatic center and the community center as large as we can afford it, as supported by GERALYN, to include CIP line item that currently exists and let’s specify the 50 meter pool. Mr. Boccuzzi Seconded. Members came forth with amendments however, Mr. Wheeler needed to leave the meeting, and after much discussion the original motion was unanimously denied in order to be re-worded. Mr. Leidlein moved to recommend to the Board of Selectmen for a facility including a Community Center with a 50 meter and Zero entry pool, a Community Center of multipurpose rooms, as large as can be built to fit within the \$15 million combination of the gift of G.E. and \$5 million CIP approved, with ability to add on whether it be additional space for the community portion, or an ice rink or senior center in addition to what’s already built, and so it’s considered, the possibility of a second phase using potentially the 2.5 million dollars in CIP if approved to add on and expand space where needed. Mr. Boccuzzi seconded. Mr. Buchler asked to make an amendment, stating the survey is clear about an ice rink being the first add-on, and it should not be left open for interpretation. Ms. Walsh seconded. Mr. Leidlein accepted the amendment. Mr. Dunn asked to make an amendment that the only dedicated space is for Legacy Groups. Mr. Boccuzzi seconded. Mr. Leidlein accepted the amendment. **The motion: to recommend to the Board of Selectmen for a facility including a Community Center with a 50 meter and Zero entry pool, a Community Center of multipurpose rooms, as large as can be built to fit within the \$15 million combination of the gift of G.E. and \$5 million CIP approved, with ability to add on whether it be additional space for the community portion, or an ice rink or senior center in addition to what’s already built, and so it’s**

considered, the possibility of a second phase using potentially the 2.5 million dollars in CIP if approved to add on and expand space where needed, with amendments: with an ice rink being the first add-on option, and giving dedicated space to the Legacy Groups was passed by a vote of 8-2 with two abstentions (Mr. Wheeler and Mr. Cox left the meeting). Mr. Hartgraves asked the group to come up with a list of their top priorities of things that need to be included in the Community Center (bottom of page). The commission took a 5 minute break before sharing their ideas.

Voter Comment: Mr. Lerman, stated that having booths with privacy in a central area should work as a great meeting place, and wanted to see a feasibility study for both pools given the already existing pools in Newtown. Mr. Symes told the Commission that he believes the seniors did not engage with the survey because there was an assumption that the Community Center would be aimed at sports specifically and would not include other groups/needs. There were no additional comments.

Adjournment: Ms. Kron moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Buchler seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 3:28pm

Mr. Clure: 50 meter pool, full length of windows or doors to create an indoor/outdoor space around the pool, welcoming entrance, concession opportunities

Ms. Torres: 50 meter pool, option to open space to outside, zero entry pool, common area and multiuse spaces

Mr. Dunn: 50 meter pool, common area that everyone can enjoy at no cost, outside area that can be enjoyed in all seasons, town hires outside director to run Community Center

Mr. Leidlein: external director, 50 meter pool, common area using inside and outside space

Mr. Buchler: “Goat Room” (Atlanta, GA) type of space, state of the art kitchen, retail space, ice rink

Ms. Kron: emergency shelter, community kitchen that allows cooking classes, prioritize programs for physically/mentally disabled and mental health, proper acoustics for Arts

Ms. Walsh: accessibility, environmentally friendly (solar etc.) everything else had been shared

Mr. Boccuzzi: energy efficiency, easy to maintain, large designated senior center space

Ms. Hockley and Mr. Hartgraves agreed with the above ideas.

These ideas will be circulated to hopefully create a prioritized list of things that will need to be included in the proposal to the Board of Selectman.

Respectfully Submitted,

Georgia Contois, Clerk