

Meeting Minutes
Senior Committee Meeting
Wednesday, September 4, 2013
Conference A, City Hall

Members Present: Robert J. Lister, Chairman; Nancy Novelline Clayburgh, Councilor; Martha Fuller Clark, Senator; Jack Jamison, Judy Bunnell, Maureen O’Leary, Nancy Andrews
Absent: N/A
City Staff Present: Brinn Chute, Senior Services Coordinator; Adam Cannon, Special Projects Manager; Rus Wilson, Recreation Director

Chairman Lister opened the meeting at 9:03 a.m. The Committee first discussed changes to the prior weeks meeting minutes. Mr. Cannon noted the changes and would send out a revised copy to the committee.

Following discussion of the minutes, Mr. Cannon gave a summary of information distributed to the senior committee which included handouts on senior and Portsmouth demographics, research provided by Ms. O’Leary and a synopsis of the February meeting of the former Senior Steering Committee discussing various potential sites of a Portsmouth senior center.

Ms. Andrews noted how large the 50+ population is in Portsmouth and how it will grow during the next five years and decade. Chairman Lister added that he would like to consider the idea of a community center and also stated that he would like the Committee to be more forward-looking and avoid creating a senior center in reaction to the existing senior center population.

Next, Ms. Andrews stated that she did not see any piece for education in the different sections of the senior services budget and no sections for lifelong learning in the school budget. The Committee agreed that education is an important component of any senior center and Chairman Lister added that it is why it is so important to think about partners.

Councilor Clayburgh stated that the Committee should make a decision on the target age or whether there would be a target age. Ms. Andrews said that there are a large amount of people coming up through the ranks into the older population who are active and don’t have the physical and nutrition needs of the seniors who are more frail.

Ms. O’Leary briefly summarized the statistics regarding senior centers which target certain age populations. She noted the diversity and stated that there are some senior centers which allow for 18+ to participate. Others were very strict and required an ID for age verification. She also added that an intergenerational component is necessary to have a successful senior center.

Mr. Jamison noted how people aged 50 and older are healthier, living longer and have different abilities and needs. Ms. Andrews added that the Doble Center is a large site and if it were to be used as a site for a senior center, she could see the value in the ability to have a location that caters to the diverse interests of seniors. Ms. O'Leary stated that senior centers often need more space than expected and as an example she noted a former senior center that was 7000 square feet and had two floors. One of the floors was taken up by administration.

Senator Clark noted the importance of how a center would be labeled and to align the center with one vision and communicating this vision. She also added that there is a real opportunity to include a larger slice of the population and offer things for all different ages. Chairman Lister agreed and liked the idea of an adult center. Ms. Andrews stated that the process should consider what is good for Portsmouth and to think about concepts like healthy living in order to capture the 40+ demographic.

Next, Chairman Lister asked the Committee to move onto the discussion of potential sites for a center and the Committee reviewed the list of sites from the former Senior Steering Committee. Ms Andrews added some additional sites including the dog park and tennis courts near the South Mill Playground and the space between the middle school and the library. She also inquired if the tennis court space is bound by federal dollars. Senator Clark stated that zoning is an issue with the tennis courts and that a potential idea would be to move the courts to Peirce Island and have a central building as an anchor utilizing the Library and New Connie Bean as additional activity and recreation components. She also voiced her concern that the Doble Center may be too out of sight and out of mind which could deter seniors from participating.

Ms. Chute considered Senator Clark's idea as one that could be part of a longer-term plan. In the short term, Ms. Chute recommended to use a re-existing building like the Doble Center. Senator Clark agreed that there should be a space sooner rather than later. Chairman Lister added how important it would be to educate the community so that everyone sees the value of a center. Ms. Chute stated that she envisions a center that encapsulates the six dimensions of wellness (physical, emotional, spiritual, social, vocational and intellectual).

Next, Ms. Andrews offered forth consideration of a few more existing sites including the Women's City Club off of Middle Road, the Masonic Lot, space in the historic mansions, space at Strawberry Banke, and the site of the old Page Bar. She also stated that she is impressed with the energy and resources put into the development of senior services and that she would like to involve architects and city planners, potentially.

Ms. Chute and Senator Clark discussed the merits of a center downtown. Ms. Chute was concerned about the limited parking and slippery winter sidewalks in the downtown area. Senator Clark was concerned that if it was not downtown, a population would be marginalized. She also added that a location can make the statement that the population is not marginalized and that transportation would need to be a key component of a center.

Ms. Andrews said that the vibrancy of downtown is what makes Portsmouth what it is. Ms. Chute was concerned about where the majority of older residents reside. Mr. Jamison spoke about the Doble Center and noted that it has a large parking lot and is a single floor structure. He also noted that the Community Campus is more than just a medical service center and includes many programs that serve many different generations. Ms. Chute noted that the Community Campus is owned by the Foundation for Seacoast Health.

Mr. Wilson suggested adding Spinnaker Point as a potential site for a senior center.

Chairman Lister stated that the Committee should narrow their list to a few sites and compare the positives and negatives of each. He also noted that the City Manager would have access to federal funding to renovate Doble as a senior center, but that this funding would not be available for other locations. Following this, the Committee brainstormed various qualities they would like to see in a comparison of sites. These qualities included size, parking, levels, greenspace, potential for growth, location, ownership, transportation, costs of rehabilitation or costs of a new build, age of neighborhood and time for completion.

The Committee then narrowed possible sites down to five sites: Community Campus, Spinnaker Point, Doble Center, the former Page Bar and the VFW center.

Ms. Andrews noted that the Community Campus still has a negative stigma associated with the prior Senior Steering Committee process. Ms. Chute believed that the perception had changed and noted the great attendance at the senior luncheons at the Community Campus. Ms. O'Leary also believed that there is a negative stigma associated with the Community Campus as a senior center location.

Next, the Committee discussed Spinnaker Point as a site. Ms. Chute noted that additional land would need to be leased and that Spinnaker would need ADA renovations.

Mr. Jamison noted that he liked the suggestion put forth by Councilor Clayburgh and the Italian-American Heritage of a bocce ball court at the new center to bring in various age demographics. He also asked if COAST would be amenable to establishing a transportation stop at a center. Ms. Chute noted that COAST works very closely with the City and would work with the City concerning this matter.

Chairman Lister asked about the revenue from the sale of the Connie Bean. Ms. Chute noted that the City received \$1.5 million and that a piece of that money would need to be used for veterans. Councilor Clayburgh added that an expenditure would need approval from the attorney general's office.

Mr. Jamison stated that another benefit of Doble is its proximity to Portsmouth Regional Hospital and the potential for a partnership. Ms. O'Leary stated that other senior centers like the Mill Race Center in Columbus, Indiana have a partnership with a nearby hospital. Ms. Andrews recommended expanding a partnership with the Foundation for Seacoast

Health. Councilor Clayburgh stated that the foundation only grants money for programming, but not construction. Senator Clark noted that the original concept of the Community Campus included a component for seniors and that it was not just meant to serve adolescents.

Chairman Lister stated that the Committee should have an open mind about all of the decisions in the process. Ms. O'Leary offered to bring some sample goals, missions and visions from other senior centers to the next meeting. Councilor Clayburgh said that it is really important that the Committee gets to take a tour of the Doble Center.

Ms. Bunnell provided the Committee with a list of all of the New Hampshire senior centers and noted that there is a new center in Concord. Ms. Bunnell also asked that the contact information of the executive director be included in these minutes. It is as follows:

Vivien Green, Executive Director
Centennial Senior Center
PO Box 4149
Concord, NH 03301
603-228-6630
www.centennialseniorcenter.org

The Committee then considered potential existing senior centers to tour. Ms. Chute stated that the Committee could utilize the 14-passenger Recreation Van for a tour.

Chairman Lister stated that he would like the Committee to inform the community through a press release in celebration of seniors. He noted that this was a way that the public could be part of the process.

Ms. Andrews asked if an update or presentation by the Committee should be added to the October 22nd PORT meeting at the Library. Ms. O'Leary stated that she is working on arranging a video on seniors for Senior Center Month.

Following this the Committee discussed the action items from this meeting and considered future meeting dates. The Committee decided to move the next meeting from Wednesday, September 18th to Monday, September 16th. The Committee also decided to work on a proclamation for seniors. Information regarding the five sites will be provided at the next meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:30 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Adam Cannon