

Meeting Minutes  
Senior Committee Meeting  
Wednesday, September 16, 2013  
School Board Conference Room, 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: City Staff Present: John P. Bohenko, City Manager; Brinn Chute, Senior Services Coordinator; Adam Cannon, Special Projects Manager; Rus Wilson, Recreation Director; David Moore, Community Development Director

Chairman Lister opened the meeting at 9:04 a.m. Meeting minutes were accepted. Ms. O’Leary handed out a 1-page summary of senior center mission statements that she had compiled.

Mr. Cannon gave a summary of a matrix that he had compiled, “Comparison Chair for Potential Senior Center Locations”, which outlined the potential senior center site locations and the evaluation criteria that the senior center committee had selected at the meeting on September 4.

Mr. Jamison suggested that the number of parking spaces per facilities be added to report.

Ms. Andrews reported that The Page building is for sale for \$3.5 million. She also asked Mr. Wilson about parking status at Spinnaker. Mr. Wilson replied that parking is dependent on programming, but that it could be full based on a specific activity. He added that if a senior center were built at that location more parking would need to be added.

Mr. Jamison asked further about the Spinnaker Points facility makeup, specifically if there was a kitchen area. Mr. Wilson stated that Spinnaker only has a small kitchen space for staff. It is a fitness facility with a big cardiovascular room, workout studios, an indoor walking loop, basketball/volleyball courts, and indoor swimming pool. He continued that there are 500 senior members plus the daily non-members who attend the fitness classes. Additionally 99% of the members are Portsmouth residents. Mr. Wilson also noted that Spinnaker has an elevator, but not to the basement level.

Ms. Andrews asked if the City has considered working with the school department to utilize the buses when they are not in use to transport the students; noting that there are potential partnerships that could be considered. Chairman Lister said that he will add that to the “food for thought” list. Ms. Andrews also asked if perhaps sidewalks should also

be added to the chart to consider if walking from downtown to Doble via sidewalk was possible.

Senator Clark suggested that the committee look at the accessibility of a possible senior center to and from the senior housing units.

Chairman Lister asked for clarification regarding whether the Foundation for Seacoast Health had stated any interest in a senior center on the Community Campus site and whether the “The Greater Portsmouth Area Senior Center Project” report had those results. Councilor Clayburgh stated that the earlier committee had never met specifically with the Foundation on the use of the Community Campus site so there is not a sense from them regarding their interests. Mr. Jamison added that Families First is looking to expand and have said it would need to be a bump out to that facility. Councilor Clayburgh echoed that any talk of a senior center at Community Campus was a new building.

Ms. Andrews concurred that there would need to be a new build at Community Campus including parking. She also stated she talks to 300-500 seniors in her many respective groups and she does not know anyone who is interested in the Community Campus location. Chairman Lister added that the high school also had a hard time getting people out to the Community Campus location. Councilor Clayburgh stated that the New Heights program is very popular and a wonderful facility for them, but they do bus the participants there. Ms. Andrews also stated that is a high use facility with Kremple and Families First. Mr. Jamison added that the issue is space, but that when you have good programs, people will come.

Senator Clark asked the committee to consider as part of the big picture, a short term, a long term and transitional plans for seniors and a senior center. And to make sure the committee looks at the big picture. She further asked, doesn't the city need a community center, not just a senior center? With the loss of Daniel Street building, she would like to see the report recognize that down the road there may be a need for a different type of facility. She voiced her concern that the Doble Center could only be used for recreation; adding the importance of creating a center for everyone in the community. Senator Clark then asked that the committee examine all possible site locations including:

- 1) Lot between the middle school and library
- 2) Moving the tennis courts to Peirce Island and building a one-store building on the South Mill Pond tennis court location.
- 3) Parking lot next to City Hall

Ms. Andrews shared that she feels that it is important that the committee does everything they can to explore downtown Portsmouth for a possible location of a senior center.

Senator Clark also stressed the importance that the senior center be a place that seniors can gather and call home. She then asked about the definition of recreation as it regards to the designation of the Doble Center having to be used specifically for “recreation purposes”. Mr. Wilson replied that recreation has a broad definition – it can be active and

passive and all encompassing of wellness. He stated that you'd be hard pressed to find something that is not "recreation". Ms. Chute added that the 6 dimensions of wellness are a good starting point when thinking about what type of programming might be offered at a senior center, and that they all fall within the recreation realm.

Councilor Clayburgh, who also sits on the Recreation Commission, commented that the Recreation Master Plan states that the City needs a large, multi-generational facility. Chairman Lister indicated that the report could be sent to everyone for their review.

Councilor Clayburgh went further to say that, preliminarily, it appears that Doble makes the most sense. Ms. O'Leary commented that all the green-lights go off for Doble because it has a lot going for it like \$0 for acquisition, 1-story and COAST access. Mr. Jamison chimed in that expansion possibilities are there, but also said an elevator does make any multi-story building accessible. Ms. Andrews echoed Councilor Clayburgh and Ms. O'Leary's sentiments that she likes Doble because of green space, especially because the garden possibilities, as well as the proximity to Portsmouth Hospital for possible wellness partnerships.

Chairman Lister said we want to do a good job looking at all the options, keep an open mind, but also, in all fairness to the citizens, the committee needs to provide a report. He thanked Mr. Cannon for all his hard work on the site comparison chart. Chairman Lister reminded the committee that the next meeting is a discussion on possible programming. Then he steered the group towards the next item on the agenda: vision, mission and goals.

Ms. Chute drew the committee's attention to the Doble PowerPoint presentation in the committee's binder which has a slide on potential vision for a senior center. Additionally she asked committee members to read through Ms. O'Leary's handout on the mission statements from other senior centers.

Ms. O'Leary went more in depth to describe the four tenants of a mission statement: who, what, where and why. She also added that it should be inspiring.

Ms. Andrews inquired about the Recreation Department's mission, in relation to the fact that the City's Senior Services is an extension of the recreation department. Further inquiring about the City of Portsmouth and School Department's mission as it relates to potential partnerships. Ms. Andrews also noted the importance of looking at the 40+ population.

Chairman Lister asked Ms. O'Leary what was the best way to proceed with creating a mission statement. She replied that perhaps a small group should compile something and bring it back to the group.

Ms. Andrews said the mission is also important because it is marketing the need for a senior center in the community and shows how there will be a positive community impact.

In relation to the mission statement conversation, Senator Clark reiterated her desire for the senior center to be a place that seniors can call home and can all come together. Stating that because of all the various activities in the community, the need is really to have a welcoming place for the 55+ to meet and interact. It can also serve as a clearinghouse to learn about what is going on in the community and how seniors can access those things. Senator Clark continued by saying that it is important to look at all the things that are being offered and then look at the holes in programming and how to help create access to those programs. For example, the COAST Bus does not go to the Library.

Senator Clark continued by saying that the committee needs to ask the question, “what do we wish we had for seniors?”, and examine what we do and do not have. She commented that we don’t want to treat our senior community as something separate; we want them to be well integrated into everything that is going on in our community. The committee must look at opportunities for intergeneration programming to keep people engaged.

Mr. Jamison said a mission should be short and sweet as well as a statement that we can use when asked to do things beyond the scope of the mission.

Ms. Andrews commented that today’s seniors don’t necessarily see themselves as aging. She wants the mission and programs to appeal to a broad scope of people. The Kittery Community Center is appealing to people because it has a broad scope of programming.

Mr. Jamison said one of the things we want to consider is the people who are homebound and have limited mobility; we want to care for them.

Senator Clark said there is an immediate need to create a welcoming home for older adults. She also recognized that in the longer term it is worthwhile to create a multigenerational center. She said that the committee needs to make a statement that the City values seniors. Given the changing demographics of Portsmouth, the senior center needs to provide comparable amenities for our citizens; they are taxpayers too. Senator Clark said she feels like seniors are not getting their share of community support and added that transportation and pedestrian accessibility is a huge component of the equation.

Chairman Lister geared the group back towards a mission statement.

Ms. O’Leary recommended that the committee should come up with their own language for goals and strategies. She said this is our opportunity for a brainstorming session. Some things will be part of the mission and some will be goals. Ms. O’Leary urged members to send ideas to Chairman Lister. Then he will create a matrix using the “who, what, where, and why”. Also commenting on the “who” for the mission needs to be diverse, including seniors with and without economic needs, physically-active and vibrant seniors, and frail seniors.

Ms. Andrews repeated that everyone should put something together for inspection from the committee. Noting #2 and #8 from the mission statements provided by Ms. O'Leary's handout are a good base, plus adding the City, Recreation and School mission statements. She is interested to see how they could blend. Ms. Andrews stressed not using language like elderly and aging, but rather to focus on the phrase "positively impacting our community". As a final note, she said that embracing healthy aging will also result in cost savings for Portsmouth.

In the spirit of the programming conversation, Mr. Jamison noted that some of the Library programs could be offered at the senior center. Senator Clark followed stating that creating space for grandparents is useful for the programming discussion next time; noting that she will not be present.

Ms. O'Leary furthered Senator Clark's comment by saying intergenerational programming is essential and that the seniors at a senior center decide that on their own. Ms. Chute echoed Senator Clark's comment by stating that seniors often are the daycare for grandchildren and creating a support network can be a function of a senior center. Furthermore, she stated that Doble is a big enough facility to have rooms for such activities. Ms. Andrews did mention that some seniors make a conscience decision to attend places without children, like Spinnaker.

Chairman Lister reminded the group that talk about programming and partnerships will be in the future meetings. Pulling the group back to the topic at hand, Chairman Lister said he will send a draft of possible mission wording ahead of time for committee to review. He said he does not want to spend meeting time on wordsmithing. Adding there is a lot of opinions and expertise in committee so getting everyone's thoughts is important. Chairman Lister repeated his thanks to Mr. Cannon for his chart on potential senior center locations. He also made a point of thanking Ms. O'Leary for her contributions and City Manager Bohenko and Mr. Moore for being at the meeting and setting up the Doble Tour.

For the final topic on the agenda, Chairman Lister addressed tours of senior centers around the area. Ms. Andrews said that she plans on visiting the Concord Senior Center. Ms. O'Leary shared that at the Mass conference offers tours of other senior centers. Three committee members are attending conference; Ms. Bunnell, Ms. O'Leary and Ms. Chute. Ms. Bunnell said she plans on attending a tour and will report back after conference.

Ms. Bunnell also reminded the committee about the handout she compiled that lists the NH Senior Centers including their web addresses.

Ms. Andrews finalized her comments by noting that the committee did not talk about goals and members should be prepared to bring ideas to the next meeting. And then addressing the City Manager, Ms. Andrews asked two questions. One, in prep for the committee's work on a budget, is the City Budget on-line and two, is it possible to link school and senior transportation?

City Manager Bohenko responded that the City's annual budget and capital budget are both on-line and hard copies are available in the library. He asked the committee to note in the report that senior transportation is under the Parking & Transportation line item, not the senior budget and added that the City is spending substantial sums of money in transportation including around \$140,000 for the City-sponsored Senior Transportation at and around \$250,000 for COAST Transportation.

Responding to part two of Ms. Andrews' question regarding school buses as a possible partnership for senior transportation, City Manager Bohenko said that the school buses would bring up the issue of accessibility and that senior transportation is a demand-activated system which is a specific type of service and used for specific reasons.

Councilor Clayburgh asked the final question of the meeting to Mr. Moore and City Manager Bohenko inquiring about when the City is scheduled to acquire the Doble Center. City Manager Bohenko stated that the Department of the Army has not yet completed their new facility. The City has applied to, and been accepted by, the National Park Service to use the Doble space for recreation use. City Manager Bohenko said the City is hopeful the property will be released through either BRAC property disposal process.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:28 a.m. followed by the committee meeting at the Doble facility at 11:00 a.m. for a tour.

Respectfully submitted,  
Brinn Chute