

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://berlinct-gov.zoom.us/j/87207227108?pwd=bnJERVJ5NlMrcVN0WDA5a2J5Y1Z0UT09>

Meeting ID: 872 0722 7108

Passcode: 964082

Phone: +1 929 205 6099 US (New York)

Community / Senior Center Advisory Committee

Thursday, March 3, 2022 @ 6:00 PM

Board of Education Conference Rooms

Regular Meeting

- 
1. Call to Order
  2. Roll Call
  3. Audience of Citizens
  4. Approval of Minutes, February 24, 2022
  5. Review and organization of information to include in presentation
  6. Open Discussion
  7. Adjournment
-

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://berlinc-tov.zoom.us/j/81033302971?pwd=K2FrQj9ZQlgyd0huMENzcXVJOXlEZz09>

Meeting ID: 810 3330 2971

Passcode: 200402

Phone: +1 929 205 6099 US (New York)

Community / Senior Center Advisory Committee

Thursday, February 24, 2022 @ 6:00 PM

Town Council Chambers

Special Meeting

1. Call to Order

Chairman Luddy called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

2. Roll Call

Attendance:

Members Present: Donna Bovee, Dave Cyr, Barbara Gombotz, Chairman Luddy, Tim Grady, Mike Urrunaga

Members Absent: None.

Staff Present:

Director of Community, Recreation and Park Services Jennifer Ochoa

3. Audience of Citizens

Jan Zagorski, 63 Grandview Drive

Ms. Zagorski said adding a diving facility to the proposed plan should be considered. There is just no place available to dive and it is frustrating for those trying to qualify for a college scholarship in swimming.

Tim Thurston, 100 Saw Mill Dr.

Mr. Thurston said he is a lifelong swimmer and is glad that we are talking about the Community Senior Center plan. If the facility is done right, the Town of Berlin can make money on swimming events and it would be a benefit to the town. Also, Mr. Thurston said the committee should look at the East Lyme Aquatic Center. It has an 8-lane pool, two diving boards, a 4-lane heated pool and a splash pad pool.

Mr. Urrunaga asked if an 8-lane pool is the minimum or maximum for a competitive pool? Mr. Thurston said 6 lanes is minimum for a competitive pool.

Mr. Cyr asked if the swim team has a season? Mr. Thurston said the girls swim during the fall and boys swim during the winter, but they practice all year long. Berlin Dolphins swim during the summer. Mr. Cyr asked if the swim team has freshman, junior varsity and varsity teams? Mr. Thurston said only varsity. Also, Mr. Cyr asked if the middle school has a swim team? Mr. Thurston said just Berlin High School and there are 20 to 30 high school swim team members.

Dan Thurston, 16 Conlin Way

Mr. Thurston has been the head coach of the boys swimming team since 2012 and is a parent, teacher and citizen. The girl's swim team works on a set schedule from end of August until early November and boy's swimming is from the beginning of December through end of March. Pre-COVID there were 2 programs in Meriden and multiple programs in Middletown and Plainville. Currently the girl's swim team has 24 athletes and boys' team has 23 athletes. Both practice out of the Meriden YMCA. Divers practice at the Plainville YMCA. The girls have 3 to 5 divers and the boys have 1 to 4 divers. Home meets are at Plainville, Maloney or Platt High School. It is a lot of driving between the facilities. Mr. Thurston added that having both a therapy pool and competition pool is important as there are usually aqua aerobic classes.

Mr. Urrunaga asked about the Berlin Dolphins schedule. Mr. Thurston said they practice at Percival Pool during the summer, but did not have a team the past 2 years due to COVID and staffing issues. Mr. Urrunaga asked before COVID how many people joined? The older age group, age 13 and over, was about 25 swimmers. Younger kids, about 40 to 50 and they were getting experience, but not all at meets.

Phyllis Norton, 36 Steepleview Dr.

Ms. Norton said she is a senior citizen and applauds the efforts of the swim team and would like to see something built that benefits all age groups. Ms. Norton travels outside of town to a facility that has a pool, hot tub, exercise classes, etc. Ms. Norton wants to stay in town and enjoy everything it has to offer. A community senior center is the way to go and she hopes it will happen in her lifetime.

Mr. Grady asked what facility Ms. Norton travels to? Ms. Norton said the Wheeler YMCA in Plainville.

#### 4. Approval of Minutes, February 3, 2022

Ms. Bovee asked to amend the February 3, 2022 minutes to include that Ms. Bovee asked Finance Director Delaney for his professional opinion, that if you have a good story to tell them, talk to them and let them know, from a ratings standpoint the \$40M by itself given there is a story to it would not bring down the rating. Finance Director Delaney said absolutely, we have to have a good response.

Ms. Bovee moved to approve the February 3, 2022 minutes with the amendment.

Seconded by Mr. Cyr.

Those voting in favor: Ms. Bovee, Mr. Cyr, Ms. Gombotz, Mr. Grady, Chairman Luddy, Mr. Urrunaga

Vote being 6-0 (MOTION CARRIED).

#### 5. Presentation and Discussion with John Benigni, CEO Meriden-New Britain-Berlin YMCAs

YMCA CEO Benigni said he is a lifelong Meriden resident and his family utilizes the YMCA. Also, two of his four children are swimmers. The purpose of the presentation was to show what the YMCA would potentially look like and YMCA CEO Benigni and his staff shared some of the services that could be rendered in the Town of Berlin.

Don Rittman Vice President, Meriden-New Britain-Berlin YMCA Board of Directors has been associated with the YMCA for over 30 years and has been both the President and Vice President. His family lives in the Town of Berlin and his children had worked for the YMCA. The Town of Berlin has been looking to get an indoor pool for a long time and the YMCA is trying to accomplish that in conjunction with the town in the most cost-effective way.



Steve Markoja, YMCA Operations Director, said he understands the effort, time and commitment as his two children are year-round swimmers and travel quite a bit. The YMCA serves Meriden, New Britain and Berlin and is the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest YMCA in the state. The operating budget is \$16M and the YMCA employs over 500 employees. It is the largest childcare provider in the state with about 1,400 children daily ranging from age 6 weeks to 5<sup>th</sup> grade. The YMCA provides breakfast, lunch and an afternoon snack and provides infants with formula. The YMCA operates in 19 elementary schools with before and after school programs and has 12 childcare sites, both grant and non-grant funded. The YMCA wants to be there to support community efforts and be a great community partner. The footprint in the Town of Berlin is starting to grow and the YMCA has 2 day camps and partners with 3 elementary schools and also the transition academy. Lifeguard training certification through the Red Cross is also available at the YMCA.

YMCA CEO Benigni shared the design layout of the Meriden YMCA and noted that not all rooms would be built the same in Berlin, but the design symbolizes what the spaces are used for. The outside is a 2-story building with handicap access. A community room is located as you are entering and that can be used for things like Little League registrations, first aid and CPR classes, condo association meetings, etc. The room is free to use and reserve. The pool is highly visible with windows all around, it has 6 lanes with no diving board. Platt and Maloney High School pools are both 6 lanes and run swim meets. Balancing one pool is a dilemma. Swimmers want a cooler pool and aqua aerobic participants want a warmer pool. The biggest program for seniors is aqua aerobics. The YMCA has 90 kids on swim team and the Berlin High School swim teams also swim and practice there.

There are administrative offices, bathrooms off the hallway and a gathering space with bistro tables. Part of the community aspect of the YMCA is people gathering together and socializing. Many members come to the YMCA to socialize rather than to workout. They want comradery and to be around people and feel like they are part of something.

The Meriden YMCA has a ChildWatch program and childcare area designed to allow parents time to workout. ChildWatch is included in memberships. Parents must be onsite at all times. The hours are 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. The Town of Berlin would need a smaller childcare room than Meriden's as it is slightly oversized. Meriden YMCA added pickleball. The court divides in half for volleyball, indoor soccer, etc. Baseball pitching can also take place as it is a full-size gym. Dividers move sideways. It is a high school size gymnasium and above it is a suspended track. Both the women's and men's locker rooms have saunas and locker rooms connect to the pool area, making it easy to change and go to the pool. The fitness center is upstairs. Family locker rooms have a sub-contained toilet and shower facilities for children.

There are 2 racquetball courts, 2 stories high, and they take up a lot of space with limited use. Upstairs is a multi-purpose room / fitness center with a compression wood floor made for fitness. The YMCA offers 25 different aerobic classes per week and dance classes for children. Also, there is a multi-purpose room with tile flooring designed for meetings. Events that take place in that room include karate classes, birthday parties and a retired men's group meets there to play cards. Further down is the fitness center with 5 to 10 treadmills and a spinning studio. There is enough equipment for a good workout and it has everything you need, but the facility is not in competition with big box gyms. Offsite, the YMCA has a 66-acre day camp. YMCA CEO Benigni advised having field space and there is opportunity in Berlin for field space. You can do more with additional fields and it would add to the YMCA. Meriden YMCA is downtown and no field space is available. Playscapes and running tracks can also be built outside.

YMCA CEO Benigni said that some of the questions the YMCA received in advance from the Community Senior Center Advisory Committee are premature to answer, but they did their best. All of the questions if chosen to do a YMCA in the Town of Berlin would be answered, but at this point some are TBD.

Mr. Grady said what we would build in Berlin would be geared towards the Berlin community. YMCA CEO Benigni is not proposing to mirror the image of the Meriden facility, it is a sample of what the rooms would be. A smaller ChildWatch room in Berlin would be better. Not sure about racquetball courts, but 8 lanes of swimming and a



diving well is needed, plus stands for seating when you host a meet. All of those things are important for swimmers. Mr. Grady asked what the square footage is for the Meriden YMCA. YMCA CEO Benigni said about 30k sq. ft. It is 33.9k sq. ft.

Ms. Bovee asked about a therapy pool and CEO Benigni's thoughts. The Meriden YMCA uses their current pool for water aerobics. YMCA CEO Benigni said you are capable of doing it if money is no issue. The Meriden YMCA can't compete with the current plans, it is not in the same ball game, but a pool like Meriden's with additional space for stands and a diving well could serve this community well. Ms. Bovee asked what temperature is the competition pool kept at? YMCA Operations Director Markoja said 83 to 83.5, low 80's. Ms. Bovee asked what temperature for swim meet competitions at Platt High School? YMCA Operations Director Markoja said that is a similar temperature, 80 to 81. Ms. Bovee thought normally a pool is cooler for competitions. YMCA CEO Benigni added that he would not be surprised if Platt High School's pool is cooler than the Meriden YMCA, but not 90 compared to 80, it is within a few degrees difference.

Chairman Luddy asked if YMCA CEO Benigni thinks the people in the Town of Berlin would support putting in a YMCA. YMCA CEO Benigni said there is a need for a space like the YMCA and they would love to be part of it.

Ms. Bovee said there was a question about saturation and the answer was to be determined. YMCA CEO Benigni said the New Britain YMCA did a study and determined that it could work in the Town of Berlin, but that was 6 to 7 years ago. The study said the population could support the YMCA. It looked at the cost of lifeguards and electric charges etc. With a population of 20k people it wasn't out of the charts, but it was better than break even. We are positioned to break even on a situation like Berlin. Every community deserves a great YMCA. Mr. Grady said it certainly has the means to break even as a 30k sq. ft. vs. 70k sq. ft. facility. YMCA CEO Benigni said certainly, no question about it and done in a capacity that can afford that.

Ms. Gombotz asked how do you handle your senior programs? YMCA CEO Benigni said the Meriden YMCA facility during the day is an extension of the Senior Center in Meriden. Silver Sneakers is offered through insurance and there is a membership reimbursement. Analysis shows that in the Town of Berlin, 60% of seniors would be eligible for Silver Sneakers, or a subsidized membership which makes it free to join the YMCA. Seniors are currently eligible to come to the Meriden or New Britain YMCA and get the same benefit. If the YMCA built something in Berlin we would hopefully have that. Meriden has chair aerobics called Silver Sneakers and aqua aerobics which is one of the largest programs during the day, primarily dominated by seniors. The YMCA is very senior oriented Monday through Friday, until about 3 p.m. Ms. Gombotz asked how would you subsidize Silver Sneakers? YMCA CEO Benigni said the YMCA always had a discounted membership for seniors. No one at the YMCA is turned away for an inability to pay. The need may have to be demonstrated, but no one would be turned away. The YMCA is purposely raising money for that purpose, to not turn anyone away for inability to pay. Ms. Gombotz asked if membership is by the year or monthly. YMCA CEO Benigni said there is no annual 12 month contract, you can cancel anytime, but it takes 30 days to cancel your membership. Bank drafting takes time to stop. Members can re-join at anytime.

Chairman Luddy asked about the YMCA being an extension of the senior center and if the YMCA coordinates the programs with them? Chairman Benigni said the YMCA is definitely familiar with the Senior Center of Meriden and is trying to coordinate the best we can. The senior population in Meriden is big enough where we could serve both. One of the biggest things at the senior center is the lunch program. We don't touch lunch at the YMCA. The YMCA doesn't replace the senior center, but the YMCA could be an extension of it to further serve that population.

Ms. Bovee said based on the Statement of Needs for the seniors, every town that has a YMCA, runs a separate senior center because there are different needs. Our seniors have vans available to take them shopping and to medical appointments. What you are saying is the town would still need to run a senior center for some or all of the activities. YMCA CEO Benigni said that is a town decision. But it wouldn't be something the YMCA is planning on providing. Ms. Bovee said could you do everything plus the pool? YMCA CEO Benigni said no, we are not a facility with a kitchen for lunch programs and also unfamiliar with all of Berlin's senior programs. There are a lot of



additional programs that could become available with the addition of the YMCA. Mr. Grady said the YMCA would be a supplement. YMCA CEO Benigni said yes absolutely.

Ms. Gombotz asked who would schedule the activities at the senior center? YMCA CEO Benigni said whoever is directing the senior center. The YMCA would schedule the services at the YMCA in conjunction with them. Lunch is a big deal in Meriden and not the best time to have an aerobics class. The YMCA would work off of those schedules to provide more opportunities and less conflicts. Ms. Gombotz asked if someone working separate from the senior center would schedule the senior program? YMCA CEO Benigni said separate, we have someone trained to do the senior programming. The schedule is done by the Health and Wellness Director and she works with the Operations Director on the schedule and it rotates. There are times throughout the year, winter is more dominate with indoor programs. In the summer we have a beautiful outdoor day camp with senior activities going on. Ms. Gombotz asked if the YMCA has health programs like blood pressure screenings for seniors? YMCA CEO Benigni said the only program is a cardiac rehab program which is similar and has blood pressure screening.

YMCA CEO Benigni said he understands every question asked and why it was on there, but some are premature to answer.

Ms. Bovee asked about financials and said are they available online in GuideStar? YMCA CEO Benigni said it is a public record of our financials, about 4 year's worth are on GuideStar. YMCA CEO Benigni will send Director of Community, Recreation and Park Services Ochoa a copy of the YMCA's latest audit. It is available online as well. Ms. Bovee said as discussed, it would hopefully be break even for Berlin. How has the Meriden YMCA done and with COVID, did you break even, or lose money tax wise? YMCA CEO Benigni said during COVID, 2020 we lost money. In 2021 the YMCA got into government funded programs and flipped that. On an average year the YMCA come in just about balanced as an association, that is all 3 towns. The YMCA had a \$60M budget with \$200k surplus, and also less than \$200k. Trying to get a \$60M budget to exactly zero is a challenge. If a YMCA is built in Berlin, YMCA CEO Benigni would want Berlin as an association to remain as that viable YMCA that is fully funding depreciation too.

Ms. Bovee said other than grants, philanthropy and donations which the YMCA does a good job with, the rest is funded by fees and with the fees, over a period of time you would try to recover the cost of the building? YMCA CEO Benigni agreed and said at first try to limit the cost of the building to the best of your ability with fundraising. Raise as much funds as you could and potentially maybe mortgage a portion of that building and go from there. Over the course of time, the new budget would take into consideration the cost of the building, the mortgage and raise those necessary costs on a monthly and annual basis for the term of the loan. Ms. Bovee asked about fundraising being all local? YMCA CEO Benigni said he might of misunderstood the question and said don't limit fundraising to all local, but there might be more success with local foundations, but certainly not all local. I would not limit ourselves to just Berlin, New Britain and Meriden. There is opportunity beyond that.

Mr. Cyr asked if the Meriden and New Britain facility would remain open? YMCA CEO Benigni said yes. Meriden wasn't in great shape and we rectified that quickly and got it going in the right direction. YMCA CEO Benigni and the YMCA Board of Directors believe every community deserves the YMCA experience. There were fears of closing the New Britain facility when they merged because it wasn't doing that well. The YMCA persevered and is financially strong, no longer in the red. Mr. Cyr said the New Britain facility is older. YMCA CEO Benigni said it is older and bigger at 90k sq. ft. Modifications were done and some space there can be repurposed, the facility has 8 racquetball courts. It is a big childcare YMCA and repurposing space would better suit the community.

Mr. Urrunaga asked how long does a feasibility study usually take? YMCA CEO Benigni said it is to be determined, but a year at the most. Depends on the level that we want to go to, what the property looks like, what kind of building we are going to use, etc. The study to see if the community would support a YMCA is about 4 to 5 months. The uncertainty is whether this is feasibility to build a building on the site, or feasibility for a YMCA to sustain because the timing would be different. Mr. Urrunaga asked when would you start, is it when there is a



contract? YMCA CEO Benigni said he is only presenting to tell the committee about what the YMCA could do and see where it takes us.

Mr. Grady asked about the time it takes from reaching an agreement with the Town of Berlin to getting to shovel to the ground, is there a rough timeframe? YMCA CEO Benigni said the soonest would be a year and a half, for shovel to the ground. Ms. Bovee said because that includes fundraising. YMCA CEO Benigni said yes.

Ms. Bovee asked about childcare in the Town of Berlin at Willard School. YMCA CEO Benigni said we run a day camp at Willard School and run a before and after school program at Willard school. Ms. Bovee asked and a day camp during the summer? YMCA CEO Benigni said right. Ms. Bovee said just looking at previous financials, the money is made in childcare. One of the questions the Community Senior Center Advisory Committee asked the YMCA was how does it work with the swim team and childcare? There is a reciprocal agreement. Our swim teams don't pay the YMCA currently for pool use and Ms. Bovee assumes the same goes for the Meriden school system. The YMCA doesn't pay the Town of Berlin for childcare at Willard School, is that the reciprocal agreement, including the summer camp? YMCA CEO Benigni said correct, but the YMCA does pay for field usage and building usage for the camp. Ms. Bovee said those monies right now help fund the Meriden and New Britain YMCA. If money is being made in Berlin for child care, rightfully so since the YMCA is running it, the money goes back there. When the Town of Berlin has a YMCA, if we move forward, will there be additional childcare that you foresee? Ms. Bovee said she is trying to understand how the Berlin YMCA can be favorably impacted for fees to keep the membership fees down. YMCA CEO Benigni said there is potential, the community dictates the direction that we go. The YMCA is seeking additional childcare spots as we speak. Once those spots fill up the community has a waiting list. The YMCA is here to serve the community and the community dictates what services are needed. If there is a need for more childcare, that is what the YMCA did in Meriden and New Britain. YMCA CEO Benigni said he feels the direction of his board.

Vice President, Meriden-New Britain-Berlin YMCA Board of Directors Rittman added that one thing to consider is that we are one YMCA, in 3 towns, if Berlin needs to be shared up by some of our other daycare proceeds, that money is going to come from Meriden and New Britain, or wherever the YMCA has facilities. It is not just Berlin that is funding this, it is a joint effort. The YMCA had to accomplish that as a board when they merged with Berlin and New Britain. It took a lot of time to get the board members, there was a New Britain board, a Meriden board and people from Berlin. When the YMCA merged, the Board of Directors was looking to make a commitment to try to build something in Berlin. All of the money is one big pool, over the last 4 years since the YMCA merged, everybody has come together. The YMCA has board members from New Britain, Berlin and Meriden on the Board of Directors. Ms. Bovee asked if the membership fees are all the same for the 2 facilities and then the same for Berlin? YMCA CEO Benigni said they are very similar. Some of the fees and categories the YMCA didn't have in Meriden or New Britain. Over last 4 years the YMCA worked diligently to narrow categories down and have symmetry across the association in fees. Ms. Bovee asked are they different fees, or the same? YMCA CEO Benigni said different, but very similar. Upon merging some fees or categories were being offered at one community and not the other. The YMCA did not want to pull the rug out from anyone.

Director of Community, Recreation and Park Services Ochoa asked if the YMCA is familiar with the Patterson Way property that was discussed by the Planning and Zoning Commission and Town of Berlin Architect Arcari as being a good site. YMCA CEO Benigni said he is familiar with where it is located and walked it, but beyond that no.

Ms. Gombotz asked about the childcare and pool programs being together, how would that work for the senior program? Would they be pooled together also, or would they have to go to a different YMCA? Depending on how you do the programs. YMCA CEO Benigni said the senior programs would be offered in all 3 communities and all 3 YMCA's. There may be staff that are doing some aerobic classes in Berlin, Meriden and New Britain. The YMCA is one association, but you would be able to go to Meriden if you love that aqua aerobics class and instructor and want to do 2 classes in 1 day, you are more than welcome to attend there too.



YMCA CEO Benigni thanked the committee for the opportunity to present and said the YMCA is there to serve and give back to the community. The YMCA wants to do great things in each community and no one will be turned away for an inability to pay.

## 6. Open Discussion

Chairman Luddy said for the next meeting, the committee can start thinking how we can start pulling this all together. As discussed at the last meeting, the committee will try and get a report for the Town Council. Mr. Thurston mentioned visiting another facility, but unsure if there is time. Maybe search online for some pictures and get ideas. The committee has been to a couple YMCA's and newer facilities and has a conceptual plan. Chairman Luddy has been writing down his thoughts and the committee can discuss next week.

Director of Community, Recreation and Park Services Ochoa said the committee can put together a PowerPoint presentation with the information for Town Council, but the information needs to come from the Community Senior Center Advisory Committee. The committee can either bring it, or send it out together with the agenda package, but the committee will need to approve it and Director of Community, Recreation and Park Services Ochoa will then put the content into a PowerPoint presentation. That is what the committee needs to start focusing on. Chairman Luddy said we have the visits, notes, and the financial discussion from last meeting. The committee should keep it simple and show people the charges the committee was given, what was looked at and some of the thoughts. Ms. Bovee said she talked with Chairman Luddy about reaching out on swim team costs incurred, just to have potential offset savings. Ms. Bovee said that Chairman Luddy also asked that Director of Community, Recreation and Park Services Ochoa and the town staff put together some operating budget to look at if we were going to move ahead. Director of Community, Recreation and Park Services Ochoa said we started and put together potential staffing and equipment, but it is very time consuming to actually put costs next to that, especially on a giant scoreboard and timer for example. We would have to meet with a vendor, they don't just email you that cost, but Park and Recreation does have a thorough list on equipment and potential staffing. Still trying to work on the senior centers team. Senior Center Director Doyle has been out for a few weeks. Having actual costs associated with everything is going to be extremely difficult, but we do have an itemized list of equipment that we don't think of and potential staffing, union positions and who would be considered part time positions.

Mr. Grady asked if we could get numbers on the usage of the existing senior center? They have a badge swipe system. How many people use that facility per day? Ms. Gombotz said the senior center has a list of people that sign in every time. We know whose there and not there, how many people are using the building and different programs. Director of Community, Recreation and Park Services Ochoa believes that it counts each individual visit, if Ms. Gombotz comes at 9:00 a.m. for a program and then returns at 2:00 p.m., it counts as 2 swipes visits. Mr. Grady said it would be a little more complicated to breakdown how many people. Director of Community, Recreation and Park Services Ochoa said it is based on how many people are registered for the senior center, we have a list of our memberships and then we could come up with a list of how many people visit the senior center. Ms. Bovee said she believes Ms. Gombotz brought some statistics to an earlier meeting about the number of visits made to the senior center. Director of Community, Recreation and Park Services Ochoa said Superintendent of Recreation Dennis also came up with something for the community center on who uses it each day.

Mr. Cyr put together a rough draft table of contents on what topics should be in the presentation and gave committee members copies. Some of the numbers are not correct, but a comprehensive report has to be given to the Town Council and this would be a start. A few of Finance Director Delaney's charts are included. Mr. Cyr said he included what he thought was important to share. Chairman Luddy said he appreciated that and Mr. Grady said there is a lot of good information. Chairman Luddy approved giving a copy to Director of Community, Recreation and Park Services Ochoa. Ms. Bovee thinks it is important to include staff because they know how things operate and can provide feedback on how it works. Mr. Cyr added that he doesn't know if you want Director of Community, Recreation and Park Services Ochoa's copy to be shared. Ms. Bovee agreed and said no. Mr. Cyr said it is a Word document and the committee can use bits and pieces from it. Ms. Bovee said it is really good and



maybe put on top of it a PowerPoint presentation with the details. Also, go through the task-list and make sure we hit the task and answer those questions in the PowerPoint. To have this type of thing behind it is really good, we need this and the public wants to know. Chairman Luddy thanked Mr. Cyr for his effort.

Ms. Gombotz added that is excellent and thank you. Chairman Luddy said the committee is going to digest everything. Mr. Urrunaga said it is a good start. Director of Community, Recreation and Park Services Ochoa said the committee will have a working group next meeting. Ms. Bovee asked if the committee would we be able to put operating costs review on the agenda and review whatever information is available? Director of Community, Recreation and Park Services Ochoa said she will work with Chairman Luddy on adding that and not sure if she will have everything, but will get the attendance numbers for the senior center.

Ms. Bovee said based on this meeting we will add the YMCA. Mr. Cyr did not put much in the table of contents about the YMCA. Mr. Grady said we are covered, he toured the Meriden YMCA and it is really nice for its age and surprisingly big.

Ms. Gombotz added that she is concerned about not enough for the seniors. The current programs that we have now, we are in charge of ourselves and Ms. Gombotz sees how much people appreciate what we have there and doesn't want to give that up. Ms. Gombotz is afraid it is not going to be the same direction with the seniors. They are not going to turn anyone away, but there is a concern about the programs. People enjoy the current programs so much and we don't want to eliminate those things. Director of Community, Recreation and Park Services Ochoa said if you go with the YMCA option, YMCA CEO Benigni is not looking to come in here and build a 70 sq. ft. facility that the conceptual plan is, he is coming as an addition to the senior center. The programs that are run at the Senior Center would stay, but we would have the YMCA option in town as well which would add additional programs. The senior center would stay where it is. Parks and Recreation would still be an operating department. Ms. Bovee added that in towns where the YMCA operates, there might be some things the YMCA offers that complement the town, but to say the senior center will stay as it is, the programs hopefully will remain, but it is up to the town to decide if they build a new senior center. That is how this started. The Town of Berlin's current senior center has outlived its use, that was the take. Whether we keep what we have and the YMCA being an option to compliment it, or you build a combined community senior center. Or you do separate senior center and community center, but a combined would make more sense. That is what we need to go through in the Statement of Needs that we gave to the YMCA on Park and Recreation and senior center. YMCA CEO Benigni articulated that the YMCA can't do what we do at the senior center. Park and Recreation might be able to do what is in the Statement of Needs. The rooms that we currently have below the library, those can stay as community center meeting rooms. Park and Recreation is running the parks and recreational programs of the town. Where you do that is up to the town to decide.

Chairman Luddy said we all know there is work to be done. Mr. Grady said a lot of the town facilities did not have senior centers, there was a common theme that any place with a community center and pool, didn't have a senior center. Mr. Grady thought there would be more senior centers combined and there aren't. Ms. Bovee said the current wave is to combine because you have a lot of the same resources, the seniors use the gym during the day, teens use it after school and families use it at night. Pool, gym, meeting rooms, aerobic room, dance floor. The newer ones start to combine and don't have 2 separate spaces. Mansfield is 30 years old, but Newtown and Glastonbury have separate senior centers. Branford has a combined facility, but no pool. Mr. Grady said the senior center is used during day for meals, exercise and companionship. Ms. Bovee said it does programs, activities, socials, meals, medical transport, etc. The senior center is fairly active. Mr. Grady said none of that would change, or go away. Ms. Bovee said the committee would present the facts to the town our facts and the town makes the decisions, not the committee.

Ms. Gombotz said we started out doing just a senior center, then senior and community center was the future trend. Ms. Gombotz feels like we are separating it now and is afraid of eliminating any programs. It is a win-win situation for everyone, but Ms. Gombotz does not want to get off track. Ms. Gombotz said the senior center has a lot going on and the programs are full during the day. It is a busy place.

Chairman Luddy said this is a learning experience. The committee saw some new facilities and talked with people running them about what worked and didn't work. The committee is not trying to make decisions, just gathering information to push forward and keep it moving.

7. Adjournment

Mr. Urrunaga moved to adjourn at 7:30 p.m.

Seconded by Mr. Grady.

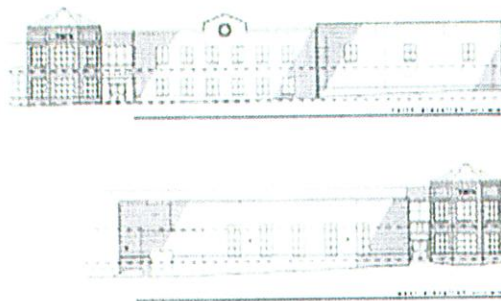
Vote being 6-0. MOTION CARRIED

Submitted by,  
Alina Brown



## Meriden YMCA

Meriden, Connecticut



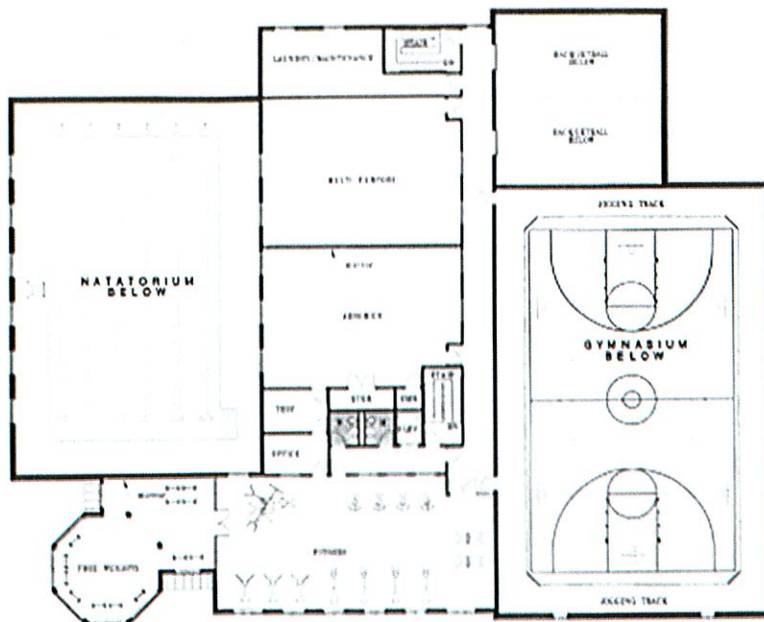
**Client:** Meriden YMCA  
Meriden, Connecticut

**Project:** New 33,900 sq ft YMCA Facility consisting of a Gymnasium with suspended Jogging Track; a Natatorium with 6 lane swimming Pool, Racquetball Courts; a Fitness Center; Free Weights Workout Room; Aerobics Room; Large & Small Multi-Purpose Rooms; Family Lockers, Adult Lockers & Children's Lockers; a Nursery; & Administrative Offices.

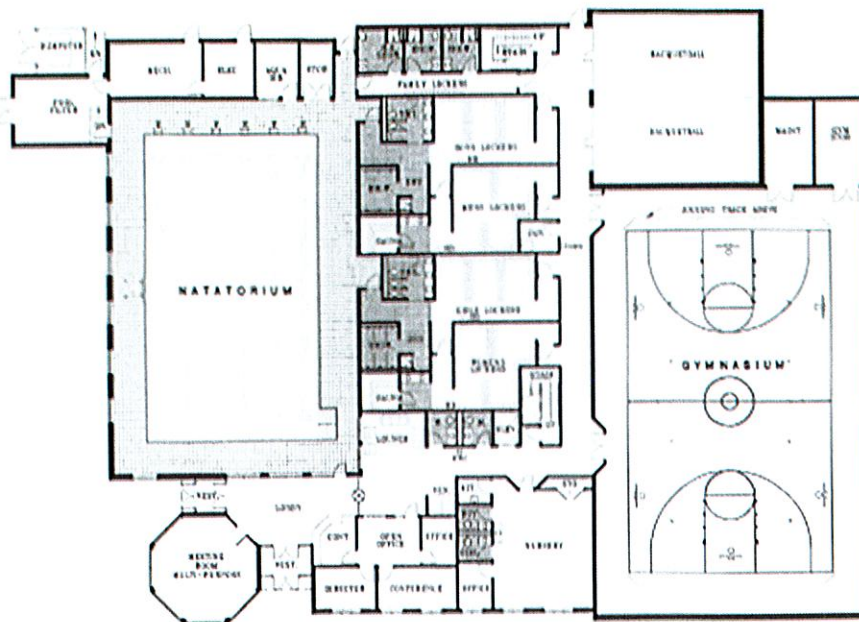
**Features:** The building was designed to fit on a tight downtown urban site and featured a prominent octagon with public meeting room overlooking Main Street.

**Services:** Programming; Site Planning & Building Design; Presentation Drawings; Construction Documents; Construction Cost Estimate





SECOND FLOOR PLAN



FIRST FLOOR PLAN



## QUESTIONS FOR JOHN BENIGNI FROM THE COMMUNITY/SENIOR CENTER ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Please review the attached Statements of Needs that were prepared by the Berlin Parks and Recreation Commission and the Commission on Aging. Comment on each and identify that a local Berlin YMCA can or cannot meet the needs addressed in the statements for our Parks and Recreation Department and Senior Center.

### FINANCIALS and FUNDING

1. Would you please provide 5 years of the latest financials (audited if applicable) and Federal Income Tax Returns? In addition, can you provide a detailed overview of your current full year budget and budget actual, revenue and expenditures to year to date? **Online GuideStar provides 4 years of financials.**
  - a. Please provide a breakdown of revenue (philanthropy, grants, government bonding, memberships, program fees, child care, annual fundraising campaign, etc.). **Online GuideStar**
  - b. If the Meriden YMCA is what you envision Berlin to be most similar to, are there separate financial for just Meriden with numbers of participation and other benchmarks you may use? **We are one organization and each community has its own budget/benchmarks and Berlin YMCA will TBD.**
    - i. Are Meriden YMCA membership fees in line with what your thoughts for Berlin would be or would the basis of fees be different? Are Meriden membership fees different from New Britain? **Based on the various categories some are similar and some are different.**
  - c. Please provide the Berlin childcare and summer camp program financials.
    - i. If child care and summer camps is where the YMCA's make money, the Berlin YMCA child care and camp profits would not be incremental to a new Berlin YMCA facility. Does that mean the new Berlin YMCA facility fees would not be favorably impacted by the profits from Berlin child care and summer camp? **Not applicable at this time.**
2. Who would you use as your professional fundraiser and how do you go about choosing that? **To be determined. We would use the National YMCA as a resource.**
  - a. What is the estimated expense for that? **TBD.**
3. How long does the fundraising campaign last before a new Y facility breaks ground? **TBD and best case scenario 1 year.**
4. Please provide the timeline with key steps (feasibility study, architect design, fundraising, bidding, construction, opening, etc.) **TBD and best case scenario 1 year.**
5. What does the feasibility study look at and will it consider area YMCAs surrounding Berlin? What is the YMCA's saturation point? Has such a study been performed for a YMCA facility in Berlin? **All questions will be answered upon completion of feasibility study.**
  - a. Does Berlin's current population support the need for a YMCA facility that is sustainable? **TBD a formal study will be conducted.**

- b. Will it consider consolidation with the Town departments or any other services elsewhere, including the Meriden and/or New Britain YMCAs? **No-we will work in conjunction with the town and others to work with them not to compete with them.**
6. Does the YMCA have its own group of contractors, architects, or engineers it typically works with, or would the Y be reaching out to the Town and working with us on what we are looking for? Are there any estimates on what a YMCA facility would currently cost to build? **Yes we do. It will depend on what the facility will have in it but estimate is to be determined.**
7. Given all fundraising is local and looking at your experience from other locations, what do you feel a community like Berlin would be able to offer in local donations (businesses and residents)? It has been mentioned that YMCAs have access to certain donations that town government may not; is that correct and please provide examples. **We are a non-profit 501c3 and can qualify for different grants and donations etc. that are not available to the town.**
8. Does each YMCA have a local annual fundraising campaign to offset operating or other costs? **Yes. They are all incorporated into our organization wide annual campaign.**

#### COMMUNITY

9. What are your plans to work with the existing staff at Parks and Recreation and the Senior Center if there is to be YMCA built in Berlin? Does the YMCA look at its operation in a town as a compliment to a town funded Parks and Recreation Department and a Senior Center? How would you collaborate with them? **All to be determined but we have had great success in New Britain and Meriden working with both Park and Rec Depts. as well as the Senior Centers.**
10. How will the YMCA include seniors in its mission statement to coincide with the needs of seniors in Berlin? Berlin has approximately 20,000 residents with approximately 5200 over the age of 60. The Silver Sneakers program is available where approximately 65% of them qualify according to our study. No one will be turned away for the inability to pay. Meriden and New Britain have a Town Senior Center. Do you foresee Berlin maintaining a town funded Senior Center if a YMCA is built in Berlin? **It will continue to be the towns responsibility.**
11. What is the advantage of being a Berlin resident if they decide to become a member of the Berlin YMCA? **Discounted rates, convenience of the facility, use of meeting rooms and a pool with school meets and recreational use.**
12. How would a practice/competition schedule be worked out with the BHS swim/dive team?
  - a. Would they be able to pay a special rate to use the pool at their need? **Free use. The anticipation will be that the schedule is similar to what it is now in Meriden.**
  - b. Who would keep the proceeds if tickets and concessions were to be sold at meets?  
**Berlin HS**
13. How would the addition of a Berlin YMCA alter the agreements already in place such as the child care facilities in the schools, the summer camp and the transition academy? **Not at all.**
14. What does the YMCA currently pay the Board of Education in Berlin for usage of the schools for these programs and does it currently charge the Board of Education for usage of the pool and what are those numbers? **We currently have a reciprocal facility use agreement.**
15. Would the plan be to run after school/child care programs and summer camp at the YMCA instead of at the schools? Or would you remain in the Berlin schools? **Before and after school will remain at schools and summer camp TBD.**



16. Would any programs/services be restricted to Berlin residents only? Or would it be open to any YMCA members of Meriden, Berlin, New Britain, other YMCAs? **YMCA is open to all members.**
17. What does the National YMCA organization provide to the local YMCAs and what are the benefits received from the National organization? Do you incur fees paid to them? **National YMCA software, training guidelines, standards, and consulting. Yes we incur fees as we are a National affiliate.**
18. What kind of commitment is the YMCA looking for from Berlin? Land? Financial? Etc. **TBD- assistance not yet identified.**
19. The idea of a proposed Community/Senior Center has benefits in terms of financial, social and intergenerational programming and usage. How would the YMCA "sell" building and operating a YMCA facility, especially if fundraising is local? **N/A-We are looking to possibly build a full service YMCA to enhance the people of the community.**
20. The fitness center at the Meriden YMCA is much larger than our Community Center. Is the YMCA perceived to or does it compete with local gyms and would a Berlin YMCA have as large a fitness center? **We are not looking to compete with local gyms. We are non-profit organization and not just a gym. No one is turned away for the inability to pay.**

#### **MISCELLANEOUS**

21. Do you have any information on why Cheshire built their own town pool rather than working with the Cheshire/Southington YMCA? **No information.**
22. Do you have any knowledge or information on any YMCA pulling out of building a facility in a town due to lack of funding? What happens if the funding is not raised for the design? **Not to our knowledge. We do not see the funding for the design as an issue.**
23. Are you aware or have any information on a joint YMCA/Municipal building anywhere, such as New Jersey? **We know there are cities/towns that have a YMCA do work together on special projects and run some programs together. We are not aware of a joint YMCA/municipal building project.**