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Community / Senior Center Advisory Committee

Thursday, March 31, 2022 @ 6:00 PM

Board of Education Conference Rooms

Special Meeting

1. Call to Order
2. Roll Call
3. Audience of Citizens
4. Approval of Minutes, March 24, 2022
5. Discussion of items to include in presentation
6. Open Discussion
7. Adjournment

Join Zoom Meeting

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Community / Senior Center Advisory Committee

Thursday, March 24, 2022 @ 6:00 PM

Board of Education Conference Rooms

Special Meeting Minutes

1. Call to Order

Chairman Luddy called the meeting to order at 6:03 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

Tim Thurston, 100 Saw Mill Dr.

Mr. Thurston said with some competition pools you have people walking around puddles of water on the poolside deck and you don't want that especially for the elderly. Mr. Thurston shared a printout showing what a poorly designed pool spectator area looks like. Mr. Thurston asked if the committee will present specific parts of the design to the Town Council and give recommendations? Also, will the town come back and ask the committee what can we cut? Director of Community, Recreation and Park Services Ochoa said I believe the process is this committee will make a recommendation to Town Council. Town Council can decide whatever they want to do. Town Council can send it back to the Public Building Commission with a recommendation that they go back to the two commissions that wrote the Statement of Needs. Asking them to scale back the Statement of Needs, thus creating a new conceptual design, but it is all based on recommendations. Mr. Thurston asked if normally they take your recommendations? Director of Community, Recreation and Park Services Ochoa said this is not a normal frequent thing where there is a huge project and a sub-committee. Mr. Grady said this is on the same level of building a school, like when we did the high school renovation. We are not experts either, just regular citizens trying to learn this process and do the best we can for the town. The committee has contact with the Town Council and both Chairman Luddy and Mr. Urrunaga are on Town Council. They are aware of the whole process we are going through. Ms. Bovee said we are supposed to present factual information and one of the tasks is presenting information on two options. We will go through what should we present, the two options, and will be reporting on pros and cons. Also, any feedback we receive from our visits, discussions, or guests and maybe audience of citizens to put into our

report. Regarding the spectator stands, one of the things I put in was it is something we are looking at. Everybody is doing pros and cons for the report and we will take the best of everybody's and come up with a presentation. So included is the spectator pool area, I highlighted it and understand it. We have the architect there and that might be something that is not necessarily a change in the Statement of Needs, but it is a design change. Something that we have learned from listening to people. Mr. Thurston asked who makes the final presentation changes and who makes the decision for example, what size our kitchen will be? Ms. Bovee said the Town Council and the Board of Finance, each one has to make a decision, from what I understand, to move it forward to a referendum. Both parties have to agree to move it to a referendum. The Town Council might decide to digest it and take some time and try to understand it a little bit more and then they might talk about it. It is really those two bodies. Chairman Luddy added the committee gathers the information and learns a lot of things about the facilities. The recommendation for the Town Council is the two commissions involved may want to take a look at it. The Town Council would then say, we want to present the design, vote on it, and maybe we let them sit with the Public Building Commission and suggest changes. Then it would come back to the Town Council. Mr. Thurston asked if the committee will keep going and they come back for recommendations? Chairman Luddy said he believes the committee is done at that point. Director of Community, Recreation and Park Services Ochoa agreed. Ms. Bovee said we would have fulfilled our responsibilities.

Ms. Gombotz said she thanked the Thurston's and the Norton's for coming and appreciates their support, input and knowledge.

Dan Thurston, 16 Conlin Way

Mr. Thurston thanked Ms. Bovee and Director of Community, Recreation and Park Services Ochoa for reaching out and asking questions about the high school swim team. Anything we can do to support your work, we are here to help answer your questions. Also, Cornerstone Aquatic Center in West Hartford just held the all-state tournament because they are the only one that had the place and willing to do so. The architect had built in deck space on the pool deck around the pool in their design. One complaint about the deck space was behind the starting blocks and the end of the pool, there are spectators at the end of the pool. Also, the size of the locker rooms was a concern. Our conceptual design had pretty substantial locker rooms. There was conversation at the event about trying to fit 100 young men into the very small locker room facility. Locker room space design can have a limiting effect.

#### 4. Approval of Minutes, March 14, 2022

Ms. Bovee moved to approve the March 14, 2022 minutes.

Seconded by Ms. Gombotz

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

Vote being 6-0 (MOTION CARRIED).

#### 5. Discussion of items to include in presentation

Chairman Luddy said he will start with Mr. Cyr's presentation. Mr. Cyr said he took the comments from the last meeting and added items and pages based on the feedback received. The second draft copy was handed



out to the committee. The goal was to have the committee go through it page by page and add additional comments. Mr. Cyr thanked Director of Community, Recreation and Park Services Ochoa for working hard and obtaining information from town staff. Some of the changes included spelling error corrections, adding the date the Town Council approved the Community Senior Center Advisory Committee and adding a line stating where to view the entire presentation on-line. Ms. Bovee said to add Director of Community, Recreation and Park Services Ochoa as the Staff Liaison. Also add the committee is composed of 6, instead of "was composed of 6".

Mr. Cyr said there was information in the table of contents provided by Finance Director Delaney. The grant term originally expired on 6/30/20 and there was an extension until 12/31/22. If we are near 12/31/22 and have not used the funds, we can apply for another extension. Director of Community, Recreation and Park Services Ochoa said before the report gets submitted to Town Council, we will get the updated figures. The only expenses coming out of the grant currently is to pay the Recording Secretary for meetings, so the number does change and we will have the most updated numbers. Ms. Bovee said to put "as-is" in the wording and also to fix the wording of Berlin Community and Senior Center, as the words were in the wrong order.

Mr. Urrunaga asked when we say "top options available for consideration", does that mean options this committee is going to submit to the Town Council as our recommendation? Mr. Cyr said he put down what possible options we could look at. Mr. Grady added that we looked at the town facility and the YMCA option. Would one of the options that we put here possibly be recommending to the Town Council to change the scope of the project by sending it back to them and saying we want to look at something that could be smaller, or something like that? Mr. Cyr said he already has it under conclusions at the end, the Town Council should consider looking at a smaller facility. Mr. Urrunaga said he wasn't sure if we wanted that as an option, but under conclusions is fine. Ms. Bovee added that we did not review option C. Ms. Bovee said change it to options studied by, or analyzed, or covered by this committee. Something like that. Options explored by this committee.

Mr. Cyr said there are a lot of different types of YMCA membership fees, but only individual adult rate is shown in the report to save space with a note at the bottom that rates are for one adult person, but there are discounts for youth, senior and families. Ms. Bovee said she could send the detailed membership fees in an Excel spreadsheet to import into the report with columns for the ones that the committee looked at and the different memberships. Ms. Bovee will email the spreadsheet to Director of Community, Recreation and Park Services Ochoa. Also, some of the sites without pools charge differently.

Under site selection and analysis, Mr. Cyr added the cost and value of the land. There were 4 different parcels purchased. Ms. Bovee asked for the current site that we are looking at, the historical purchase price has been \$700k? Mr. Cyr said that is correct, for the 4 pieces that are all together. Mr. Grady asked how many acres? Mr. Cyr said 10.4 acres total and the YMCA did mention they would add an outdoor playscape and a running track. Ms. Bovee added to maybe say there will be a future access road going through it per the conceptual design. Mr. Cyr said he would put "future" in front of Lower Lane.

Ms. Bovee asked if age 60 or above are eligible at the senior center? Director of Community, Recreation and Park Services Ochoa said yes, age 60 or above and confirmed that with Senior Center Director Doyle. Mr. Grady said the membership application does not say age requirements. We should put it on the form. Ms. Bovee asked if for 2020 and 2021 can we put "pandemic"? Mr. Grady reviewed the membership numbers and Director of Community, Recreation and Park Services Ochoa said a lot of people came back when we re-opened and also a lot of new members joined. Ms. Bovee said we might want to put percentage of membership, so that it tells us that 50% of the current membership as of March 1 attended something at the senior center during 2001. Mr. Grady said he would use the 2019 number instead. Mr. Cyr said we could add

member numbers for each year with a percent. The Town Council should know that we have 6k seniors in Berlin and 1,004 use it and that is 18.1%. Director of Community, Recreation and Park Services Ochoa will ask Senior Center Director Doyle for members each year and update the information. Ms. Gombotz said it seems misleading where it says only counts as one active member. If you use two activities, you use the senior center more. Director of Community, Recreation and Park Services Ochoa said the bottom paragraph explains that. Ms. Bovee asked what is the point of putting this in? Mr. Cyr said the point is to show what the demand is. Mr. Grady said this is to guide the Town Council into looking at options of downsizing. Because if we don't need x number of sq. ft., because we don't have as much activity. Ms. Bovee added this is usage and factual information. Expand the senior center to have other activities. Provide seniors with a place to play pickleball. Mr. Urrunaga said adding a pool adds more activities too. Ms. Bovee said a table with a footnote using the same numbers is needed, or the committee can leave that page as is and add columns for percentage with a footnote at the bottom.

Ms. Gombotz asked about the asterisk that says the numbers are calculated, the same person may be counted more than once. Director of Community, Recreation and Park Services Ochoa said correct, that means if you come to the community center and use the gym in the morning and you are part of the Boy Scout troop so you go there twice, that counts as two visits. We don't have memberships, so the only way that we can count is by visits.

Mr. Cyr said the town staff is coming up with calculations on annual operating costs for the new facility and we would add maintenance costs and what FFE would be on page 12 of the report. Ms. Bovee asked about the annual cost of Putnam and thinks Meriden's operating costs are more applicable than Putnam's. Mr. Cyr said the Putnam facility is newer and probably more efficient than Meriden. Page 13 has the Putnam operating costs shown. Ms. Bovee said we should at least get the Meriden information, because that is who would be running it. Putnam reports up to Hartford and is run differently.

Director of Community, Recreation and Park Services Ochoa asked what do you envision the operating hours to be? Mr. Grady said you would probably be open from 6 a.m. until 10 p.m. Director of Community, Recreation and Park Services Ochoa thought the same and asked what about weekends?

Mr. Urrunaga asked if we would be able to use the FFE expenses for the Meriden YMCA too? Just to get an idea on what we are looking to do. Mr. Cyr said that we can use the FFE of any facility that has a pool and community senior center and similar in size. Ms. Bovee said that she met with Director of Community, Recreation and Park Services Ochoa and went through initial thoughts, custodians, public grounds and lifeguards needed some increase. Director of Community, Recreation and Park Services Ochoa is trying to work with that and understand how we are going to operate that building to come up with expenditures and determine the equipment, etc.

For the operating hours, Director of Community, Recreation and Park Services Ochoa added that we can probably agree that 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. is probably a good number to go by. For weekend hours Mansfield is 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. and 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., Newtown is 7 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. and Rocky Hill is not open on weekends. Mr. Grady said we could possibly be 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. on the weekends.

Director of Community, Recreation and Park Services Ochoa said in regards to FFE on page 15, do we want to re-use the existing furniture that we have in the community center and senior center? Mr. Cyr said it is difficult to propose to Town Council that we will use this many number of older desks and for ease of calculating we should look at all new stuff. Director of Community, Recreation and Park Services Ochoa said aside from the tables and chairs at the senior center and a couple of tables at the community center, I was going with all new, but wanted a consensus from the committee. Mr. Cyr said add an asterisk at the bottom



indicating that some of that furniture may be re-purposed, the new stuff. Director of Community, Recreation and Park Services Ochoa just wants to be clear that we are not expected to bring over every piece of furniture from the community center and senior center over there. Ms. Bovee said to put the list in.

Mr. Cyr said that page 16 did not change, it talks about bonding and lists the documents that are going to follow. Page 17 is the bond numbers. Ms. Bovee suggested putting in the tax impact with the mill rate. This will be a public document and we are making the presentation to the residents as well. We should tell them what the impact is. Page 20 is the cleaned-up timeline for the bonding referendum. Page 21 is the same document given on proposed bonding from Finance Director Delaney. Page 22 will be the capital numbers.

Mr. Grady asked if we had a list of surrounding towns? Director of Community, Recreation and Park Services Ochoa said Finance Director Delaney provided the whole state.

Mr. Cyr said page 23 includes 2 paragraphs directly from Finance Director Delaney. The committee should review the information with Finance Director Delaney to make sure that he buys into all of these things. Ms. Bovee said when she had a discussion with Finance Director Delaney, he told her it shouldn't be a downgrade as long as we tell a good story. Every time you meet with the bonding agencies you have to tell the story of why you are doing this. He had the comment that was in our minutes, then we amended the minutes to include that Ms. Bovee said to Finance Director Delaney, if you include the story of how we are planning and doing things and why, will we get a downgrade in your professional opinion? Finance Director Delaney said if we tell a very good story, no. There would not be a downgrade. Show it to Finance Director Delaney and let him put the wording in.

Page 24 is the same document based on the presentation from YMCA CEO Benigni. Mr. Cyr asked do we want to say these are his comments? Director of Community, Recreation and Park Services Ochoa said add "comments from Meriden YMCA CEO Benigni". Page 25 is unchanged from 4 weeks ago. If the YMCA builds it, they are paying to run it. Ms. Bovee said that is where YMCA CEO Benigni said we would look for something from the town. Perhaps land or whatever and that is what the Town Council would have to decide. Unless the town decides to provide any support for the YMCA. Mr. Cyr said page 8 lists some options such as sale of land. Ms. Bovee said to add reference page 8C.

Mr. Cyr said Page 26 is about fundraising and grants. Ms. Bovee asked If Mr. Cyr wants to put fundraising / donations for each? Mr. Cyr said yes.

Mr. Urrunaga asked about page 25, did the YMCA agree to follow our Statement of Needs for that? Director of Community, Recreation and Park Services Ochoa said no, they have stated that they do not meet the Statement of Needs. They are not looking to build the same type of facility. Ms. Bovee said put in the comments that he cannot meet the Statement of Needs. Ms. Bovee added that YMCA CEO Benigni said the YMCA would complement Parks and Recreation and the Senior Center, but not replace.

Mr. Cyr said he will fix a few things on page 27 and call Hospital of Special Care to confirm their pricing to use the pool. Page 28, Ms. Bovee asked if people take this and consider that we are building a competitive pool solely for the swim team, that is erroneous. The pool would be year-round for the community and it includes being done to support the swim teams so they do not have to go out of town. It needs to be stated by making a comment down below that this is an indication of the high school needs, the competitive pool and aquatic center is for the entire community. That is why it is in the Statement of Needs and not just for the swim team. Mr. Cyr said it is intended for the entire community.

Page 31 and 32, Director of Community, Recreation and Park Services Ochoa said item number 7 should read "Peck Memorial Library". Mr. Urrunaga said there is one pro that we can put in, the housing in the old senior center could be expanded. Director of Community, Recreation and Park Services Ochoa said it would revert to the Berlin Housing Authority with the probability of additional senior housing. Director of Community, Recreation and Park Services Ochoa said Ms. Bovee had typed up all of her pros and cons. Ms. Bovee added this is a PowerPoint and it would be part of an appendix. Page 3 also includes pros and cons from Ms. Gombotz. The list has town funded and YMCA option pros and cons. Director of Community, Recreation and Park Services Ochoa will combine them and the committee will look at them next week. Ms. Bovee added that a con for the town funded is you will need a membership for the pools, or whatever is decided. That is a negative because you have to pay for it. Director of Community, Recreation and Park Services Ochoa asked to confirm if you are buying a membership to use the whole building, even if you just want to come in and play basketball or pickleball? Mr. Grady said yes, for the whole building. Any place that had a pool, you had to buy a membership. Chairman Luddy said that will have to be discussed and evaluated.

Ms. Bovee asked about previous discussions on getting professional fundraising and the feasibility study for the YMCA. How will we know when that is going to be done? Director of Community, Recreation and Park Services Ochoa said she can't imagine they would pay to do a feasibility study unless they knew they had the land in Berlin. Mr. Urrunaga said that was a question that he had asked and they would do a feasibility study once we decided to go with them. Ms. Bovee added that YMCA CEO Benigni said New Britain YMCA had done a feasibility study about 6 years ago and it showed that Berlin could support it at best. The national YMCA will require they do a feasibility study to make sure the YMCA can sustain. Mr. Cyr said he and Director of Community, Recreation and Park Services Ochoa will take care of the pros and cons.

The last page, page 35 states that bonding deadlines are weeks away. It also notes that residents will have to pay to join with the YMCA option and that we are not supposed to be biased, whoever reads the report cannot be biased. Ms. Bovee said to make it "keep an open mind".

Ms. Bovee reviewed her analysis document with the committee. The document includes costs and pool membership details. Director of Community, Recreation and Park Services Ochoa will come up with estimated operating expenditures. Page 10 of the document had net operating loss total and mill rate impact in total. This is the PowerPoint with major points. It should show the impact to residents. Grant examples were included and private companies such as Eversource could possibly donate money. Local companies could also help with fundraising activities. Also, there were items noted that could be removed from the design that don't require a change to the Statement of Needs.

## 6. Open Discussion

Director of Community, Recreation and Park Services Ochoa said the next meeting is scheduled for next Thursday, March 31. The committee decided to meet again on April 6 at 6:00 p.m.

Mr. Grady motioned to add a meeting on April 6 at 6:00 p.m.

Seconded by Ms. Gombotz

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

Vote being 6-0 (MOTION CARRIED).

Ms. Bovee asked if we are putting the presentation date as April 19? Mr. Urrunaga said Mayor Kaczynski said doing a special council meeting on April 19, but was just something that was thrown out. Mr. Cyr said we should ask.

Chairman Luddy said everything is coming together.

7. Adjournment

Mr. Bovee moved to adjourn at 8:26 p.m.

Seconded by Mr. Grady.

Vote being 6-0. MOTION CARRIED

Submitted by,  
Alina Brown

Received on 3/28/2022  
at 12:22:14 PM by Town Clerk  
Kathryn J Wall