

Holliston Community Center Task Force Meeting Minutes

Date: 4 February, 2013

Location: Room 105, Holliston Town Hall

1. Meeting Called to Order at 7:00 by Carl Damigella, Chairman.
2. Task Force members in attendance: Carl Damigella, Kristen Hedrick, Mark Ahronian, Tom O'Leary, Keith Buday, Heidi Schreuder-Gibson.
-Audience in attendance: Kevin Conley, Holliston Town Selectman
3. Public comment: there were no public comments offered.
4. Review of the Natick Community Center Facility.

Summary: On Thursday January 24th, Five Task Force members met the Director of the Natick Community Center, Dick Cugini at the new facility and took a guided tour of the building. In summary, the Natick Community Center is a 30,000 foot two-story building on 5 acres of land with parking lots for 135 cars. The Community Center project was just under \$10M. The building floor plan was provided. The building features a full court gymnasium with two-lane walking track around the floor, locker rooms, pull out bleachers (small), and a \$9K floor covering system to protect the floor for multipurpose use. The gym also has storage closets for chairs, an AV system, and a family changing room with showers. There are washer and dryer facilities in a security room, and it is notable that this Center is also an Emergency Shelter site for the Town of Natick. There is a fitness room, which is equipped through a grant from the Metrowest Health Foundation. Charges are \$25/6month for seniors over 60, and \$40/6mo for residents/nonresidents under 60 years old. There are two as well as a multipurpose room for exercise classes (yoga, etc). These are also used for veterans support classes. The check in lobby has a card swipe system and is supported by a large staff area with up to 8 desks for office workers/volunteers. There is a common area for a library/coffee area in view of the front door, with access to a patio area. This was found to be a very inviting and well-used space despite the noise of the lobby. Off the lobby is a gift shop, and an extensive computer room near the entrance. There are monitors and cameras all over the building that feed to the front desk, the security room and the police station. On the opposite side of the building from the gym/locker rooms is the Great Room, containing a dining hall with a stage and a sizable industrial kitchen that is used to prepare Meals on Wheels. The dining hall can be divided in half, and there are separate AV systems for each half – an excellent facility for rentals and events. There are executive offices downstairs including the director's office and a Veteran's affairs office, the Human services/COA office and executive assistant. Upstairs are classrooms with sinks, counters and cabinets for cooking, sewing, knitting and art classes. There is a card room, a TV room, and a game room with two pool tables and an extensive storage area with cages for file and maintenance storage. There are also social services

offices (4) with a counseling waiting room and two conference areas, as well as a health exam room. Staffing: one full-time custodian and two part-time assistants for set up and event support. One Community Center director, front desk staff, and volunteers. The Task Force met with one of the key people involved in the Natick Community Center Planning Committee, Ms. Susan Salamoff, who will provide information about the planning and preparation activities for the Natick Community Center.

The Holliston Community Center Task Force noted that Natick's Community Center was set up well to serve the senior population, and could accommodate after-school activities, but could not support preschool family classes. Natick has another location at the Cole School for their Recreation programs, so that the Community Center does not have to serve all the needs of all populations. This is different than Holliston's needs that do not currently include adequate facilities for Parks and Recreation services for youth and families. We noted that the Natick Center did not house facilities that were in significant competition with the services and facilities that the School Department might make available for rent, so conflict or competition for outside resources were probably not important.

Other comments: when we plan our design, we need to consider all the needs and propose a full plan, rather than a series of phases for building additions to a future Community Center. It is important too make it a center that serves all needs. Our agenda is to also consider accommodating administrative offices for other town departments within the Center.

5. Discussion of Goals, Objectives and Tasks. The Task Force agreed to develop a survey to assess the needs of all the possible stakeholders in the Center, including departments Youth and Family Services, Parks and Recreation, Senior Center, Veterans Affairs, Holliston Historical Commission, and the possible combination of Public Works (Water & Highway) offices. Kristen and Heidi will formulate a survey for projected needs. For example, would the offices of Youth and Family Services have confidentiality and access needs?

6. Assign groups for future Community Center facilities visits. Kristen, Heidi, Carl, Michele and Tom volunteered to survey other community centers, particularly those that house more of the facilities that Holliston needs, including a full Parks and Recreation program. We want to visit the Ashland Center, and other similarly sized towns.

7. Establish a location search group. Carl, Mark and Keith volunteered to identify candidate sites, including town land, private land for sale, and industrial buildings. We would be willing to consider conversion of a commercial building to save money. Carl suggested looking at the Taylor property on Prentice, the town property behind Town Hall (8 acres), the 5 acre lot on Woodland that could take advantage of the sewer treatment plant across the street, the Norkfolk street land at Patoma and other pieces of land.

8. Other comments. Mark asked about the census forecasts – how will the population composition of the town look? We know that families are having fewer children and the residents without school age children are staying in place possibly due to past stagnation in the housing market. We need to consider this when sizing the facility. Also, Carl pointed out that we need to answer, “how much does it cost to run the Center?”

Next meeting: scheduled for Monday 4 March at 7pm.

Meeting Adjourned at 8:50pm.

Respectfully Submitted

By Heidi Schreuder-Gibson, Secretary of the Holliston Community Center Task Force.