

Holliston Community Center Task Force Meeting Minutes

Date: 7 January, 2013

Location: Room 105, Holliston Town Hall

1. Meeting Called to Order at 7:05 by various members.
2. Introductions were made by members in attendance:
 - Tom O’Leary, Interested citizen with no specific affiliation
 - Michele Goldberg, Senior Center representative and former aide to Mass State Senator Karen Spilka
 - Keith Buday, Business Manager School Department and interested in recreational opportunities
 - Bob Nemitt, Highway Department representative
 - Kristen Hedrick, Recreation Department representative
 - Carl Damigella, Water Department representative and past member of the Holliston Board of Selectmen
 - Heidi Schreuder-Gibson, President of Friends of Holliston Youth and Family Services and past member of the Community Center Task Force of 1999.
 - Audience in attendance: Kevin Conley, Holliston Town Selectman, and Paul LeBeau, Holliston Town Administrator.
3. Election of Chair, Vice Chair and Secretary. The following Task Force members were nominated and unanimously voted to positions of Chairman – Carl Damigella; Vice Chair – Tom O’ Leary; Secretary – Heidi Schreuder-Gibson.
4. Discussion of Goals, Objectives and Tasks.

Carl suggested that we needed a town building assessment to determine the facility needs of each department prior to determining potential sites for a Community Center, in order to meet as many urgent facility needs and to leverage as many opportunities as possible during the planning phase.

Senior Center status and needs were discussed – we in the Town of Holliston seem to be reactive, rather than proactive, when dealing with aging town buildings. For example the Senior Center has urgent needs such as the leaking roof. As a building, the Senior Center shouldn’t be written off if a new building was provided for a Senior Center – a shifting of function should be considered. A building like the Senior Center could be considered for functions like the Water Department. If the Water Department was relocated to the Senior Center, the Water Department could purchase the building from the Town for operations – thereby providing seed funds for a new Community Center. This is an example of a “domino effect” in considering all building needs together during planning of new facilities such as the Community Center. The Task Force could be planning a building big enough for multi-use functions and cross-generation activities. Multi-use

functions would involve Parks & Rec; Youth & Family Services; Veteran's Services, the Senior Center, the Historical Commission, and a possible combined Department of Public Works (Water & Highway).

The purpose of the Community Center assessment by the Task Force: to identify and rank the important functions, location considerations, parking accommodations, age of the existing buildings, future service life of existing facilities, future department needs, access, associated property, and available Town property for new buildings.

5. Discussion of Existing Buildings:

Flagg School: original purpose & title restrictions were discussed. The building must be used as a school or a facility whose primary purpose is educational. However, the old building can never be used as a public school again due to the wood frame construction that no longer meets code. The heating system is an old boiler that has a limited life-span left.

Andrews School: not possible to be considered due to parking restrictions

6. Discussion of Land:

Town property behind the VFW – 5 acres, with Boston University (BU) land abutting. This Town land also borders the new Recreation Trail, and is across the street from the Elementary and Middle Schools. The Task Force discussed whether BU could be approached regarding use of abutting acreage in an exchange or mutual interest arrangement (e.g. joint parking).

Potoma Park property, including land under current tennis courts and slope behind. This parcel has a lot of land and could accommodate parking of at least 200 cars. Concern regarding isolation from Town Center was raised, but bussing children and seniors would be an option. This site would accommodate multiple functions, and could provide rented function space, in addition to expanded recreational opportunities. Parks & Rec would have to discuss loss of woodlands and facilities used during summer programs.

Town land behind Golf Course clubhouse (90 acres on Miller Hill). There would be parking and traffic issues for abutting neighborhoods. Not centrally located, so this option has the same isolation problems as Potoma.

7. Needs and Use Analysis.

Kevin Conley suggested that the Task Force begin by analyzing the needs and use requirements of the community and the stakeholders.

Paul Lebeau suggested that the Task Force read the “Lexington Report” a 70-page report of the process that was followed by the Town of Lexington in establishing the needs and performing the due diligence studies to determine the best way to serve the community. The report was and will be emailed to all Task Force members.

Carl Damigella and Kristen Hedrick suggested that the Task Force find out what other towns did to approach the development of their Community Centers. Example questions were:

- How many employees were needed to support the new facilities?
- What were the needs and their priorities?

Kristen will contact the director of the Natick Parks & Recreation Department and schedule a visit during the next week of 14 January to tour the Natick Community Center and ask about Natick’s concept development process.

We talked about the potential for revenue generation at a well-designed Holliston Community Center, but Keith Buday reminded us that the School Department also rents space for functions, classes, and recreation, so there is a zero-sum situation that needs to be considered.

The Task Force also talked about the process of conducting a Needs Survey – suggested to develop the survey and email it via a Town-wide network.

The Task Force discussed the need to survey and list the community volunteer groups in town that need meeting space and who could benefit from a Community Center for meetings and volunteer coordination. A preliminary listing was mentioned, including the Soccer Leagues, the Baseball/Softball League, groups like Celebrate Holliston and the Lions Club (who meet monthly out of town), the PTSA Auction (which needs a bigger in-town facility and always holds their fundraiser out of town), and even Town Committees like the Historical Commission (who meet in the Flagg School). Heidi Gibson noted that in the past, the previous Task Force contacted the library and the churches to get an assessment of how much need there was for meeting space in town.

8. Determination of meeting schedules and conducting tours of local Centers.

The Task Force identified Monday evenings as the best meeting times for the group. Next meeting is scheduled for Monday 28 January, 2013 in room 105 in Town Hall.

In the interim, the Task Force will travel to Natick to meet with the director of Parks & Rec, then report back on the findings on the 28th.

Meeting Adjourned at 8:50pm.

Respectfully Submitted

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