

Senior Center Site Selection Working Group
May 6, 2016
3.00 p.m.
BOS Meeting Room, Town Hall

MINUTES

Present were Jill Bishop, Dick Bowen, Joe Clancy, Sallie Giffen, Robert Leary, Brenda Swain, James Vieira (chairman), Ray Young, Heather Harper (assistant town manager), and Meg Costello (recording secretary). Wendy Vogel was unable to attend.

J. Vieira called the meeting to order at 3:05.

Gus Canty Site Back in Consideration

J. Vieira explained that he had called this meeting, with the approval of the Board of Selectmen (BOS), because the BOS may put the Gus Canty site back into consideration for the new senior center. J. Vieira wanted the working group to go over their opinions about Gus Canty (GC).

J. Vieira asked for members' thoughts.

R. Leary said that seniors who attended the public forums did not want GC. Problems with it include traffic, the bad intersection, and the flood zone. Woods Hole will come out soon with a flood zone study that differs from FEMA's. The town should avoid building on problematic sites.

B. Swain noted that GC is not at the geographical, or population, center of town.

J. Clancy has explored GC from all directions and thinks the site is overburdened already. The town shouldn't add a 20,000 SF building, with parking, there. His opinion has not changed.

D. Bowen said that an Enterprise op-ed, calling for a 2 story building at GC, had completely ignored the flood plain issue. He also asked how the large discrepancy had come about, between the two estimates for what it would cost to relocate the high school soccer field.

H. Harper replied that the first estimate was made by Coastal Engineering after a walk through with consultant Joel Bargmann and a school committee member. But later, the school superintendent, facilities director, and athletic director told her that to relocate the soccer program they needed much more. According to CBM, which builds multi-purpose fields, the new soccer field would need roads, irrigation, 90 parking spots, fences, etc. In particular, a two lane road, not just a cartway, would be needed for tournament play. All this pushed the cost up over \$900,000.

J. Clancy said that \$950,000 sounds reasonable for what the school says is needed. He recalled Columbus Day weekend when he and Joel and Kathleen Burke had found the site. R. Leary asked if there was any space behind the school, but J. Vieira guided members back on topic to Gus Canty.

B. Swain pointed out that we want to expand senior center programming, but how will parking work while the Commodores are playing? Seniors won't be able to have evening programs.

J. Clancy noted that the town is approaching a 50% senior demographic.

R. Young said GC poses conservation issues that might trigger involvement by FEMA or the conservation commission. For instance, what would the parking lot be made of? Would it be impervious? Can seniors utilize that? Is the overflow parking too far away? The conservation commission might classify the bank behind the baseball field as a coastal bank. Even if state regulations don't apply, local regulations may. On flood boundaries, you need spot elevations.

Maps can't always be trusted. If a site is adjacent to the flood zone, other considerations apply. You can't redirect water.

H. Harper said residents often complain that comprehensive capital planning doesn't occur. Some other constituencies feel that the senior center hasn't been vetted. She thought the working group should encourage the BOS to include GC on the consultant's list and let it be vetted.

R. Leary said some of his senior friends are afraid the BOS just doesn't want to take no for an answer, where GC is concerned.

J. Vieira noted that as long as the study is an objective one, then H. Harper is right, and we need to go down this path. Misinformation is being spread, as at the last BOS meeting, about the town's center of population. Assertions are flying from those who haven't done their homework. J. Bargmann, if left alone, will come back with the same answer we can already see. So J. Vieira thought we have no choice other than to let GC be considered, but thought we should tell the BOS about all our questions, reminding them of why the group didn't want GC: traffic, demographics, overburdened site, inadequate parking, conflicts with other programs.

R. Leary asked what would change by allowing the consultant to review GC.

H. Harper explained that those pushing for GC will see the reasons against it, when those reasons are put forth in the consultant's report. Either confront the critics now, or later at the ballot box.

J. Vieira said, regarding combined recreation-senior centers, that COA research shows you end up with a nice recreation center, and seniors in substandard conditions. The BOS should be told these combined places don't work that well.

S. Giffen thought we should pursue better information on GC. J. Clancy thought that GC, when put under the microscope, will show its warts.

J. Vieira read a letter from W. Vogel, who was absent. The soccer field at the high school was her first choice, but she liked the GC site with an exit on Dillingham Ave. She thought the building would need re-configuration, but she liked the idea of a combined recreation and senior center.

J. Vieira pointed out that at our last meeting, the group decided not to make a recommendation. Then the BOS asked him for one. He felt it had been a mistake not to have an opinion if asked, no matter what the group's charge statement said. If J. Vieira is asked again, he would like an answer to give the BOS.

H. Harper suggested that having an opinion distorts objectivity, considering the group is asking for more information about several sites.

J. Clancy noted that the BOS wanted this group's experience and advice. But J. Vieira agreed to sit tight, see how the next study phase goes, and perhaps this group will meet again.

H. Harper thought if members agreed to include GC on the consultant's study list, the working group would enhance its political capital.

J. Vieira invited everybody to come to the BOS meeting. He will email Doug Jones and Sue Moran tomorrow, and be prepared to speak if he gets a chance. Doug is doing a good job trying to cover all the bases. The process may be frustrating now, but all the hard work will pay off eventually.

B. Swain expressed concern that further delays will jeopardize our taking advantage of a window of opportunity for funding. The committee should express its desire to keep things moving along.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Meg Costello

Recording Secretary