

ARTICLE 14 – NOVEMBER 11, 2011 SPECIAL TOWN MEETING

APPROPRIATE FUNDS TO CONSTRUCT A NEW BUILDING TO HOUSE THE SENIOR CENTER AND COUNCIL ON AGING

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What is the history of the project?

RESPONSE: The existing Senior Center and Council on Aging (COA) is located in a basement that has serious facility challenges and inadequate space for programs, confidential counseling and parking. In 1998, the Comprehensive Townwide Facility Study Committee proposed a new building to house the Senior Center and COA. This need was confirmed in 2006 by the Town's Facility Working Group, which established a timeline and priority for the renovation/reconstruction of certain Town assets, including the Senior Center. Between 2007 and 2010, feasibility studies were conducted on five potential sites for such a new building, at a cost of approximately \$121,000.

2. What is the current status of the project?

RESPONSE: From 2008 – 2010, the Senior Center Exploratory Committee (SCEC) researched the issues and held extensive public hearings and other open meetings. Based on its findings, the SCEC recommended that (i) a Senior Center be recognized as a critically important resource that addresses the needs and concerns of a group of citizens that constitutes almost 25% of our Town's population; and (ii) a new 20,000 sq. foot building to house the Senior Center and COA should be constructed at the now Town-owned Heights MBTA parking lot. Last fall, Town Meeting appropriated \$500,000 to the Permanent Public Building Committee (PPBC) to design this new building, which has led to the proposed construction cost of \$8.075 million – as requested in this Article.

3. What are the benefits of a Senior Center?

RESPONSE: Studies show that individuals of all ages, but particularly seniors, benefit from interacting with their peers in social and/or educational settings. The National COA has stated that participation in senior center programming leads to the effective management and delayed onset of chronic disease, as well as targeted, measurable outcomes on indicators of physical, social, spiritual, emotional, mental, and economic well-being. Please see the attached COA Fact Sheet, which lists many of the resources/programs offered by Senior Centers.

4. Why was the Heights MBTA parking lot the preferred site?

RESPONSE: Prior to reaching agreement on the Heights MBTA parking lot, due diligence and a participatory public review was conducted on Ridge Hill (remote

area of town and uncertainty of renovation costs), Greene's Field (traffic concerns and use of green space), Rosemary Ridge (difficult site and excessive construction costs), Emery Grover (traffic congestion and access, historic building and renovation/layout issues), and Wingate (no ownership, timing issues). The Heights MBTA parking lot is a relatively flat, Town-owned open site that can cost-efficiently accommodate a new building with sufficient parking, is located in a downtown area, can be readily accessed, and is supported by the neighborhood.

5. How will these construction costs be funded?

RESPONSE: This project will be funded by borrowing with debt service to be paid within the Operating Budget. This funding plan is recommended as a better alternative than a Proposition 2 ½ debt exclusion override, and will allow construction to proceed on a timelier schedule. In order to stay within the proposed budget for this project, the PPBC used a value-engineering process to reduce the cost by approximately \$425,000, chiefly by scaling back certain furnishings and equipment. The Friends of Needham Elderly are planning a fundraising campaign to provide some of these items, either initially or over time.

6. What will be the impact of this project on the Town's Capital Plan?

RESPONSE: Sufficient debt funding for this project within the operating budget resulted from three key factors: (i) State (MSBA) funding of a portion of the Pollard Middle School new roof; (ii) identifying an alternative funding source (State Chapter 90) for the salt shed project; and (iii) a temporary potential reduction in funding for the town's capital roads program. All of the Town's other capital projects, including those for the schools, remain in the Capital Plan.

With respect to the roads program, the Town Manager, DPW Director and Highway Superintendent have confirmed there will be no appreciable impact to our ability to maintain/repair our roads and sidewalks. The Town's Finance Director has generated a conservative Facility Financing Plan that includes **all** projects in the current Capital Plan. The Town's capital process uses a range of very conservative planning assumptions, which consistently have resulted in additional future debt capacity as a result of (i) projecting lower than historical revenue increases and higher than actual interest rates; (ii) savings from previously authorized projects being completed under budget; and (iii) not assuming the receipt of future MSBA funding for School projects.

The Board of Selectmen, Finance Committee, and Council on Aging have each voted to recommend adoption of this Article. This project has been the subject of a lengthy, thoughtful and deliberative process, in which many citizens, Boards and Committees have provided insight and opinions over a period of years. Your Selectmen respectfully ask for your support of Article 14. Now is the time to finally complete this important Senior Center – Council on Aging project.

NEEDHAM COUNCIL ON AGING

Community Resource:

- ◆ A focal point for information and services on all aging issues and needs.
- ◆ SHINE, (Serving Health Insurance Needs of Elders) a federally funded program, where counselors provide and clarify information regarding Medicare health plans including prescriptions.
- ◆ Social Workers provide in-office and home visit consultations for older adults, caregivers and families, as well as offering information, referrals counseling and case management services.
- ◆ Outreach Worker identifies needs of seniors and coordinates Friendly Visitor Volunteer program where volunteers visit homebound older adults.
- ◆ Tax preparation appointments provided in cooperation with AARP and the IRS.
- ◆ Provides transportation to and from the Senior Center and grocery store, as well as information relative to additional transportation services.
- ◆ Bi-monthly Keep Well Clinics conducted by VNA Care Network.
- ◆ Legal counseling services provided by Boston College Legal Assistance Bureau.

SENIOR CENTER PROGRAMS

Lifelong Learning Opportunities:

- ◆ Lectures
- ◆ Book Reviews
- ◆ Current Event Discussions
- ◆ Art Appreciation and Art History
- ◆ Art Classes
- ◆ Music and Voice Lessons
- ◆ Foreign Language Classes
- ◆ Computer Skills

Fitness and Exercise Classes:

- ◆ Better Balance and Strength Training
- ◆ Arthritis Foundation Exercises
- ◆ Weight Management Support Group
- ◆ Walking Club
- ◆ Yoga and Tai Chi

Social Activities:

- ◆ Lunch Bunch
- ◆ Travel Events
- ◆ Friday Flicks
- ◆ Card/Board games
- ◆ Pool
- ◆ Ping Pong
- ◆ Ballroom and Line Dance classes

This is not intended to be a complete list of Council on Aging Services or Senior Center Programs