

ECOA Ad-hoc Building Committee
Minutes – January 28, 2025, meeting

Present: P. Brough, T. Brown, L. Button, C. Conner, C. Cote-Stosz, S. Eddy, D. Graichen-Moore, C. Schweitzer, C. Tarail

Excused:

Absent: S. Chan

Guest: Dr. Caitlin Coyle, Mayor Nicole LaChapelle

- I. Call to order: the meeting was called to order at 12:00 p.m.
- II. Approve minutes: Tom made a motion, seconded by Dawn, to approve the January 14, 2025, minutes. The motion passed 10-0-0.
- III. Public speak: no one was present for public speak.
- IV. Report to mayor: the purpose of this meeting was to respond to the mayor's questions about the final draft and understand the next steps. The mayor complemented the committee work.
 - a. Locations: what, if any decision should be made about a site before any planning proceeds? We listed the sites in order of what we thought would work based on conversations with EDM about senior center building planning but think the building committee should be charged to make that decision. Cindy pointed out that the city should narrow the sites to 1 or 2 viable sites and have a consultant (i.e., architect) advise on those. The crux of the question is if it is not city owned, should the city acquire the land prior to starting a project. The answer is no. The mayor asked Caitlin about the proximity of the current facility to downtown. Caitlin indicated that parking is a very real detriment to doing something with the current location. Also, during the public hearing in October in the Senior Center, the audience (appx. 40 people) was asked about how many walked there. Only 2-3 people raised their hands.
 - b. Single floor vs. 2 floors: in terms of cost of building, what would be cost impact of 1 versus 2 floors? We would not save money by going up in terms of building costs; however, operating expenses would increase with a 2-story building because more staff would be needed to manage it. How much does the new stretch code cost? Anecdotally, it does not appear to add much, *but* it depends on the project.
 - c. Use of space and potential community access: with other Senior Centers, did you get a sense it was designed to include community use, too, or was it strictly a senior center? At South Hadley, it was designed strictly as a Senior Center. If the city wants to plan for community use, that needs to be a discussion with the architect. Hadley was the only facility that specifically designed use of multi-purpose space for some discrete town meetings and functions since that space can be locked off from the rest of the building. Caitlin commented that in her experience, Senior Center operations are typically 9 a.m.-5 p.m., M-F, whereas community uses of space in a Senior

Center happen during off-hours. Relationship management is key to making something like that work.

- d. Kitchen: thinking of licensing issues where kitchens are concerned, is there a preference for what this should be? There are many different models for dining programs. The Mass Council on Aging is looking at what is out there. The consensus of the group is to include a kitchen and provide meals; a program can be adapted around it. Including such a space helps increase socialization for seniors because isolation is a huge problem. Having a chef and/or staff trained to prepare meals is definitely a trend that new senior centers are including per Caitlin.
 - e. What did the other communities wish they had or changed in their new buildings? A couple were across the board wishes in hindsight were increased storage and staff space. Another was making sure town/city staff who will be responsible for maintaining a specific feature, for example, IT, have a seat at the table.
 - f. Next steps: the mayor's vision is to establish a new senior center building committee and hopes to post something soon. What's been done in the committee's report goes a long way toward creating an RFP. Can this report be given to the City Council? Yes, and the mayor plans to post our report with a notice asking people to apply to be on the building committee.
- V. Adjournment: Tom moved, and Dawn seconded, that the committee adjourn and disband. The motion passed 10-0-0. The meeting ended at 1:06 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Leslie Button
Secretary