

SENIOR CENTER BUILDING COMMITTEE

The Senior Center Building Committee was established in June of 2003 and charged with the task of preparing a Schematic Design of a two story building on the Kendall site with a second floor shell.

The Building Committee hired the firm of Catlin Architecture for the Senior Center Project and they completed the Schematic Design at the end of June. They have designed a fully handicap accessible, two story, 18,350, 18,350 square foot building. It will be located on 1.24 acres at the site of the former Kendall School on Beech Street.

The building includes a large multi-purpose room with an adjacent kitchen. This room will provide space for large gatherings and meals programs and is also very flexible, in that it can be easily divided for simultaneous uses. The facility also includes a library/lounge, a billiard room, a crafts room, classroom spaces, an exercise room, a conference/card room, a computer room, as well as administrative and counseling areas. The rooms have been designed so that they can accommodate a variety of uses. The plan also provides for a modest amount of possible expansion.

Outdoor areas include a landscaped parking area for approximately 60 vehicles, a drop-off at the main entry, a separate service area, as well as terrace and porch areas. Parking includes handicap accessible parking for six vehicles.

We hope to achieve LEED certification by incorporating renewable materials and sustainable design features such as geothermal heating and cooling and rain water harvest which represent \$58,800 in projected costs. The estimated payback period, however, is four years.

While the daytime use of the building will be for the Council on Aging and its comprehensive services and activities for seniors, this facility will be a Town-wide resource available for municipal uses and perhaps rental uses after 4:00 P.M. and on weekends. The multipurpose room includes a small stage and has a capacity for 380 people for row seating and 225 people seated around tables. Many of the other spaces are suitable for committee meetings, lectures, community education classes, and other uses.

After the normal hours of operation for the Senior Center, the parking area will be available for people attending sporting events at the Town field and for evening neighborhood parking subject to the same restrictions that apply to municipal and school parking areas.

Our current best estimate of overall cost is in the \$5 million range. This figure includes a 5% inflation factor and \$1.1 million in soft costs such as a Clerk of the Works, furnishings and equipment, legal fees, and the like. It is still unclear whether or not the new Construction Reform Law requires a Project Manager for this project. We will establish a final project cost figure prior to a Debt Exclusion vote whenever that is scheduled.

This new facility is designed as a health and wellness facility where seniors of all levels of health and ability can meet to socialize, exercise, attend classes, share a meal, and organize events, as well as receive essential services and counseling.

As Mitch Albom said in his best selling book, "The Five People You Meet in Heaven" :": "The only time we waste time, is the time we spend thinking we are alone." Loneliness is one of the most pressing health concerns of senior citizens. This new facility will provide a welcoming environment for all seniors so that none need to spend their days in solitude.

We have Belmont has provided senior activities and programs in a number of ways over the years and in a number of locations. The Selectmen secured a lease for a temporary facility at Our Lady of Mercy Parrish hall in 1998 so that senior services could finally be centralized. Rental of this facility is \$7,500 per month. It has a number of issues related to handicap accessibility, program space is very tight, and the ambience leaves much to be desired. More importantly, however, Our Lady of Mercy is one of the churches scheduled to close. The Town has a lease for the parish hall through May of 2005.

We, therefore, feel a keen sense of urgency to move this project forward as soon as reasonably possible. First and foremost, because the seniors of Belmont deserve a first-rate facility at long last but also because, it seems likely, that they may be without a home for their programs and services in the near future.

The, so called, "Mega Group" comprised of the Board of Selectmen, The Warrant Committee, The Capital Budget Committee, and the Permanent Building Committee has designated the Senior Center as the next project to

proceed. Depending on the success of fund-raising efforts and a successful debt exclusion, we could proceed with design development and preparation of construction documents in the Summer of 2005. Construction could begin in the Spring of 2006 which would make a Grand Opening possible in the Summer of 2007.

A key piece in funding this facility is the private capital campaign organized by the Friends of the Council on Aging. The Steering Committee tells mehas indicated that by the first of the year they will be able to more accurately predict the level private funding that will be available.

I would like to thank the members of the Senior Center Committee for all their fine work this year. Serving as Vice-Chair is Neil Hegarty, and as Secretary is Lynne Doblin. Also on the Committee are Pat Bruschi, Walter Guertin, Mary Ann Johnson, Rob Jones, Penny Schaffer and Phyl Solomon. We very much appreciate the administrative support we receive from Nava Niv-Vogel, Director of the Council on Aging, Jane Fitzgerald of the Building Services Department and our Clerk, Monique Van Beek. We will very much miss the many contributions made by Paul Maney who has resigned from the committee.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Pressey, Chairman



Members of the Senior Center Building Committee, along with the Board of Selectmen, proudly display an architect's model of the soon-to-be built Senior Center