

The Wellesley Townsman

Thursday, June 18, 2009

GREAT STRIDES ON SENIOR CENTER

By Terri Tsagaris, Chair, Senior Center Building Committee

Last April, Wellesley Town Meeting approved the appropriation of \$600,000 to develop a detailed building design and prepare construction documents for the construction of a free-standing **Senior Center**. We are pleased to report that we have made great strides on the project and are eager to share the details with you. We will continue to work on this over the next several months, and are hopeful we will present it for a vote at the Annual Town Meeting in March 2010.

PROJECT SCOPE. The project scope is a 12,440 square foot, two-story facility to be built at 496 Washington Street (currently the site of the American Legion building). The facility will be a free-standing Senior Center dedicated to providing programs and services to the senior population of Wellesley (ages 55+). Demolition of the existing structure will occur during the summer months whether or not the center is built. The new facility, if approved by Annual Town Meeting for construction, will be named The Tolles-Parsons Center.

BUILDING PROGRAM REVIEW. Before engaging in design development, a comprehensive review of programming was conducted. The review focused on the current programs and services provided by the Council on Aging as well as options for future program expansion. The resulting report, the "**Building Program Review and Benchmark Study**" includes:

- A detailed summary of the activities and services currently provided and the anticipated number of participants;
- A summary of potential activities in anticipation of growth in the program offerings and in the rates of participation;
- This information enables the specification of the number, type, size and adjacencies of each space to create an inventory of physical spaces.

The inventory of spaces will be used to develop the comprehensive floor plan.

BENCHMARK STUDY. We want to be certain we adopt "best practices" of senior center design across the region, learning from the experiences of others and identifying cost-saving options. To achieve this goal, we have toured neighboring senior centers and interviewed staff members. Our findings of many of the site visits are summarized in the **Benchmark Study**. The resulting Program reflects these findings and will be used to guide the floor plan and overall design.

ARCHITECT AND PROJECT MANAGER. We are pleased to announce that the Permanent Building Committee (PBC) has secured the architectural services of *Sterling Associates*, led by Bill Sterling, for the Senior Center Building Project. Mr. Sterling has over thirty-seven years of experience in municipal projects, including 11 senior centers. We are excited to be working with him and we are already actively engaged in concept design.

We are equally pleased to announce that the PBC has hired Lee Keller of *KVAssociates, Inc.* as Project Manager. Mr. Keller brings a depth of experience in building projects in Wellesley and solid expertise in project management.

Additionally, a committee of town residents and employees has been formed and includes Terri Tsagaris, Chair, and Barbara Searle (members, Board of Selectmen) and Hans Larsen (Executive Director, Town of Wellesley); Harriet Warshaw (former member, Board of Selectmen and Chair, Senior Center Study Committee);

Gayle Thieme (Director of Senior Services, Council on Aging); Linda Cohen (Chair, Council on Aging Board); Meghan Jop (Director, Planning Board); Laura Hockett (co-President, Wellesley Education Foundation); and Mindy Brush.

With the team in place, we are confident we will make rapid progress and be able to present a well-designed, fiscally responsible building to Annual Town Meeting which will serve our seniors for years to come.

NEXT STEPS. Progress on the Senior Center Building Project will continue throughout the summer: Design development will occur in July and August. Additionally, a study on traffic and parking options will be completed, as required under the Town's Project of Significant Impact (PSI) process. Lastly, we will be scheduling a public forum in early September to review the summer progress.

We look forward to keeping you informed about the project and encourage your input and comment. The Tolles-Parsons Center promises to enable a vibrant, engaged and healthy lifestyle among our senior residents, essential for enriching the quality of life for our entire community.

Terri Tsagaris

Chair, Senior Center Building Committee

Board of Selectmen

The Building Program Review and Benchmark Study is available online at www.wellesleyma.gov, go to "Senior Center Information."