

October 9, 2020

To: Jeff Bridges, Town Administrator for the Town of Sturbridge, Massachusetts

The Senior Center Study Committee met on September 21, 2020 to review the Feasibility Study submitted by the architectural firm of BH&A for three locations that are owned by the Town.

The three locations were 480 Main Street (current Senior Center), 70 Cedar Street, and 80 Haynes Street. The Study Committee's goal was to ensure that the chosen site provided 12,000 square feet of useable space, 65 parking spaces, and a user friendly and safe environment for our growing senior population and the community. The total cost of creating a compliant Senior Center on any of the options listed above is estimated at \$10,000,000. It was interesting that all three locations in the study, whether renovation or new-build, came within \$422,000 of each other.

A committee review of the three potential sites developed questions broken down into the categories of Program Goals, Building Goals, and Community Benefits. The feedback was reviewed and great dialogue resulted in a vote to approve 70 Cedar Street, with conditions, as the proposed location of the Senior Center. The Study Committee felt this location with a modified plan would meet the criteria that was established for a compliant Senior Center in Sturbridge. It would also allow for future growth and possibly other community events. The attached plan depicts the revised plan that the committee is putting forward to the Selectmen for approval.

The concern with new construction on the 80 Haynes Street location, which was the runner-up to Cedar Street, is the unknown process of coexistence with a Conservation Restriction placed on the parcel by Sturbridge in 2016, as well as access to town utilities. The concern with renovations to the 480 Main Street location is that it would continue to be a two-story Senior Center on a small lot that has some safety issues related to basement limitations, limited parking, traffic issues and safety/code concerns for physically challenged seniors.

A Steering Committee was formed by a unanimous vote of the Sturbridge Council on Aging in January 2015 to complete an assessment of the current Senior Center. Once completed, a Study Committee was formed and has been patiently working through the appropriate process to reach this final step. We feel that 70 Cedar Street would be an ideal location to support the present and future senior population which is projected to increase from 2,695 to 3,081 in 2025 and grow to 3,350 in 2030 (according to the Central MA Regional Planning Commission which is based on the Census).

Our Senior Center supports the quality of life for older adults through a broad mix of programs, services and amenities. All three of the sites studied proved worthy of consideration to fulfill our opportunity to promote the Town of Sturbridge as an "age-in-place" community with a conveniently located Senior Center. It is now up to our town leaders and the voters to support the needs of the Sturbridge Seniors.

Respectfully Submitted,

The Senior Center Study Committee

Ken White, Chair

Rebecca Mimeault, Vice Chair

Sue Grandone,

Ann White,

Sis Chapdelaine

Gladys Santelli

Margaret Darling