

Progress Report of the Maynard Senior Center Focus Group

Purpose:

To act as a focus group of concerned citizens advocating for both a short-term and a permanent facility, additional programming, and the budgetary needs of the Maynard Senior Center.

Mission Statement:

The formation of the Maynard Senior Center Focus Group (MSCFG) provides additional advocacy for progress on meeting the needs of a documented growing population of seniors in Maynard. It is the MSCFG's mission in the near term to identify an adequate, safe, accessible space and, in the long term, to advocate for a permanent Senior/Community Center. In this role the MSCFG will complement the missions of existing groups with a similar focus, including the Council on Aging (COA) Director, the Maynard Council on Aging, and the Friends of Maynard Seniors.

Background:

Seniors, age 60 and older, living in Maynard today number 3,061 people or 28% of the total population in the town. There are 2,097 households with persons aged 60 and older in the town as of 2022. (Town of Maynard Census/Street Listing, 2022). By 2030 this number is projected to grow to 32% of the total population of the town or 3,530 individuals. (Maynard Community Life Center Committee, 2013).

Historically, the "Senior Center" was housed in the Congregational Church basement from 1975-2002. It was then moved to other **temporary** spaces, notably a very dark, confined and odorous space in the mill.

The formation of the 2013 Senior/Community Center Study Committee was driven by complaints from seniors about both the condition and accessibility of the temporary location in the mill and near total absence of activity programming. That Committee report led to a new "temporary" location of the Senior Center at its present location in the golf course clubhouse building in 2014 and the hiring of a full time COA Director.

It is important to note that today's concerns are demand driven – that having a full time COA Director generating programming has created demand for space that exceeds what is available. The current Senior Center is housed in the Maynard Golf Club (with its presently inadequate space of 1,932 square feet, 360 feet of which is permanent storage and office space) and was clearly noted as an interim solution to give the town time to pursue a permanent facility.

There are now three immediate concerns that need to be addressed.

---Because CPA funds were used to purchase this property, use of the club house by COA is technically a prohibited use.

---Due to steep access to the building, weather conditions (for example, melting snow dripping on the steps near the doorway and then refreezing) often make winter access treacherous and unsuitable for a senior population. This limits the use of the center by the senior population. In addition, the Senior Center is closed when the public schools are closed for winter storms, further reducing the time available for access.

--As noted, growth of COA programs and activities is now space limited in a time of a growing senior population.

An acknowledged frustration of the MSFCG is that in the nine years since submission of the previous study group's report, funding needs for a permanent senior or senior/community center have never been addressed, while capital funding supported a new police station, high school and a middle school. As of this report, a new Fire station has opened and the Green Meadow Building Committee is recommending a new elementary school. The Town has also pledged funding toward the multi-million-dollar bleacher replacement project.

Meetings of the MSCFG began in May of 2022. To date there have been 7 monthly meetings, including discussions with Allison O'Toole (executive director Stow COA) and Representative Kate Hogan. The first priority was to begin searching for an adequate interim facility with more space (larger square footage) and one that would be able to host luncheons on a regular basis, exercise classes, social activities, be handicapped accessible (even in the icy, snowy weather), and be able to be open for 7 hours a day, 5 days a week. Maynard seniors were previously able to attend some classes in neighboring towns, but since the pandemic, this is no longer a possibility.

Since May, several interim spaces have been discussed and/or toured. These include the Art Space building, Maynard, Mill & Main Buildings 6 and 12, the Imago school, the Beijing School, the Paper Store Building on Nason Street, the former Walgreen's building on Main Street, Maynard Crossing, the Assabet Valley Boys and Girls Club, and the Trolley building at 63 Great Road. The respective COA's of Acton and Stow were approached regarding regionalization, but this proposal was not acceptable to either town.

Lastly, a needs assessment would be highly beneficial to fully meet the level of required interaction with our senior population. One proposal (UMass Boston Gerontology) could be started in Fall of 2023 (at a cost of up to \$35,000) that would include "*Aging in Maynard, MA: A Community Needs Assessment*". They would run focus groups, mail surveys to people 55 yrs. of age and older and conduct one-to-one interviews with town officials.

To address the longer-term needs, i.e., a permanent facility and resources to support a growing population of voting seniors and other community needs to serve a wider population, the MSCFG requests an allocation of up to \$35,000 for the Community Needs assessment cited above.

MSCFG Members: Armand Diarbekerian, Ellen Duggan, Diane Gauthier, Lisa Dahill, Paula Copley, Peg Brown, Jack MacKeen, John Cramer, Mark Koenig, Jen Picorelli, Deb Roussell

Resources to the Group:

Amy Loveless, Director of COA
COA Board of Directors
Friends of Maynard Seniors
Josh Morse, facilities
Bill Nemser, planning
Natalie Roberts, Planning Board
Lindsay McConchie, Capital Planning
Master Plan and Community Principles

<u>Space-building considered</u>	<u>Pros</u>	<u>Cons</u>
Art Space	on 1st tour-proposed space was on the 2nd floor w/ adequate space and access	on 2nd tour-different space proposed Not easily accessible. Parking an issue
Mill & Main, Bldg 6	5,160 Sq ft of space. Room for Kitchen and bathroom build out. Space for offices, reception area, social space, and multiple contiguous classes. Ability to use gym, outdoor patio (w/ grill). Common lounge & game room	Parking is somewhat limited but negotiations for an increased number of adjacent and accessible parking is being addressed.
Mill & Main, Bldg 12	Ample Space	Expensive rent. Space was subdivided into individual offices. Not suitable for group activities or exercise or art classes
Paper Store Bldg, on Nason st.	downtown	no elevator in building Not available per owner.
Maynard Crossing		Expensive
Former Walgreens on Main St		Not available
Imago School Bldg		Not a viable option-- in process of being sold
63 Great Rd	1st floor entry, no steps Parking on level ground	Not in downtown condominium office space Cost listed at \$650,000 for 6500 sq ft No longer available
Bejiing School	Very interested in discussing this possibility. School is not yet open.	
Assabet Valley Boys and Girls Club		conflicting time schedules
Regionalization with Acton & Stow		Not acceptable to either town