TOWN OF TRUMBULL
CONNECTICUT

Town Hall
5866 Main Street
Trumbull, Connecticut 06611

Public Hearing

Senior/Community Center and Library Study Building Committee
Monday, September 28, 2015
7:00 pm
Community Room of the Trumbull Library

Mrs. Jamie Bratt opened the hearing and noted that she is the Director of Economic and Community Development which she has held since the spring. Prior to that time, she was the Director of Planning and Development. She is a professional planner by training and has experience in meeting facilitation.

Mrs. Bratt thanked the attendees for their time. She noted that with a large community change in development, the public is invited to hear about their priorities. She also thanked the committee, which is bipartisan. It was formed in the spring of 2015 and members are Joseph Pifko, Dan Marconi, Jeannine Stauder, Rachel Yahwak, Lori Hayes-O'Brien and Richard Seaman. Two additional candidates for committee appointment are being screened.

The government website address to send ideas or comments to is jpifko@trumbull-ct.gov. There are also community survey monkeys with links on the home page of the town website. One is specifically for senior citizens and the other is for any community member with questions about a community center.

Mrs. Bratt is not a member of the committee but has been invited as a guest and has been briefed about the committee's work. The Committee has been charged to investigate the possibility of building or rebuilding the senior center which would include in the future picking a site and looking at the possibility of the combination of a community center in conjunction with the senior center and/or a library in conjunction with the senior center. The Library has also conducted its own public outreach as part of their master planning. The results of that information will be taken into account by this committee. This committee has visited several senior centers and community centers and will review more in the coming

months. This is an exploratory committee and a think tank; no site has been selected to date. It was important to the committee to have the public outreach sessions first before honing in on a short list of sites. They have reviewed the existing applications of our current senior center. The on-line surveys will remain open until the middle of October and there will also be another community input session on Monday, October 28, 2105 at 7:00pm in the Community Room at the Library.

The three principal subjects the committee wanted to ask the community:

1. What would you use a community center for?
2. What is the importance of location, geographic centrality, on a scale of 1-5?
3. What would be the pros and cons of a community center in conjunction with a senior center? To clarify a community center, it is being what some people call a cultural center focused on meeting space, flexible space for organizations, classes. This does not refer to a recreational center that has large play areas or a pool. That is not part of the scope of this committee at this time.

Ground rules were reviewed.

Mrs. Bratt asked if there were any logistical questions. Mr. George Yahwak spoke noting he has been a resident since 1982. His wife is on the committee and also the Chairwoman of the Senior Citizen Commission. He stated he has never been at a public meeting where the members of the committee were not facing the audience. He asked if it was possible to turn the chairs around. Members turned their chairs as requested. He also stated he has been at several of the committee meetings and there has not been a recording of any of the meetings. He is a magistrate judge for the Supreme Court for the State of Connecticut and it is in violation of a number of laws and problems could be run into without recordings whether video or audio. He asked why the meetings were not videotaped to cover a broader group in the community. Mrs. Bratt stated that since that question focuses on other meetings, not this one, she will not address the question at this time. She did note that all of the meetings held to date have been open to the public and have had minutes recorded. Those minutes are available to the public.

Mrs. Bratt opened up the meeting for public comment.

Ron Foligno – Member of the Senior Commission; this is not just a senior center project but a combination project. Seniors have been asked for input but he didn't see many young people at the hearing. The location really isn't a big thing, but the location of the current center is not good. Geographic centrality is not particularly important. Does agree to combine the facilities, if possible.

Tony Petitti – Biggest concern is not the location or the facilities but it comes down to the management hired and what kind of programs they will provide. Regardless of the building, you need to have the attraction which he felt was crucial.

Cindy Katske – Also echoed that the meetings should be videotaped as it would be beneficial to the public. People would be more aware and have more interest. The committee has visited a number of senior centers and she felt more community centers should be included. She also addressed the lack of meeting spaces in town and the need for more flexible space. Custodial fees make school use expensive. Storage is a concern.

Cindy Penkoff – Current senior center is depressing and the location is not optimal – parking is a problem and the building is not laid out properly. She is glad of the possibility of attaching a community center because she believes that seniors do better with a younger mix. They are happier, have more energy, they like being around young people. She suggested a combination senior/community center that allows both those entities to interact on a daily basis. Meeting space is important with space to do shows. Needs child care. Geographic centrality is a 5. She would like it centrally located. She commented on the taping of the meetings noting that this committee is exploratory; it does not make any decisions, resolutions, pass anything or do anything that affects the town. It is a think tank where lots of ideas are explored. Unfortunately when ideas are publicized, that is when the public thinks things are going to happen when it is really an opportunity for people to talk freely and explore all possibilities.

Joan Hammill – Stated that she goes to other senior centers not Trumbull. Recommended that when a site is chosen, it should be one floor, geographically it would be #5 and a catering kitchen is of utmost importance to the community and the seniors. This is an expensive wish but necessary. Needs better programming although space is a problem. Agrees seniors like to be around younger people although it should be tempered for those that prefer to be separate.

Jean Rabinow – does not like the Trumbull senior enter. A central location is not crucial. Most of the seniors drive but an important question is can Trumbull provide public transportation. A location closer to Stern Village would be a more appropriate site. Placed a high premium on transport and parking. Likes the idea of a single story center but doesn't think there is property available that can accommodate such a structure. Therefore, it must have an elevator. Does not think a combination of both a senior center and a community center is appropriate. She noted that the Library is already the community and if we try to force the community functions into another site, it would not necessarily be a plus. Does not want to see the Library lose its function. Does not have a problem with expanding the Library to include both community and senior space. Time requirements need to be addressed so that neither group is short changed.

Tony D'Aquila – Concerned there was a lack of public notice of a public hearing. There was no legal notice issued. The meeting is a legal proceeding. The meeting is held in the evening which discourages seniors from coming as they do not like to drive at night. There is also a lack of report on the building committee's findings on the visited senior centers. Decisions are made on data. We need a detailed report of these findings to make a decision on potential locations. There are some public properties but we don't have access to private properties. The Executive Session was held prematurely and not by the book; we are not negotiating yet we are just identifying sites and the population should understand

which sites are available. He proposed replacing the current senior citizen center with a new community center. We do not need a senior center as the concept alienates the senior from the members of the community and has a negative impact on the social and emotional needs of the seniors. Proposed the highway department property be considered as a potential site. Also, the area next to Middlebrooks School in Middlebrooks Park would be large enough. He proposed a two story building to separate the rooms for the seniors from the remainder of the groups. Also proposed a pavilion for outside recreational activities. It must meet the needs of the disabled and include a large elevator. Also recommended a large auditorium, kitchen, additional meeting rooms and computers. The building needs to be serviced by public transportation. The town should provide transportation within the town and get away from cars. Sidewalks are necessary, bicycle paths, crosswalks and traffic lights. Encourage pedestrian traffic to lessen the need for a large parking lot. Location should be central. Agrees the Library should not be a part of this center. Agrees the mingling of the various ages is critical. Recommended the community center be open for the evening hours.

Mrs. Bratt noted structural sensibility and programming is key but while it is not the charge of this committee to decide this, it is to be considered.

Lainie McHugh – discussed programming, noting that if the committee is not looking at programming, she felt it was necessary to consider to see what functions you will need and what type of space is required as it would dictate space and location. Community interests are diverse over all ages and encouraged the consideration of general programming to include all age groups. Mrs. Bratt felt the committee was looking at programming in a broad sense.

Jean Fereira introduced herself and was sad not to see many of her seniors at the meeting. Many do not drive at night. Perhaps transportation could be provided as they do want to discuss programming and other things regarding this project.

Mrs. Penkoff stated she is opposed to having the library a part of this center. The Library is very different from a community center.

Vickie Tesoro – speaking as a private citizen thanked the committee for all their work. She commented that the meetings should be recorded due to the fact that the meetings are held at 5pm in the afternoon and it is a difficult time for most people to attend them. Having them on the TV would spark interest. She would like to see everything talked about. This is the opportunity to explore everything and encouraged the committee to do this. Questioned the pool possibility – this should be considered as part of the overall discussion and this is an opportune time to do this. She would like the center to be separate from the library but a community/senior center would be the way to go.

Mrs. Bratt noted this evening's drive was to test whether a community center would be appropriate. It could be possible that if there is a positive test for a community center, then the next level could include a recreation center.

Mrs. Tesoro wants a center that will encompass the needs of the community and felt survey information and community input was important. That is why it is important to have the meetings taped to reach all the community.

Mrs. Bratt encouraged everyone to email Mr. Pifko and complete the on-line surveys on the town website at www.trumbull-ct.gov. There is also a public hearing on October 28th. She thanked everyone for their time.

Hearing closed at 7:55pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Crandall
Clerk