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**MINUTES**  
**Community Center Building Committee**  
**December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2020 7pm**

**Zoom Teleconference – Call (646) 558-8656 – Meeting ID: 816 7391 2661**

**Members Present:** Kurt Miller, Mike Marcinek, Bill Sawicki, Suzanne Reilly, Tim Connors, Fred Stanek, Jim Baldwin, Zack Philippas, and Bryan Nesteriak

**Members Absent:** None

**Others Present:** First Selectwoman Annmarie Drugonis, Rory Burke

**1) Call meeting to order**

The meeting was called to order at 7:03 PM.

**2) Pledge of Allegiance**

All present stood and recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

**3) Public comment**

There was no public comment.

**4) Delivery of Charge**

Annmarie: Thank you everyone for being available tonight. As you know, former First Selectman Kurt Miller put this group together to discuss ideas and get the process for building a new community center started. I will entertain a motion to nominate a chair for the Committee.

**5) Election of officers**

A motion was made to nominate Kurt Miller.

**Motion:** Tim Connors

**Second:** Jim Baldwin

**Vote:** 7-0

A motion was made to nominate Fred Stanek as Vice Chairman.

**Motion:** Jim Baldwin

**Second:** Bryan Nesteriak

**Vote:** 6-0-1 (Fred Stanek abstains)

**6) Open Discussion**

Kurt: As you know, we put this out to residents during the last municipal election in a referendum to draw attention to it. We had some initial conversations and put together this exceptional group of people. I think we represent all the bases of the community. At this point we don't know what we will be able to build with the reality of COVID. I think it's prudent that we put some plans in place, not knowing what the future holds. I believe Mike put together some talking points that were sent out with the agenda.

Mike: These are based on conversations with Kurt and my experience with these projects.

Bill: I'm in favor pending cost, location etc. Building versus leasing remains to be seen. There's a lot that remains to be seen. Location will depend a lot on the cost. Build versus lease as well. We still have debt

under control but the size of this project will be impactful. With COVID we're figuring collections may not be normal.

Kurt: When we restructured our debt last year, we built in approximately \$500,000 per year in flexibility anticipating this project. That requires us to keep debt service level.

Mike: I put a lot of thought into what we should talk about in the initial few meetings. Most important to me, is how can we leverage developers in our community that allows us to get additional tax dollars through this project. Sitting on EDC, you get frustrated because there aren't a lot of visible projects. This will be and they'll see their taxes going up, so I think leveraging is important.

Kurt: Locations we had discussed that will allow us to use this project as a springboard for mixed-used development include Tri-Town Plaza and behind Stop & Shop. I had discussions with both of the landowners, so we'll need to talk to them. We had also talked to other communities about partnering, including Beacon Falls. With the YMCA closing in Ansonia, we had several conversations with them and they are very interested in a partnership, anything from managing programming to partially funding construction. I think we have a lot of options, which Mike has included in this document.

Suzanne: In terms of location, from a senior perspective, avoiding the hilltop would be ideal, especially on a bus line. I had worked with the YMCA for a while so they are very interested. My concern is whether they can raise the funds to do what they want. In terms of program items, I would like to recommend a kitchen. Being able to prepare meals could make it a congregate site. Also some type of private area for the medical programs that are popular with seniors.

Kurt: We went to the Newtown Community Center in preparing for this. They have that there and have special needs students who prepare snacks for sale. While it may not be an industrial kitchen, we can do cooking classes. I think everything should be considered but we'll have to make some hard decisions about what will be included. I want to make this a multigenerational destination with activities for everyone.

Tim: Newtown was great but there was a lot of empty space so I think we need to be conscious of that. We need to make sure we cover costs while still being accessible.

Kurt: One of the things holding our Community Services Department back is a lack of space so we need to maximize our space as much as possible. We need to look at it as an emergency shelter as well.

Fred: Our Town deserves a modern, safe and well-designed community center. There have been many complaints about the condition of the current building dating back some time so this project is long overdue. An ancillary issue is what to do with 98 Bank Street because I know that issue is also problematic. I agree that a kitchen would be a great asset. I think the location should be towards the center of the community and will draw people to our small businesses.

Kurt: Some of the other conversations are how can we maximize our office space and offload some of our older building. We had conversations and there were interested parties in the building, but we have to find a location for Naugatuck Valley Health. We spoke briefly to them and they were open to a move if a proper location could be found. We talked about including them in this facility potentially, as well as the Boys & Girls Club as they service over 100 Seymour kids each day. The amount of money we spend to maintain these older buildings can be used to partially cover the cost of these buildings.

Jim: When we reviewed other community centers, we need to talk about layout. In terms of location, downtown is the best but the old middle school site isn't large enough. We would hope to move that into the private sector. I'm not inclined to look at Tri-Town because the owner has proven difficult and

we would hope to generate economic development in the Derby Avenue corridor and could therefore be losing valuable property. I'm the chairman of the regional planning board at NVCOG. There is a program that's funded by the State looking at development in flood corridors. This may have benefits for the property behind Stop & Shop. We might be able to align this program with our goals and really benefit the Town. We should utilize our State delegation and the COG and leverage the relationships. I would be in favor of regionalizing with Beacon Falls. If we build we'll be subject to prevailing wage and the cost per square foot will be somewhere in the neighborhood of \$400. If we go with a private developer that will be somewhere more in the neighborhood of \$250. We definitely want to look at a build/lease option. We can build athletic fields in the flood plain. We need to offload these older buildings. I would like to see where we can get assistance to get more value for our dollars. I will defer on programming needs.

Kurt: We've had some interested parties in the current Community Center building. I think people see the success of the old Maple Street School and would like to replicate. Larry Janesky's architect/builder offered to do some quick drawings for us and did a mockup of what a building might look like on the current site. I think we should at least review it. I was approached by someone who runs a soccer program who has considerable resources who was looking to build a turf field somewhere so something like that might fit in nicely.

Zack: The current building is old and we're trying to expand programming but we're hitting road blocks. We've partnered with the schools to the extent we can but our own facilities would be ideal in terms of expansion. We can rent out space and attract people to town.

Kurt: It's not only building the building, we need to understand how much it will cost to maintain and staff the building as well. We currently have a very small staff so we will likely need to expand. Each member of this team covers all the bases we need to include.

Bryan: I think it's a necessary project. I think a pool is an absolute, especially now that the YMCA has closed. I think a lot of the features being discussed can turn into a revenue stream to offset the cost of the additional staff. I think a public-private partnership can benefit both sides.

Bill: I think we all agree it's a good thing but I think it's going to come down to determining priorities. Since we're starting from nothing, I think we need to focus on location first and then look at leasing versus buying.

Kurt: In looking forward to January, do we want to look at location first, maybe narrow it down to three: Tri-Town, current and behind Stop & Shop.

Tim: Are all the considered sites still in play? Have we talked to them?

Kurt: I haven't spoken to anyone since COVID but we can circle back.

Mike: We would have to lock down Tri-Town on paper but they're interested in mixed use on site with the Community Center as an anchor.

Jim: I spoke about Stop & Shop recently but as we all know they're looking for infrastructure in terms of a connection between Routes 67 and 42. They plan on moving there as soon as they finish in Oxford. It would be worth it to reconnect.

Kurt: If you look at Quarry Walk, that's bringing a lot of dollars in and would pay a large part of the debt on this building. If we were able to enter into a regional agreement with Beacon Falls, that might help attract State funding.

Bill: It seems likely to come down to those two properties so maybe we should contact them both before January.

Mike: Tri-Town would be quicker to generate a tax base. Haynes' site would have to blow up a mountain first.

Jim: The caveat to the Tri-Town site is that the owner doesn't have all the requisite property.

Bryan: If we need or want an athletic field, Tri-Town, Haynes and the current site might not fit it. We may have to determine location and programming at the same time.

Mike: We may want to develop the wish list to determine the size.

Fred: I think we should concentrate first on programming first.

Kurt: For the next meeting, everyone should come prepared to discuss programming. In the meantime, we will reach out to the property owners to gauge interest.

### 7) Meeting Dates

A motion was made to approve the Community Center Building Committee dates for 2021.

**Motion:** Bryan Nesteriak

**Second:** Bill Sawicki

**Vote:** 7-0

### 8) Public Comment

There was no public comment.

### 9) Adjournment

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 8:01 PM.

**Motion:** Suzanne Reilly

**Second:** Mike Marcinek

**Vote:** 7-0

Submitted by,



Rory Burke

Recording Secretary