

Community Wellness Center for New London
May, 2016

We recognize that there has been an ongoing effort to develop a community center in the 1941 building. This effort had a number of weaknesses:

- First it required a very large amount of charitable support--for purchase, renovations and/or ongoing operations.
- Second it required many local groups/nonprofits to rent space long-term and/or on a one-off basis.
- Third it depended on the willingness of these same groups to pay adequately for their space rentals.
- Fourth it depended on the ability of whatever community center organization is established to self-fund operations--from rentals, Town funding, or gifts.

The BOS has appointed a committee to take a second look at the project, based on CIP requests for more space and reluctance to let a large facility be demolished if it can be put to a valuable community use. Mark Kaplan and I have talked with a number of local groups about programmatic and space needs, had an engineer and contractor walk through the building, gotten a very preliminary parking plan done and had a budget estimate prepared for renovation and renewal of the building. Based on our discussions, we would propose that the BOS consider creating a **Community Wellness Center in the 1941 building.**

A Community Wellness Center—What is it?

One of the infrequently discussed themes of the Affordable Care Act is a shift in focus to preventive health. As an affiliate of Dartmouth-Hitchcock, NL Hospital is focusing even more attention on community wellness as a driver of preventive health. But community wellness is a holistic approach that incorporates preventive medicine, family planning, financial counseling, mental health, lifestyle changes (smoking, obesity), nutrition counseling, after school programs, health screening, substance abuse, exercise, recreation, meditation, end of life issues and about anything you can think of that relates to a human being's wellness. It could incorporate programs and educational opportunities from COA, AIL, Colby-Sawyer, the SAU, the Boys and Girls Club, VNA, NL Hospital and Dartmouth-

Hitchcock. It could take advantage of existing programs in town as well as developing new ones.

This week (5/16/16), NL Hospital staff are meeting to discuss possibilities and Mark and I have a meeting scheduled with the Director of the Central NH Boys and Girls Club. In short, the possibilities are only limited by our imagination, and a Community Wellness Center would be quite compatible with the educational campus that the SAU wants to develop with the non-1941 portion of the building.

So what would make this possible?

- We need to abandon the idea of renovating the old gym. It's in bad shape, the cost to fix it is high and with it gone, about 30 extra parking spaces can be created. It also reduces the renovation cost by \$1.5MM.
- We need to recognize that private fundraising efforts have been unsuccessful and ask voters to approve a bond issue for the renovation of the building.
- We need to recognize that there will be an ongoing support cost for the building which cannot be reliably funded with rental income from programs using the facility. If New London residents recognize the value of the program, they also need to commit to funding it.
- We believe that with continued national emphasis on preventive care and wellness, that Federal and private grant money will be available, but that a town supported operational budget should serve as the foundation of facility support.

Costs

We have a budget estimate that would be refined and competitively bid should the project move forward. The renovation cost estimate is \$2.54MM or about \$230/sq². That budget includes demolishing the old Gym, and would save the SAU about \$400K that would be required to demolish the 1941 building. It would also save the SAU the cost of adding parking and sorting out the drainage and egress issues. We've submitted a detailed budget to the Town Administrator, along with a preliminary site plan, but some of the renovation highlights include:

- Some structural and ventilation work to meet new codes.
- New energy efficient heating system to which A/C could be added.

- New energy efficient lighting and dropped ceilings to reduce heat demand.
- An elevator and an ADA compliant entrance and parking.
- ADA compliant bathrooms.
- Site work, drainage, paving and granite curbing.
- 100 parking spaces including the existing ones behind the 1941.
- Redesigned traffic egress (still a work in progress).
- A sprinkler system, and new doors to meet assembly codes.

Next Steps:

We have promised to submit a proposal to the SAU's Facility Committee by June 6th. That committee will make a recommendation to the school board on the suitability of the proposal. One of the concerns by at least 2 members of the school board is that this proposal would require a vote at Town Meeting in 2017, delaying any other work for a year. The school board is meeting this week to consider transferring surplus funds from its 2016 budget to demolish the 1941 building this summer. If they decide to do so, then this issue becomes more complicated. If the school board decides to give NL time to present this idea to voters and if the BOS decides that it wants to support the proposal, then we would spend time over the next year refining the proposal with more specifics and educating voters on the pros and cons.

Summary:

This proposal meets some current needs, but it also requires voters to consider where the town is going in the next 30 years and what kinds of services and programs will be desirable or required to meet the needs of all our citizens. This requires a commitment on behalf of the BOS to providing citizens with a vision of the future and the information necessary to understand and evaluate that vision.

To quote management guru, Peter Drucker, "The best way to predict the future is to create it."

Town of New London, NH

Building 1941: Recreation Department

Fitness and Wellness Program Space

- Yoga
- Thai Chi
- Mindful Meditation
- Insanity®
- Boot Camp
- Zumba®
- Walking Club
- Preschool Play Days
- Karate
- Square Dance (outsourced)
- Archery
- Self Defense Class

Arts & Crafts Class Space

- Adult
- Youth
- Event Prep/Instruction (i.e. Pumpkin People, Watermelon Races, Gingerbread Houses ext.)

Access to culinary area/kitchen for Baking/Cooking Classes

After School Intramurals

Adult Sports and Athletics

Instructional/Classroom Space (with AV)

- Classes
- American Red Cross Certification Courses
- Lectures
- Small Programs
- Volunteer Training (Community & Youth Sport)

Meeting/Conference Room Space (AV optional)

- Weight Watchers (requested)
- Boy & Girl Scouts
- Board meetings
- Elections for Organizations/ Meet the Candidates
- Commission Meetings
- Available space for NLOC meetings/youth sport organization

Office & Resource Library

Storage Space: Consolidate all inventories to new space and open Sewer Department storage to town

Center for the Arts: Display/ Storage Space (collaboration)

Other:

- Farmer's Market (seasonal)
- Family Dance
- Kids Night Out
- Movie Nights
- Easter Egg Hunt & Meet Easter Bunny
- Halloween Party
- Vacation Camps (December, February, April)
- Summer Day Camp
- Festival of Trees & Meet Santa
- Hospital Days Events & Programs
- Strawberry Festival
- Winter Carnival Events & Programs

Whipple Hall: Comedy Nights, Karaoke/ Lip Sync Shows, Talent Shows, Guest speakers, Stage rental for plays/shows, Concerts, Recitals, Performances, Magic Shows