

**REPRESENTATIVE TOWN MEETING
TOWN OF DARIEN, CONNECTICUT
FINANCE & BUDGET COMMITTEE**

**Minutes of a Special Meeting Held on October 26, 2011
“DRAFT”**

On October 26, 2011, a meeting of the RTM Finance & Budget Committee was held in Room 273 of the Darien Town Hall with thirteen of fourteen members present.

Present were:

Michael Harman
Bruce Orr
Nora McIlree
Charles Brode,
Reilly Tierney
Tim Schwarz
Deb Ritchie
Bill Smith
Marc Thorne
Jim Palen
Terry Duffy
Anita Rycenga

Absent were: Jack Davis, Kirk Hoffman

Guests in the audience included: Liz Mao, Betsy Hagerty-Ross and members of the Board of Selectmen

The Chairman, Bruce Orr, called the meeting to order at 7:35 p.m. and moved the motion to begin discussion regarding the facilities switch. The discussion was led by a description of the issues by Joseph Pankowski, Chairman of the Commission on Aging who spoke in support of the plan.

His support is based on four primary benefits:

1. Synergies achieved by having the senior center in city hall with close proximity to services and the availability of sufficient parking provided by the existing city hall lots.
2. The re-use of existing buildings is more environmentally friendly and less costly than new construction
3. The new community center will have enough space to provide for youth groups and the arts counsel
4. The current senior center will now be available for up to 20 affordable senior housing units

Marc Thorne asked why seniors can't fit into the current Board of Ed space.

– The existing center has no passageways will reduces that amount of space that is used, but the new space would have to be configured to include passageways.

Reilly Tierney asked why isn't there a new use initiative to go along with the new community center and if there are no new programs why do we need a new center.

– The existing senior center is already used for many child and adult activities which will now be done in the new center.

Norm discussed the square footage summary which outlines the usage components for all of the current and proposed facilities. The new community center will be approximately 16,000 square feet which will be the same as the current facility and it will provide for no new program space than currently provided for.

Nora McIlree commented that the town is the midst of a necessary facility upgrade, citing the high school, Tokeneke School, Weed Beach Project, Library and Police Station.

Liz Mao made a comment that the Library investment required the town to acquire 35 Leroy. The cost for that purchase has been embedded into the overall capital base and should not be applied to the proposed budget for new facilities.

Bruce Orr commented that at the time of the library investment debate RTM members recognized that the vote to acquire 35 Leroy was a vote for the library and the cost of that property should not now be incorporated into the discussion about the new facility proposal.

Anita Rycenga asked that the town look to do value engineering on the development proposal. To which Norm explained that significant value engineering has already been done.

Betsy Hagerty-Ross commented that some facility projects for the current Board of Ed space have been deferred and new IT and special education specifications have been fitted into the 35 Leroy plans. She also said that a new tenant would be expected to use the basement.

Bruce Orr asked what the future capital project are expected to be. Liz Mao said nothing significant is expected. She also commented that Dairen is the most funded town in Fairfield County and of all AAA rated towns in CT with \$16.1 million in funding.

Joseph Pankowski commented that the demolition of the current senior center should be fast and will be handled by the future housing developers.

Reilly Tierney asked if the seniors and board of Ed can fit in the current city hall. David Campbell said that there wouldn't be enough parking.

A vote a taken to approve the budget – the vote passed with 10 yes votes and 2 no votes (Tierney & Thorne)

Bruce Orr moved to the next item on the agenda – a change in ordinance to change the date for that Board of Finance sets the tax deferral interest rate. The item was unanimously approved.

Dated: October 27, 2011

Respectfully submitted,

Timothy Schwarz, Member

RTM Finance & Budget Committee