

Public Health and Safety Committee
Meeting Minutes
October 26, 2011

A special meeting of the Public Health and Safety Committee (PH&S) of the RTM was held at 7:30 pm in the auditorium of Town Hall on Wednesday, October 26, 2011. This was a joint meeting with the Parks and Recreation Committee (P&R) of the RTM. The meeting was telecast live by Channel 79.

Members Present: Carolyn Schoonmaker, Chair; James Patrick, Vice Chair; Jim Cameron; Sue Maguire; Susan LeHan; and Mary Guimond, acting Clerk

Members Absent: Barry Baldwin; Dr. Robert C. George, Clerk; Jennifer Sommer; and Cassandra Hegarty

Guests: Parks and Recreation Committee members; Olive Hauser, Director of Social Services; Beth Paris, Director of Darien Senior Center; Mather Community Center Building Committee members Robin Wood, Louis Gesualdi and Jon Hertz; MaryAnn McCarthy, Commission on Aging; Jayme Stevenson, Selectman; and joining late were Joe Pankowski, Chair of the Commission on Aging; Jerry Nielsen, Selectman; and Norman Guimond, Chair of the Mather Community Center Building Committee

The meeting was called to order by chairs Carolyn Schoonmaker and Cheryl Russell at 7:40 pm. Introductions of all guests were made. The format of the meeting was to invite each constituency to the table to entertain questions specific to their area of expertise regarding the Mather Community Center. The members of the Mather Community Center Building Committee were invited first. Questions ranged from use of particular rooms in the new center to use of the lower level at 35 Leroy. Discussion ensued, touching on topics such as alternative ideas for usage of the Town Hall Annex, previous designs of senior centers, demographics of the senior and toddler population, costs, and affordable housing at Edgerton.

After this discussion, Ms. Schoonmaker read a letter into the record from Sue Swiatek, Director of Parks and Recreation Department for the town asking for the support of the RTM in approving this project.

Ms. Hauser was invited to the table next and described her work. She detailed the importance of the coordination and proximity to town services for all members of the community and especially for seniors. She indicated that use of the Mather Center as a shelter is of great importance to the entire community. She asked for the support of the committees and RTM in approving the project.

Ms. Paris was invited to speak next. She described the expansion of the number of programs offered at the senior center in the last two years and that the increase in participation is expected to continue. She explained that the conditions at the current

center are a barrier to participation by many people. She complimented the architects who spent several months studying the usage of the existing center and for creating such a useful design for the new center. She asked for the support of the committees and the RTM in approving the project.

Ms. McCarthy read a letter into the record on behalf of Mr. Pankowski in support of the project. Mr. Pankowski was able to join the meeting at this time and continued his comments in this vein.

Mr. Guimond also joined the meeting late and related his experiences as the Vice Chair of Community Homes at Leroy Advisory Committee (CHALAC), an affordable housing project at 35 Leroy which he supported. He stated that while CHALAC offered one good solution, this project offers four: replacement of a deteriorating senior center at Edgerton with a multi-generational community center; utilization of significant amounts of wasted space at the Annex; usage of 35 Leroy, empty now for 4 years; and 20 units of affordable housing at Edgerton. He asked for the support of the committees and the RTM for this project.

The committee chairs requested that the committees separate to take a vote. Mr. Cameron made a motion to vote and the committee voted 4-2 in favor of supporting Item #11-13, the bonding resolution for this project.

The meeting adjourned at 9:45 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Guimond, Acting Clerk