

TOWN OF DARIEN  
PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION

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HAND DELIVERED

October 22, 2010

David Campbell  
First Selectman  
Town of Darien  
2 Renshaw Road  
Darien, CT 06820

RE: *Mandatory Referral under Connecticut General Statutes Section 8-24  
MR #2-2010, Board of Selectmen, 2 Renshaw Road*

Dear Mr. Campbell:

At its meeting on October 20, 2010, the Darien Planning and Zoning Commission issued its Mandatory Referral report regarding the proposal to convert of the Board of Education office and storage space to a Senior/Community Center; subsequently construct of a new community pool addition to that building; and raze the existing Senior Activities Center.

The Commission's report, approved by a vote of 6-0, is enclosed.

If you have any questions about the report, please give me a call.

Sincerely,

Jeremy B. Ginsberg  
Planning and Zoning Director

Enclosure

Cc: Karl Kilduff, Town Administrator

**DARIEN PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION  
C.G.S. SECTION 8-24 MANDATORY REFERRAL REPORT  
BOARD OF SELECTMEN, 2 RENSHAW ROAD  
OCTOBER 20, 2010**

**Mandatory Referral #2-2010. Board of Selectmen, 2 Renshaw Road.**

Proposal to convert the Board of Education office and storage space to a Senior/Community Center, and the subsequent construction of a new community pool addition to that building. The existing Senior Activities Center would then be razed.

This request is part of a multi-step “shuffle”, with the Board of Education offices now at 2 Renshaw Road to move to the former Darien Library property at 35 Leroy Avenue. A related referral report has been issued separately on that. Other uses now in Town Hall such as the Probate Court could also be part of such a relocation from 2 Renshaw to 35 Leroy Avenue. The next step would be to renovate the space vacated by the Board of Education into a new Senior/Community Center. Subsequent to that, the existing Senior Activities Center on Edgerton Street would be razed. Also included in this process is the possibility of constructing a new community pool addition to the Town Hall building.

The 2006 Town Plan of Conservation & Development is clear that a decision needs to be made regarding the status of the existing Senior Activities Center on Edgerton Street. The proposed move of the Senior Activities Center, which would then become a Senior/Community Center, to the site at 2 Renshaw Road would be made possible via a move of the existing Board of Education offices to 35 Leroy Avenue.

Pages within the Town Plan which reference the Senior Center and/or Community Center include pages 7-2, 7-3, A7-11, 9-2, 9-3. Applicable excerpts are included as follows:

Page 7-2 Policies: *To ensure that space needs and the need for community services are adequately met for the planning period. This may include: upgrading or renovating existing buildings; adding on to existing buildings to meet demonstrated needs; and/or constructing entirely new buildings where appropriate.*

*To maintain the Senior Activities Center in its existing building, or establish a permanent alternative site.*

Page 7-3 Recommendations:

*As noted in Appendix A7, a number of other facilities are in need of replacement, renovation and/or expansion over the next ten years, including the Police Station, Darien Library, one or more of the Fire Stations, the Town Garage, and Town Hall. With this in mind, the following are recommended:*

*Encourage a comprehensive analysis of the space needs at Town Hall. Grants should continue to be pursued to offset the costs of improving this facility.*

*Consider the purchase or lease of the present Darien Library property as it plans its move to a new site.*

DARIEN PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION  
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*Study the existing Senior Center facility, and make a determination on how to proceed—whether to continue repairing and renovating the existing building, or whether to consider alternate locations for a new Senior Center. The Appendix lists some of the repairs that are needed to the existing building.*

Page A7-11:

*Issues*

*Townpeople who are 62 years of age or older use the center for lunchtime dining, entertainment, charitable work, skill classes, and various forms of recreation. The dining facilities alone are oftentimes used at their full capacity of approximately 120 persons. The seniors also use the facilities to undertake contributions to the community such as repairing furniture for Person-to-Person, carrying out major mailings for local charitable agencies and producing items for charitable events. By all measures, the Senior Center has proved to be extremely successful.*

*An important policy decision facing the Town is whether to maintain this facility at its current location or establish an alternative site.*

*Issues*

*Significant repair work needs to be done to the Senior Center. A decision needs to be made as to:*

- Whether to repair the building little-by-little;*
- Whether to perform substantial renovations all at once;*
- Whether to demolish the existing building and construct a new Senior Center—either in generally the same location, or elsewhere within the community.*

Page 9-2:Policies

- Continue careful monitoring of Special Use Permits to minimize impact on surrounding single family neighborhoods.*

Page 9-3

*Recommendations:*

- The existing Darien Library is located in a residential zone. In the event of the Library's moving, efforts should be made to rezone this property to allow condominiums.*
- The Town should continue exploring possible locations for a community center/community pool facility.*

**COMMISSION'S FINDING:**

The Commission finds that this proposal is consistent with the 2006 Town Plan of Conservation & Development. Future details regarding the location of a Senior Center/Community Center at 2 Renshaw Road will be reviewed by the Planning and Zoning Commission as part of a subsequent required Special Permit application process. This review will cover many issues, including, but not limited to, hours of operation, schedules and programs, and related issues such as traffic and parking. At such time as a community pool proposal does materialize, scrutiny will be given to that as well. Any application will require a full needs and use assessment of the spaces being occupied.