

MAYOR'S SPECIAL SENIOR CENTER STUDY CMTE.

March 16, 2000

10:00 AM

Present: Aldermen Shea and Lopez, Jack Royer, Irene Robie, Penny Sconsa, Fred and Rita O'Connor, Bob MacKenzie, Pamela Goucher and Donna Pollock

Messrs: Lucille Bayko, Alice Wallace and Tom Wallace, Architect

Chairman Shea stated that the purpose of the meeting is to bring the members of the Special Senior Center Study Committee up to date regarding the engineering and the status of the feasibility study. Mr. MacKenzie will briefly address that and then introduce the architect.

Mr. MacKenzie stated we worked last year to set aside some money for a feasibility study. We have gone through the standard selection process and have selected Tom Wallace as an architect to work on the feasibility study. He has appeared with a couple of other people who also specialize in site selection. I would like Mr. Wallace to go through what he proposes as a process. He has worked on senior centers before, has experience in both feasibility studies and actually constructing senior centers. He has been through the process so he knows what the pitfalls are and in that way he can help us out. Mr. Wallace also has some very good ideas on how to get ideas from all the seniors about what they want and how they would like to proceed with it. I will also note that you may have heard that the Mayor in his proposed CIP has included some money to get to the next step of land acquisition and final design for this project. That will go to public hearing next Monday night and the Board of Mayor and Aldermen then will act upon that CIP budget sometime early in April. I will now turn it over to Tom Wallace, the architect, to give an outline of how he would expect to proceed and how to get the input.

Chairman Shea asked Mr. MacKenzie to stay for any questions the members may have.

Mr. Wallace stated that he printed out a couple of additional copies of what he will be presenting and passed them out. The first page states the experience he has had with senior center projects. We have done a lot of feasibility studies looking into uses of existing buildings. Comparisons between building new versus renovating existing buildings. One of the projects that you may be familiar with that we did was for the State of New Hampshire looking at the old *Manchester Union Leader* building. It was when the State was going through the evaluation as to whether to

accept that building as a donation from the *Union Leader* to be used as a courthouse. We were hired by the State to do that analysis to see whether a courthouse would fit in that building and what it would cost to do it. Then the State used the report that we had done to make a determination to in fact accept that building. Since then, as you know, they have renovated and it is being used as the District Court. We have also done a number of projects for the Housing Authority. There are three elderly congregate facilities upgrading the dining facilities at the Kalivas Park, the Burns Apartments and the Pariseau Apartments. In most cases, those were expansions of their dining facilities and enlarging the kitchens along the back. We have done a couple of projects that involve senior centers with expansions of existing facilities. One was in Ossify and the other was in Groom. One was a new building in Hinsdale. We were interviewed a couple of weeks ago and we used these pictures on the board of the Hinsdale facility. The board outlines how we were proposing to go forward with the feasibility study. The first one was past program evaluation and it involved trying to determine what the needs of the senior center would be. It involved surveying an inventory of what you have in your existing centers and becoming familiar with those. It also involved field measuring and preparing layouts to scale of what you have that we could use as comparison and as a starting point for coming up with the new requirements. The second was to meet with the staff and to review your existing programs and find out what things work and what doesn't work. We were asked to identify things that are duplicated in the two different facilities that might be able to be consolidated and be used more efficiently in the new building. Then try to identify also the future needs so you will be ready for expansion. The third thing would be to meet with elderly groups to get input. One of the things I found useful on past projects is to have a meeting and a questionnaire available to people at the meeting. I would like to make the questionnaire provocative in terms of the questions that it asks to try to elicit response from people. If you have a generic questionnaire, you get very nebulous answers. But if you make some statements and ask people whether they agree or not, you get better responses that are easier to evaluate. You could talk about one senior center is the best alternative and if there would be only one to be considered, people would have one response to that. You might have an alternate question that would say we should have two separate centers. But try to get some input from people as to what their opinions are. Quite often I found that when people check off the answer, they also put in a comment that is helpful in evaluating what they really meant by their answer and the things that were important. We would have a meeting and go through that kind of thing to try to get some feedback from the actual users of the facility to see what was important to them. Then based on what we were able to gather in these three would be to prepare a space program, which is a listing of all the spaces that would go in the building. How big they would be. A bubble diagram is an architectural term where you organize and group the spaces into different things and see which ones would be

next to which other ones and what the flow is and so forth. It is helpful in planning when we move into the actual design. That would be the first step in developing the program. The second step is looking for alternate sites. In this task, a local firm REI that is a real estate developer would assist us. They manage properties for people. They are located at the other end of Elm Street and do a lot of work here in the city. They are well aware of available properties, market values, operating costs and so forth. They would be helping us as a consultant. One of the things they would do would be to analyze and obtain demographic information to get an idea of where the elderly population is located and see how that would effect our selection of a specific site. The second was using the space program that we develop in part I is identify potential sites. That would give us an idea of how big the property would need to be or how big a building that would be considered for acquisition. The third step is the evaluate all of the sites that we identify. We would probably do that in some kind of a tabular form so that we could evaluate them against certain criteria i.e.: access to transportation availability, parking, where they fell in relation to the demographic information. We would have a way of objectively comparing the different sites. Based on that, we would short-list our list of all of the sites down to four that we would look at in more detail. That was a number that was identified in the proposal. The next step is the actual architectural design. We would take each of the four alternatives which were identified as two sites for new construction, one for rehab and then looking at the existing police station and see how that could be used. We would develop full schematic designs, which would be floor plans and what they would look like on the outside for each of those so that those could be evaluated and compared against one another. We would also prepare cost estimates for each one. Then after we did that, we would compare these different alternatives using some kind of tabular form where we could compare the scores one against the other. We would have an objective way of looking at those. Then we would review our findings with everybody. Although, we would be having meetings with this committee or a sub-committee on a regular basis as we went through trying to get input. This would be a more formal and final review of what our findings were. Then after we had that, we would also evaluate as a separate thing, a single senior center versus separate centers. That was something that we were specifically asked to look at to confirm one or the other, to see what the pros and cons of each were. At the end of that, we would have an overall with four different possibilities that we would be able to compare and so would you. Then the final task is a presentation of our findings. We were asked to attend the meeting of the Mayor and Aldermen to present what we found, answer questions that would come up. Then after that, we would prepare a final report that would summarize the whole process that we had gone through. At the end, make a recommendation as to what we felt was the best design. Hopefully, through discussions back and forth that would be something that this committee would also be agreeing with. As part of that final package, there would be rendered drawings

and the floor plans and what the building would look like that could be used for publicity. That is an outline of what the process that we were talking about. We had a schedule on the back and based the dates on when our interview was in getting started. But I think the overall timeframe is pretty much the same in terms of number of weeks. It is just that we have not gotten the authorization to start yet. So we would push the start date back a little bit. We were proposing three months, middle of the summer for finishing. If we get started in the next week or two, it would probably be the end of summer by the time we get done.

Alderman Lopez stated the schedule reflects July 3rd.

Mr. Wallace replied on that schedule, but that started on February 28th and we have not been given the authorization to start yet.

Ms. Robie asked Mr. Wallace would your company also be looking for the site.

Mr. Wallace replied in the affirmative. We will be looking with *REI* for a number of potential sites.

Ms. Robie stated that she feels Mr. Wallace is attaching the senior center to the police station.

Mr. Wallace replied that we are looking at the possibility of putting the senior center in the existing police station. That project has been side tracked for a little bit.

Mr. MacKenzie stated it was the Board of Mayor and Aldermen that gave the direction to build a new police station and look at the existing police station for potentially a senior center and some other departments. That directive by the Board of Mayor and Aldermen is still valid and that is why when we included the analysis in a report, it was because the board had directed it. Until the board changes that directive, we are still going to be following what they said before. The Mayor has presented a budget that may not include a new police station, but the board has not taken any formal action to say that we should not be looking at the existing police station for the center. I do believe that the board may or may not eliminate the existing police station at some point. But there will always be aldermen that say why didn't you look at it. If we do not look at the existing police station, there will always be board members who say why didn't we look at the existing police station. If we go through this process and this group will review the four sites in the end. This group has to come to some consensus on what they prefer as the right alternative. If you look at the police station, and it does not meet your needs i.e.: parking, location. In the end you can always tell everyone that we evaluated that existing police station and it was not the best site.

You may want to try and get that eliminated early on but at least evaluate it and compare it against other options.

Ms. Robie stated we were told at the last meeting that we have to wait five years for us to be working on a new center. You are saying five years to people who are all over eighty years old. If we have to wait until they decide that this police station is not for us, we have already decided that. What we want, and the most important thing, is to make sure that the west side and the East Side meet. We have to make sure that it has plenty of parking spaces. As it is, people who work at the police department do not have any parking spaces. I can't even consider the police station. We have already said that we do not want to share the center building with any other agency because eventually they push us out. Look at the west side, it is all library and it is just a little center that holds only seventy people the fire department has said you cannot have more than that in there. I went in there one day to speak, and they had sixty-seven dancers. The director was there, she made sixty-eight, her assistant was sixty-nine, when I came in to sign the book, they closed the book and put a note on the door "Full Occupancy". In a city of 22,000 seniors, we cannot repeat that. We have to have the room, our own building, and we cannot even consider or waste time considering going into the police station. If you are one to be looking for a piece of property that is going to be big enough to hold the police station and the senior center, you are going to waste our time looking for that because that is not what we want anyway.

Mr. Wallace replied that is not what we were asked by the city.

Alderman Lopez asked Mr. Wallace how do you evaluate what is really needed in the City of Manchester. Some opinions are one first-class senior center. How do you evaluate that when it comes to the situation that we are in – east and west.

Mr. Wallace replied it could go either way.

Alderman Lopez asked could you make an honest judgement at some time to say that it would be nice if we had this and that we had the money to do this. But the best way to go would be to have one first-class senior center in the City of Manchester wherever that might be. I will leave that for thought.

Alderman Lopez asked Mr. MacKenzie if he realized the board directed the four to include the old police station. It has been very well documented that the seniors in this city do not want to go there. Are there any savings if we do not evaluate it or go back to the board. If we cannot, then I do not see any harm in it.

Mr. MacKenzie replied I would want to negotiate with Mr. Wallace on that. It is possible that we could see some savings but I am not sure.

Mr. Wallace stated that we are going to start looking at more than four that we are going to evaluate. Instead of the final four, one does not have to be the existing police station. It could be another option, either a new site or an existing building that would replace that.

Alderman Lopez stated I am looking at if Mr. MacKenzie could look at that and if we have to go back to the board, but I think the people have spoken and they can speak again. We have a CIP meeting. We are wasting time doing this and more time will be developed and we do not need it. We need a first-class senior citizen center. We have to find a place, whether it is on city land or we have to buy land. How big is that senior citizen center we are looking for. In the eyes of many, when you have your meeting, my vision is 10,000 square feet. That limits you to where you are going to go.

Mr. Wallace stated the number is going to point us as to what sites can take it and what sites cannot.

Alderman Lopez stated there are only two places in the City of Manchester where you are going to find two and a half acres. But that will be another issue.

Chairman Shea stated that he wanted to clarify the point that the only alderman that really had an interest in continuing the study was Ex-alderman Girard. Most of the board members were not in favor of putting the seniors there.

Mr. MacKenzie stated that he recognizes that and it would be easier for my job to not evaluate it. But still the board has taken a course and I am not about to change what the board has directed.

Alderman Lopez stated that we could go back to the board.

On motion by Alderman Lopez duly seconded by Rita O'Connor, it was voted to not go to the police station as a site for the senior center.

Ms. Robie asked Mr. MacKenzie early on when we were looking around, we were enhanced by a piece of property that was on South Commercial just beyond the Singer Family Park. There are two large lots there that you and I looked at on the map. We were told that the first lot was the park had a lease for twenty years on that in case it got so big the city promised the building a parking lot on that piece of land. Then beyond that, there was enough room for a center we thought. But nothing came of it. They are hiring people to go around looking and nobody has tested that land to see if it was possible. Has it ever been tested. Has anyone every looked at it. It belongs to the city and this will cut down expenses.

Mr. MacKenzie replied we will have to get concurrence with the Riverfront Park Foundation and they might be amendable although they have their own plans. A couple of years ago, the board deeded the lease rights to all of that land to this park foundation. It might be amendable and that is one of the first sites that could be evaluated. I do want to caution you that a year from now, hoping to be under construction with the facility, historically if you do not look at alternatives, several of the board members have offered sites, and if you do not go in and evaluate those sites, then the likelihood of a project not proceeding is higher. If you look at all of the sites now, including that site, which is one that I like. It is good to go out to the seniors and ask if there are any sites that they are aware of. If you get sixteen sites and you want parking near the front door, room for this type of facility, it would be nice to have an outside area with trees and natural areas. Then you take each one of those sites as a group, Mr. Wallace will guide us through, these four sites we like and these twelve sites we do not like. We have gone through a process of reasonable evaluation and the board will accept that in the end. If we have not looked at a particular site that three or four board members like, then the process will slow down and the likelihood of the project not getting funded is higher. A few weeks invested right now will save us tremendous amounts of time and increase the likelihood of this project proceeding. I have watched a lot of projects fail in the city and a lot of them proceed. Generally, the projects that have failed have not gone through this consensus building process and evaluation of alternatives. That is where this group has to draw a consensus by the time we get to the Board of Mayor and Aldermen. If there is still division on this group, then the project is not going to proceed. Even though there are sites that are good, if you put all of your eggs in one basket and say that this is the only site and it does not turn out to be workable, then we are in trouble. I can give you examples if you want of what has happened to these facilities in the past. The first time they said let's move the Chandler School population, kids that have special needs, someone said the perfect place is the Brown School. A year went by until they finally realized that the Brown School would not work for the Chandler School population. So the next person said the Hevey School at Ste. Marie's would be perfect, it is available, we could lease it. Another year went by and in the end it was determined that they could not go there. This went on for three or four years. Someone had a bright idea and nobody looked at twelve sites to start with. This group needs to look at all alternatives because in the end when the Aldermen say did you look at this site, you can yes we looked at that and it is not as good as the site we want.

Ms. Wallace stated that this has been going on for quite some time and they are going to drag their feet.

Alderman Lopez stated that Mr. MacKenzie is right. The only suggestion is an alderman has something they want to look at, then that is fine. When you ever run into a problem, we have to bring it before so we can solve it with the policy makers. Just like the police station, we made a vote and then you do your thing with the Board of Mayor and Aldermen and we go from there. There is no sense in wasting time.

Ms. Wallace asked if anyone here has any sites at all.

Alderman Lopez replied one is down by Riverfront as Ms. Robie mentioned. The other that has been mentioned that a couple of aldermen are interested in is Pine and Hayward Streets.

Mr. MacKenzie stated that he had not heard of that one but would look into it.

Ms. Wallace stated that on Pine and Hayward Streets, the owner was going to sell it. Then according to the newspaper, he does not want to sell it.

Alderman Lopez stated that it is a different area. It is not the area that was in the paper.

Mr. MacKenzie stated if the ideal site is privately owned, and the best one, the city does have the option of taking the property by eminent domain. That is an action that I very rarely support because I do not like the concept. But if there is only one site that it will work on, the city does have that option.

Ms. Wallace asked if there were any other sites mentioned.

Mr. MacKenzie replied several people have sent me sites: one is on Pennacook Street just off of Elm Street, it used to be Magnuson Motors which is a large building about 10,000 square feet. It is right behind Rite Aid on upper Elm Street. Another one mentioned a site near Osco Drug on Mammoth Road, an existing complex. It is the old block of buildings that have a bakery in it facing Mammoth Road. The owner of the property wants to evaluate that. My first reaction was that if there is one center that is too far from the West Side. Another one suggested that we use the first floor of one of the mill buildings along the river. There may be access issues and parking issues. We should make a list and the chairman might find the best way to make this list and look at a dozen sites.

Ms. Wallace stated that is what I am suggesting.

Mr. O'Connor stated before we decide on a site what the senior center is going to need to support everybody who is going to use it in the foreseeable future. That is

very important. There is no sense in building a place that is going to hold one hundred people when five years from now you are going to need one hundred and fifty people. It is going to be undersized like it is today. That should be the first priority to lay out just what they need for this place.

Chairman Shea stated that is a very good point.

Alderman Lopez stated that he subscribes to what he is saying. List all of the sites but the only thing I would ask with your expertise and Mr. Wallace's expertise in finding out exactly what the seniors want is that there should be a process if you have twelve sites, right away you can eliminate seven or eight of them because that is not what they want. There should be a small process where you are not going to be wasting time looking at all of these sites if it is not going to meet the building as Mr. O'Connor has stated.

Mr. MacKenzie stated that is a very good point. Typically what might happen, Mr. Wallace might ask you what the criteria should be. Parking lot big enough to handle "x" amount of cars, a site that has natural abilities, "x" distance from the river or close to both sides. Mr. Wallace, would you normally put that in a matrix perhaps.

Mr. Wallace replied it depends on the kind of input we are getting. What we might do is work up a table and have criteria for location, size, proximity to transportation, and group them and be able to score them as well. We could do it as a group, each person putting down their scores. We would find quickly that everybody throws out certain sites and we focus in on a few that are worth looking at in more detail. That way it keeps it objective and it forces you to think about all of the different aspects too instead of just one thing that catches your eye about a particular site. Sometimes it tends to make you overlook other things. You have to put a score down for each one, and then you have considered all of these different options and aspects of the evaluation.

Ms. Robie stated that the committee and I have been going through different senior centers. We have gone through New Hampshire, Derry, Nashua, Plymouth, Laconia. None of these are what we had in mind. But we did go to Massachusetts and I have two sites that we really approved of. We liked them very much for several reasons. They had their own site. They had plenty of parking spaces, plenty of lawn and trees. It looked home-like. They had two floors but one was a basement. When I think of Commercial Street, I doubt very much you could put a basement in there. They have so many activities. They have their own kitchen. They hire their own help. They do not have the Meals on Wheels, which is nothing I would want to eat. We have eaten at all of these places and the food was delicious and it did not cost any more. People have to pay for their own. They

had one large room where one end had all the tables for dining. Then they had another part was an auditorium with a stage where you could have activities or you could push the chairs to the side and you could have line dancing for exercises. They have billiard rooms, two or three billiard tables, poker tables, and darts, shuffleboards. It took care of everyone. We are apt to forget about the men. The men will bring their wives to the center and then go off somewhere and have to come back and pick them up.

Ms. Wallace stated that she went there with Ms. Robie and it is beautiful with plenty of parking.

Ms. Robie stated we are not through. Everytime somebody tells us you should go somewhere...I will not go to New York. But when they say you should see what they have and speak with the people who run it. It does not seem to cost them as much as what it costs the keep the center over on Hanover Street. Yet they have hundreds of people. They have a beautiful library that had been donated. A lot of the things that go into a center can be funds, it can be donated. Mr. MacKenzie, you have people who work in your office that do federal grants. I understand that for anything that is done for the seniors, there are many grants. If, as we would like to have in our center, we would like to have a portion of it that would be for the adult daycare center where they could have their own entrance. This could also be a door that would come into the center so that those who are well enough to come in and enjoy line dancing or playing bingo or just talking. They would be a part of us but their entrance so that it would not bother them or be distracted. They could go outside in the sunshine, on the grass, under the trees because people who are in an adult care center are indoors day in and day out. When they are home, they never get out. In an adult day care center, they are right in there and then get out. I am thinking about them too. So I understand that they have twice the amount of money donated for adult care center. That would be big savings when they are thinking about putting so much money. I am thinking like a housewife, not a businessperson. Commercial Street is owned by the city, let's test it and find out if it is not feasible, let's get rid of it and go on to other things. I am thinking of federal funds, and people like Walter Stiles to help get a donation of a foundation, a roof, a ceiling, or a library, or a kitchen. Am I wrong in thinking this way.

Ms. Pollock stated to Ms. Robie that she had mentioned Meals on Wheels program. I am hosting that program at the West Side center and the meals are for the public. The seniors who do attend are welcome to eat at the congregate meal site but it is not there specifically for the seniors that attend the senior center. I also had a question about the parking. If a site was chosen, for example in the millyard, is there a possibility of a shuttle. If you had a building with some parking around it but there was more available parking just a block or two away.

Could a shuttle, like *CMC*, come in and go back and forth. If it was the perfect site, but the problem is parking.

Alderman Lopez replied that once it is there, all of those things come into play. I have already talked with the *MTA* and they would be willing to go around and have a bus route. After you get the house built, you are going to get all of these things.

Ms. Pollock stated that she was more concerned if the parking was a detriment to the location, but the location was perfect.

Alderman Lopez stated that it does not matter where it is. *MTA*, *CMC* and *Elliot* are willing to change their bus route to get the people there and pick them up.

Ms. Pollock stated that she is not talking about a shuttle from *CMC*, it was just an example of the parking lot, then you cross the street and the shuttle them into the hospital.

Mr. Wallace stated that you are saying that if you find a site that you really like but you can only fit forty cars on it and you wanted eighty cars. But there was another place that was a half a mile away that you could park the other forty cars then you would have something going back and forth. You would have to consider that when you are evaluating the site. It certainly a bit of a drawback but there may be other advantages of that site that overweigh the parking issue. That could be addressed and not eliminated because of that reason.

Ms. Robie stated to Ms. Pollock that she has already spoken with Mr. Webster at the *MTA* on South Elm Street and he said that it could be very well arranged. If people live on the bus line, they could take it down in front of City Hall. He would pick up groups and take them wherever they have to be. However, Alderman Lopez said when we find a site, I am sure they would be very cooperative. I asked if we would like to close the center because it costs so much money to operate. We stood outside and watch big crowds coming out of there. That is fifteen people playing bingo twice a week. We would like to see that place closed, save that money, put it in the funds for the future seniors. Then bus these people over to the West Side center for their bingo. There will be a few left behind, but it is a thought to give. The money that is going into that Smile Center/East side center is pathetic.

Ms. Pollock replied the rent per square foot is cheaper now then what they are renting now on Bridge Street for other departments.

Chairman Shea stated that is a separate issue and if you want to bring that up at the CIP meeting that is fine but that is not what we are discussing here.

Ms. Pollock stated when we were speaking about the seniors knowing the needs of what the building should be, we should also consider that we have staff and a director that have the expertise in that area as well of what the seniors need.

Ms. Wallace asked how many are on the staff.

Ms. Pollock replied there are two of us in the office. Jan would retire at that point.

Mr. Royer stated the cost is \$60,000 a year including electricity. The rent is \$47,000. Nobody goes there because of the parking. You have the West Side center and there is a little bit of parking. Tomorrow we are going on a bus trip with two buses and we have to park in Bedford because there is no way we can park all of these cars on the West Side. Sometimes she has four buses. The main problem with both centers is the parking. This one is worse than ever. There is no parking whatsoever period.

Chairman Shea stated that is something that is very important now, and you tie it into a future center. But I think it is a separate issue. I agree with you but I am not sure we can solve that problem today.

Mr. Royer stated we have been talking about getting another place from the time we became a commission back in 1986 when we found out what we were paying for rent. At that time, it was over \$60,000 a year and Barbara Vigneault had to put in about \$72,000 to take care of everything.

Ms. Pollock stated we were given \$100,000 from CIP but we did not spend all of that.

Mr. Royer stated I am talking about the \$76,000 to take care of the rent, electricity and everything else. Since then, we have been paying that amount. We checked out the Hook and Ladder at one time, Lowell Street where the Telephone Company used to be, the Blessed Sacrament School (I mentioned that to the Mayor). Nothing ever came about. It is not that we have not been trying to get out of there that has been since day one.

Alderman Lopez stated that he would recommend that the commission make a recommendation to close that place with the Board of Mayor and Aldermen.

Mr. Royer stated what it amounts to is an office.

Alderman Lopez stated and the commissioners can do that. Do not look at it as advisory, the commissioners can make a recommendation to the Board of Mayor and Aldermen. Mr. MacKenzie, can I get the plans, is it public document from another city.

Mr. MacKenzie replied if it is another city, there is no copyright information.

Alderman Lopez stated the Claremont Senior Citizen Center, I gave you a notice in reference to and I will give you the plans since Mr. MacKenzie said it was okay. It is a one-story, 9,604 square feet. It is on 2.54 acres. It has the capability of having 783 people in it at one time. The floor plan includes a director's office, activity room, kitchen, bathrooms, janitor room, lobby and large multi-purpose. I took the liberty of finding the plans. This is in conjunction with the photographs that went around the table. Everything is there including the parking spaces to help you. This is an idea of a lot of senior citizens that attended a meeting Alderman Shea was at. They want a first-class senior citizen center and every city in the United States that is comparable, as a senior citizen center is capable of doing anything. All the things in the photographs are what people want. I am getting older too and I want to go there and shoot pool. My dad spent nine years, before he had Alzheimer's Disease, in a senior citizen center. He went everyday for five hours and played pool with his buddies that he grew up with.

Chairman Shea stated that one of the presenters who was on the feasibility study list presented something in terms of that center. You had one that you did up in Ossipee.

Mr. Wallace replied in the affirmative and stated that was a renovation of a building. We did a new one that was in Hinsdale that was somewhat smaller than this building.

Chairman Shea asked the one in Ossipee was how many square feet.

Mr. Wallace replied that he could not recall. It was a senior center and a childcare center in the same building.

Ms. Wallace stated that this city is supposed to be number one or number six and yet we have less than any of the other cities in the State and that is not right. We should have done this a long time ago.

Chairman Shea stated you couldn't undo what has been done. The point is that there is a beginning and we can talk all we want about what proceeded it but we have to look ahead and say we are here now, let's work together. If mistakes were made in the past, move forward but do not repeat them. What we have to do is

work together for the benefit of all of the people and generate ideas. Mr. Wallace will come back at a certain time and report to us.

Mr. Wallace stated the first step and task was to get all of these ideas of what needs to be in the building, what spaces are, what the parking requirements are and then tabulate all of that and then agree on what you want in your building.

Chairman Shea asked how would you like those ideas gathered. It is impractical to have one hundred people together.

Mr. Wallace replied I would like to get people to write down what they want in the building so that people on this committee can use plans like this one. We can go look at some of these facilities that you talked about and say what you like or do not like, this room should be bigger for our use. Then I can take all of those things and begin to condense it into something for you particular needs.

Chairman Shea stated there are two committees here today. There is a committee within a committee. Irene Robie meets with a lot of seniors, would you suggest that she compiles through Lucille Bayko, a list of what those ideas are. Is that what you want.

Mr. Wallace replied in the affirmative and stated put them down so we can have a meeting. But it is hard for me to write everything down as fast as it is being thrown at me.

Chairman Shea stated Rita and Fred O'Connor are over at the West Side so they can get some ideas there. What you want is general ideas from seniors, then these ideas being brought back by this committee, discuss it with you and also with a representative from *REI* would be here also. Then from there have the process going.

Mr. Wallace stated then we start identifying sites that meet those criteria.

Ms. Sconsa stated that she had called Century 21 and spoke with Rick Dumont. I asked him if he knew of any land. He is in residential but he will keep his eyes open. Land is hard to come by in Manchester. Maybe a realtor can help us out.

Mr. Wallace stated that is what *REI* does. He has a broker's license.

Mr. Royer stated that Barbara Vigneault should be included in this list.

Chairman Shea stated that he agreed the commissioners as well as Barbara Vigneault.

Mr. MacKenzie stated that he feels it would be very useful if we could set a time deadline in order to get all of these written comments. There has to be enough time so that you can get to the other groups.

Ms. Robie stated that she will be speaking to quite a few groups, the *AARP* have given permission and I will see if I can get that message across to them.

Chairman Shea asked what would be a good timeframe for you.

Mr. Wallace replied I am ready to start whenever you are ready. We have not been authorized; there is no signed contract yet.

Chairman Shea asked how about the 16th of April.

Mr. Wallace replied that he would like to get something quicker than that if we could.

Mr. MacKenzie stated that we are still reviewing the contract. We only have to have the City Solicitor review it. It should be fairly soon.

Alderman Lopez asked do we need to do anything before we can do that because we were ready to proceed yesterday.

Mr. MacKenzie replied in the negative and stated that we can give notice to proceed. We do not have the signed contract but it is close.

Chairman Shea asked then what would you suggest.

Mr. Wallace replied that he would like to get started next week on this project. I can begin to get some information together myself. Then if you think you could get your information back in a couple of weeks.

Ms. Robie replied in the affirmative.

Mr. Wallace stated then we will have a meeting and I will try to get what I can gather. At that meeting, we can schedule to go look at a facility.

Chairman Shea stated to set a date.

Alderman Lopez asked if the information could be compiled by April 3rd.

Chairman Shea asked what is the date for the next meeting.

Mr. Wallace said April 3rd.

Chairman Shea stated at 10:00 AM. What day of the week is that on.

Mr. Wallace replied a Monday.

Alderman Lopez asked Mr. MacKenzie; in the process would the Singer Park area be one of the first sites we could start looking at.

Mr. MacKenzie replied in the affirmative and stated that we still have to make sure that the Riverfront Park Foundation okays that because they control it. The board gave the easement rights to them and we will have to get some formal okay before we start looking.

Alderman Lopez stated if you need any help on that, Mr. Provencher said that he would be willing to help.

Mr. O'Connor stated that there is another site on Route 3, it is virgin land. It is right on the border of Hooksett and Manchester. That might be a spot that would be interesting to look at.

Chairman Shea introduced Pam Goucher of the Planning Department. She is here to answer questions in Bob MacKenzie's absence.

Mr. Royer stated when you referred to closing down the center, I do not think it would be right to do that now. The people that are going there, a few come from the Carpenter Center.

Chairman Shea stated that you would have a meeting to give the Board of Mayor and Aldermen some direction. You can get together with the members of the commission.

Mr. Royer stated that the meeting is always the first Tuesday of the month.

Chairman Shea stated as an alderman along with Mike Lopez, we will look to you for direction. You will have a meeting the 2nd of April. I am not sure when the Mayor's budget is finalized but whatever you may recommend we will set a goal on it.

Ms. Pollock stated that there will not be a meeting on April 2nd with Barbara Vigneault for the commissioners, she will still be out.

Mr. Royer asked can't she give you the papers that we usually get so that we can hold our meeting.

Ms. Pollock replied you can hold it but it will not be with the director. If you want input from Barbara Vigneault, she will not be available.

Mr. Royer stated that Ms. Pollock could fill in for her.

Mr. Wallace stated that it is good to see so much interest and good ideas that people have.

Ms. O'Connor stated the directors know what the seniors need working all of these years and the complaints they get. They know that parking is a good point, having our own kitchen, our own building. There are not too many things that we want.

Alderman Lopez stated just to remind the commissioners that the contract is up for 2001. We do not want to be locked into anything.

Tom Wallace, in Task 3, Number 5 is there a way that could be escalated. That is the biggest issue we are facing.

Mr. Wallace replied in the affirmative and stated that we could do that. I put it in there because when we got the RFP from the city, the proposal was connected to that portion of the work. It would seem to me that it would be very helpful in identifying sites as to whether we are looking for one or a main site and a satellite.

Alderman Lopez stated Irene Robie is getting information. With your expertise, should there be a public forum for everybody to come to that particular meeting. Would you recommend that. Probably everybody at this table would agree on a first-class senior citizen center. Then you do have the east and west. How do you think we should handle that. Should that be a public forum or should it be more people inclusive.

Mr. Wallace replied that he thinks there should be a public forum to express opinions. But the final decision is going to have to be a smaller group. We should give people a chance to make their feelings known so that we are aware of them.

Alderman Lopez asked Mr. Wallace to accelerate that to a point...

Mr. Wallace replied that he feels that should be moved up into Task 1 as part of the program evaluation.

Chairman Shea stated that is a very good point.

Ms. Goucher stated along with the ideas that Irene Robie is going to be collecting, Tom Wallace will try to develop some surveys that we had talked about and will have to discuss a method of distribution so that we can cover the broadest group of senior citizens that we can. Making the questions somewhat provocative to make people get really excited about it as opposed to checking yes or no, really does help. I am sure that our department could work with Tom Wallace to try to develop that and make sure we get a good distribution. Barbara Vigneault will advise how we can get some good distribution.

Mr. O'Connor stated cost-wise it would be more efficient to have one center. There are not many people participating in the East Side center. If you have a place that will handle everybody, with the parking. People on the East Side will go because they can drive there. Any further accumulation of people who do not have transportation can make arrangements somehow with the city or the Bus Company to transport them to a senior site.

Chairman Shea stated he thinks most people concur with that that are here. One of the problems that you have is a strong feeling, like parochialism, in terms of people being attached to a particular center. Obviously that requires a little bit of weaning but the final decision will probably be determined by several factors. One of which the financial situation, the more practicality of it, the location, etc. It is a good point but you have to reason that not everyone thinks the same as we do.

Ms. Robie stated it would be best to have one center would be to bring back to the east sides and west sides together. It has been for many years a difference of opinion. A lot of the east sides go over to the West Side and things are getting along great. If we could all have a senior center where everybody would go that would be a different thing. It would be cheaper for the City of Manchester because everyone wants their own kitchen. Everyone would like to see meals served. In Chelmsford, they told me they serve 172 meals a day. People will come in the morning and stay for the dinner. Other people will just come and have the lunch and go off. It is very nutritious food and only costs \$1.75. The manager of the kitchen told me that they make \$.02 on every plate that they serve. It does not cost the city that much money. It pays for their salary, it pays for the food that goes out, and they clear \$.02 on each. The City of Chelmsford is making a lot of money. That is not the idea. Another reason why it would be great, if you had one big center that you would hire a certified activity director whom had been trained to go out in the community and get volunteers to come in. She hears about a choir leader who decides she does not want to do it anymore in church, perhaps you could interest her to come and start a glee club. Or a dance teacher who has given that up, and she will come over and teach certain steps. Over at the West Side, they have a marvelous leader for line dancing. Dancing is merely for

exercise and I want to move every inch of my body. There are several reasons why one center would be more feasible in the City of Manchester.

Chairman Shea stated Irene Robie brought up how long it will take for a senior center to be built. Of course, everything is political. Once we get all the items in place, then you start moving. It is not necessarily going to take five years. I would estimate that if we have everything in place and we get the community behind us, we could probably start within a year or two to construct. In order to not be presumptuous, one has to be realistic and say we have to have the planning in place, we have the have the community support, and then we go after the amount of money that is needed for it. But if we have all the items in place, then it is pretty hard not then to get the necessary money. Of course, as an alderman and Mike Lopez will concur, nothing is cement. There are certain projects that obviously require a little bit more time than others. If you have the political force behind you, it takes less than more time. That is something that obviously you are quite concerned about, but we are on the right track now. It is a matter of keeping the momentum going. Once the plans are drawn up and everything is presented to the aldermen, then the next phase is to appropriate money and so forth.

Ms. Goucher stated that we have talked about that in our office too. You are on the right track and your timing is very good because you need part of this summertime to get everything in order. As both the aldermen know, it seems like it is only a short time that there is not a budget process going on. We will be starting to look at the funds and funding sources. It is very likely that everything is in order and you have that contingency and a consensus among the senior citizens, you are going to be a big force to be reckoned with. All the homework is done and as Alderman Shea has said, and Tom Wallace reiterated, you get everything presented...someone says why didn't you look over there, you can say we did, we looked at that site and we have abandoned it for certain reasons. We want this site; we are set, we all agree. It is going to be very difficult for the political leaders to say no. That is why things could be on track next year.

Chairman Shea stated that would give time for the Planning Department to look into any federal grants.

Alderman Lopez stated that the plans he brought are being built by Claremont Housing.

Ms. Robie stated if Mr. & Mrs. O'Connor could get an appointment for me to go over and talk with the people on the West Side about stating what they would like. It would be good if they looked through these things. If you could talk with Claire about seeing if she can get a large group when they are not bingo playing or not dancing.

Mrs. O'Connor stated it is probably going to be a Monday, it is the quietest day.

Ms. Robie replied that would be great for me too. I can bring this with me and Lucille Bayko will come with me.

Mrs. O'Connor stated that they are going back to the center today and we will set it up.

Ms. Robie asked as soon as we get everything going whom do we drop it off to.

Mr. Wallace replied it would not hurt to see it as soon as you have it.

Mrs. O'Connor stated that we are hearing comments that all the money in the city is being spent on children. They are saying with the new Mayor, nothing is being allotted for the seniors, it is all talk. After watching across from West High, we get it constantly, being on the Board of Directors with the seniors we hear this. Where is our senior center.

Chairman Shea stated that is why at the open meeting next Monday night, Irene Robie will be there speaking for it, and any other people who are in favor of the senior center should come and offer their thoughts and ideas and comments. That is 6:00 PM on the 20th of March.

Mrs. O'Connor stated a lot of the seniors do not go out at night. They cannot drive or cannot get rides.

Alderman Lopez stated to get a petition.

Chairman Shea stated that he suggests when you go back today, if you could get twenty or thirty signatures and say if you were able to come to the meeting Monday night, and say I am speaking on behalf of fifty senior citizens who do not go out tonight but this is what their desire is for a senior center. Something that will focus the concerns of these people to the aldermen. That is very important. Irene Robie is able to speak for people who she represents and she can mention that she has signatures or the concerns. If she brings out that there are 22,000 seniors in the city and nothing has been done for them. The overall problem has been the fact that when somebody comes for the downtown, they have all kinds of things; a plan, the money, the research, etc. This is what you have to do. You have to start with a feasibility plan, architects, engineers, real estate people, you have to present this in a format because otherwise what happens is as Pam Goucher said, it is always shot down because the aldermen have their own special kind of interest.

I am rallying the folks around Prout's Park because that has been cut out. It was supposed to be a four-year deal. I have called twenty people. Everyone who uses that park I have called; the Babe Ruth, the Lebel Leagues, Memorial and Hallsville Schools, St. Joe's, the people who live around there because that is a community park. That is what you have to do.

Mrs. O'Connor stated that her and her husband were involved in Little League for many years. It started out that they would not give us money for a hall and they sold the hall for eleven million dollars.

Ms. Robie stated to Mrs. O'Connor that our generation is at fault for not speaking up because we are the generation that lived through a depression. We did not run to the city for welfare. The city gave us a plot of land about seven blocks away where we could plant seeds and grow vegetables. Then they gave us a hydrant one hundred and forty feet away to lug water. We thought the city was so wonderful to do things for us. When they did this West Side center then the East Side center, there was a place to park at that time and they broke the lease. We did not do anything; we just kept quiet because we are of that generation. All of a sudden, I have stirred them up and we want it now. We have waited forty years. If we have to wait five years, it will be great for the baby boomers.

Mrs. O'Connor stated that she hopes they do not have to wait five years.

Mr. Royer stated that parking was in the lease and they took it out but we never had any parking. All of that parking was for the stores.

Ms. Robie stated we asked why couldn't we park there. They said because apartments were built after we were there.

On motion of Alderman Lopez, duly seconded by Penny Sconsa, it was voted to adjourn.

A True Record. Attest.

Clerk of Committee