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AUG 03 2006
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Town Hall Room 102
21 South Main Street
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Phone: (508) 278-8600
Fax: (508) 278-8605
town.manager@uxbridge-ma.gov

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| FAX: | 508-993-6581 |
| FROM: | Karen |
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AUG 03 2006
By

Memo to: Jill Myers, Town Manager

From: Marsha Petrillo, Senior Center Director

Re: Blanchard Feasibility Study

Date: August 1, 2006

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The purpose of this memo is to highlight changes in our local aging population and to offer suggestions about how our community could begin to address these changes. In conjunction with the Blanchard School feasibility study, we submit the following information regarding the current square footage of our center. It is our hope to begin to increase awareness about future trends that emphasize partnering for resource and community development.

The Uxbridge Senior Center is located at 36 South Main St. It is approximately 3,600 square feet (80 x 44) in size. Our building consists of two administrative offices and a multipurpose activity/dining room. We also have a small work kitchen approximately 16 x 9 sq ft. Located in the left back is a small computer lab with four workstations approximately 16 x 12 sq. ft. The computer lab also serves as a makeshift health screening area and podiatry clinic. It has a conference table with six chairs and side by side refrigerator for the meals on wheels program. We have two handicapped bathrooms measuring approximately 12 x 7 sq ft. The building is ground level and handicapped accessible.

We have limited parking in the front and on the southern side of our building for a total of 9 (nine) spaces. Three of the nine parking slots are for designated parking. One space is designated for our van and one for our car. The other designated space is for public handicapped parking. We have no garage to house our vehicles in the winter. We have no outside activities areas.

We offer a congregate luncheon each day and serve approximately 125 meals each week. We also prepare approximately 350 meals each week for delivery to homebound residents in Uxbridge, Millville, Blackstone and Mendon. We plan to continue this service in the future.

In order for our senior center to continue to play a vital role in the future, we recommend consideration not just for a new building/location with increased square footage but for a new public identity as well. A new identity might begin with a new name, such as *"New Life Center"* replacing the current "Senior Center" name. A new name may begin to break the stereotypical image associated with "Senior Center" and attract a new generation of baby boomers.

As many of you know, the Town of Sutton has a new Center. Attached is a copy of their new floor design for your review. Sutton has 6,090 square feet including a social daycare room/ a full size kitchen, a medical screening room for blood pressure clinics and podiatry clinics, a multi-purpose dining room, an activities room, three administrative offices, a transportation office and waiting/lobby area. They have a patio for outside activities and luncheons in good weather. They have an open and airy entrance and plenty of safe public parking.

Our Center plays a vital role in Uxbridge's aging network. To continue have an impact, we need to be aware of and plan for future trends. Our recommendation for the future is summarized in five critical areas:

1. **Attracting Baby Boomers**

To attract a new generation, the baby boomers, we need to make a paradigm shift. Most senior center directors are aware of the challenge. There is a gap between baby boomer interests and preferences and our current senior center offerings. How we use this information may be a critical factor in the long-term outlook for our local population. There is an opportunity for us to begin to think in new ways about our mission.

2. **Fostering Diversity**

It is a challenge to foster diversity in senior centers. While senior centers draw participants from different socio-economic populations, in general our program offerings are fairly homogeneous. One barrier to change is participants like to be with people "like themselves". We hope these attitudes will fade as baby boomers become more open to being around people with different abilities and talents, skills and preferences. Senior centers of the future will be a combination fitness and wellness center, coordinator of volunteer opportunities, cultural enrichment center, Internet Café, and travel center (and not just to Foxwoods!). Local schools, area colleges, hospitals, and others will become partners in service the needs of the growing boomer population.

3. **Linking the Generations**

Boomers, in general, are for mixing generations and for intergenerational activities while older persons tend to express a desire to preserve space of their own. It is our goal to preserve space and present "ageless" activities and programs that appeal to a wide range of people and that will help bring people together to change ageist ideas.

4. **Redefining the Image of Senior Centers**

Many senior center directors agree the image of senior centers keep many away. The common perception is that centers are for dependent "old people". Many boomers still believe they don't need a senior center and tend to stay away. The up and coming generation is more independent, more comfortable with technology and looking for something more than bingo. We would like to offer evening classes on topics including

great musicals, world religions, foreign languages, computers and digital photography. We recommend an emphasis on new "interest-based" and not simple "age-based" programs for the future.

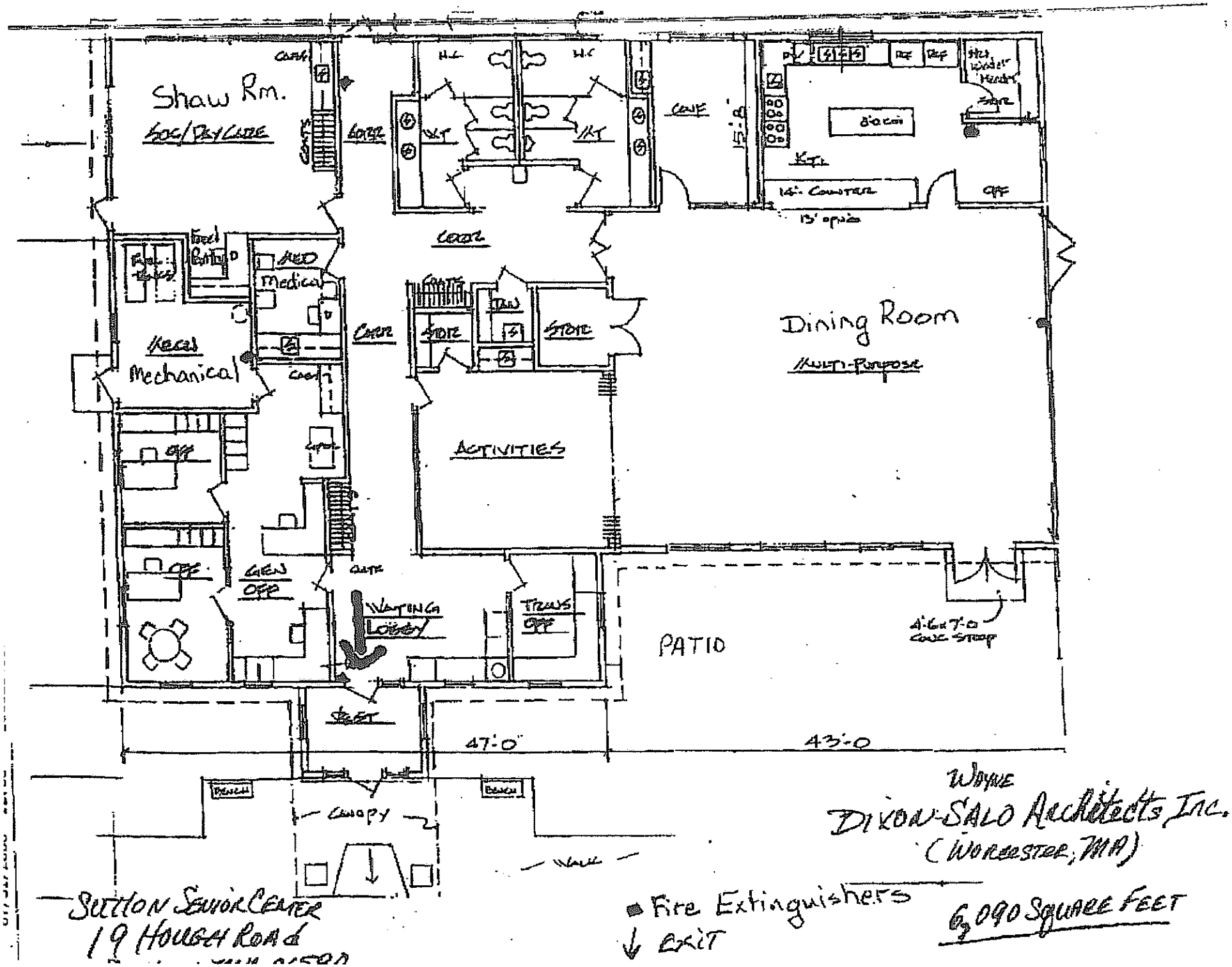
5. **Partnering for Resource and Community Development**

We recommend seeking diversifying funding and seeking new community partnerships to stay current and vital. Local sources remain a vital source of funds for senior centers and we are proud to say we raised over $5,000 with our first golf tournament this year.

Attached is a copy of a press release from Swampscott that outlines their plan to incorporate a new senior center into the design for a new high school. This trend may warrant our serious consideration as it may result in the state reimbursing a higher proportion of the school's costs and provide innovative approaches and strategies to deliver services and solve space problems.

If you have any questions relative to the above information please do not hesitate to contact me directly.

Marsha Petrillo, Director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(WORCESTER, MA)
SUTTON SENIOR CENTER
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# New Swampscott high school to house senior center

Friday, July 01, 2005

How does a town with almost no open space make room for a new senior center? In Swampscott, with a population of 14,500 in just three square miles, the answer was to incorporate a senior center into the design for a new high school, scheduled to open two years from now.

"One of the overarching purposes of the [high school] project was to make it a civic facility," says Joe Markarian, chair of Swampscott's School Building Authority. Markarian, noting that many seniors on fixed-incomes were opposed to the building of the new school, adds, "This way they're getting a return on their investment."

Swampscott's current senior center is located in a converted three-story home built in the 1870s. Because only the first floor is handicapped-accessible, the other two floors are used primarily for administrative purposes. The tight quarters, according to Executive Director Mary Marcou, means that there is little space for educational or recreational activities, and blood-pressure testing takes place in the lunchroom.

At the new high school, the senior center will occupy 6,500 square feet on the ground floor of the building.

While town officials hope that students and seniors will benefit from mutual contact, "that doesn't mean they'll be sharing the corridors," Markarian says. The senior center will be at the opposite end of the school from the classrooms, and will have its own entrance and parking area. Seniors also will have access to other school facilities or equipment, including the gym, weight room, a pottery kiln, and computers, though not at the same time as students.

Swampscott officials had hoped that including community space within the school would result in the state reimbursing a higher proportion of the school's costs, but this did not turn out to be the case. Town Administrator Andrew Maylor says, however, that the prospect of the extra money spurred officials to think creatively about the community's needs.

"We wouldn't ever have been able to build a senior center if it weren't for this project," Maylor says. "We wouldn't have been able to afford to build a building or to acquire the land to build it on."

When voters approved the financing of the school construction in late 2002, plans called for setting aside 2,000 square feet for "senior space," an amount roughly equivalent to what the center has at its current location. When it became clear that the proposed space was inadequate, a much larger area was incorporated into the school's design.

Meanwhile, school officials also agreed to expand plans for a gymnasium on the floor above the senior center into a larger "field house" with four basketball courts. The two expanded projects increased the overall cost of the school by $2.1 million; town officials this spring were required to seek public approval for a Proposition 2 1/2 debt exclusion to fund the cost.

Both senior center supporters and advocates for the larger gymnasium expressed concern that their particular project could lose, so the two proposals were presented as a single ballot measure to consolidate support. The measure passed handily on April 26, and Swampscott broke ground on the $55 million project less than two weeks later.
"I think that the community really understood that if you're going to build a building, you do it once and you do it right," Maylor says. "And that if you're able to fulfill multiple community purposes – hey, that's great."

This monthly column highlights some of the innovative approaches and strategies Massachusetts municipalities are using to deliver services and solve problems. If you know of a Mass Innovation that could be featured in this column, contact Mitch Evich at the MMA (phone: (800) 882-1498; fax: (617) 695-1314; e-mail: mitch_evich@mma.org ).

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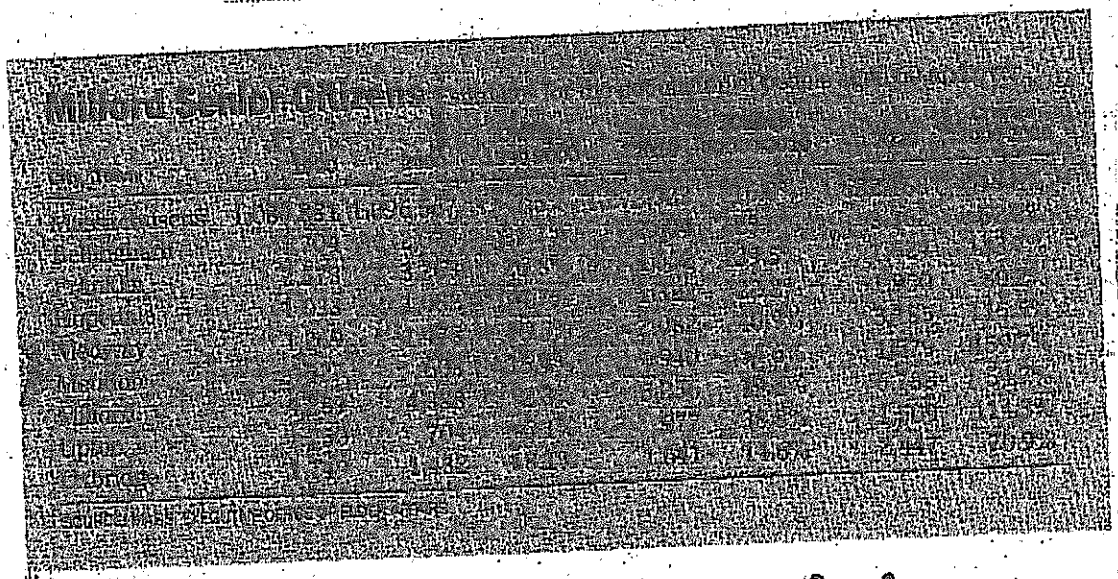
FROM THE FRONT PAGE



# Senior centers aren't just for bingo players anymore

SENIOR CENTERS. *From A1*

Holliston Senior Center.

"This is a time of changing cultural, societal and individual expectations. It is the general opinion across the country that in order to remain viable, the center must also change," said Lutton.

According to the state Office of Elder Affairs, the number of senior citizens in Massachusetts is estimated to rise by 48.8 percent between 2000 and 2020, from 1.1 million to 1.6 million.

The up-and-coming generation is more independent, more comfortable with technology and looking for something more than mah-jongg in their senior centers, directors said. The Baby Boomers, and those in between, are a large, diverse group, they said.

"We need to bring the activities of the 21st century to these people. I mean, bingo is great, but it doesn't always bring people in," said Lutton.

Holliston has recently joined with Framingham State College [illegible] classes on topics walkers, housing, food stamps or fuel assistance for their aging parents.

Five months ago, Joe DiRosario, 75, of Milford, started visiting the Milford Senior Center weekly for reiki healing sessions. Previously, he and his wife of 49 years, Lena, would only join some of the trips and one-time events at the senior center.

"I was stressed out. I needed help," said DiRosario.

An ancient practice re-discovered by a Japanese minister in the 1890s, reiki is a non-invasive therapy where a practitioner gently places his or her hands on or near the client's seven chakras, or energy centers. It is said to bring joy and well-being, relieve depression, ease pain and erase some afflictions like migraines, PMS and digestive pain.

"It helps physically, emotionally and spiritually," said Pat Hatfield, who practices reiki at Milford Senior Center. "Even if you're healthy, it can help you cope."

Hatfield, who services mostly Ashland last Wednesday.

"It's a chance to feel interactive and part of a community," Koos said while tying her dancing sneakers. "It's a chance to communicate with age-appropriate people."

Line dancing teacher David Sickles, who also leads classes at the Southborough Senior Center and Callahan Senior Center in Framingham, said he thinks seniors enjoy the exercise and the mental challenge of learning new terms like grapevine, jazz boxes and shuffle steps.

"This is great exercise for mind, body and soul. You always leave feeling good," Carolyn Tompkins of Framingham said of Sickles' classes. She, like some other seniors, travels to other towns to take Sickles' classes.

Dancing is also the ticket in Medway, where a ballroom dancing class has seniors kicking up their heels. While bingo and crafts are still popular center activities, a new poker group, book discussion groups and new trips are the latest [illegible] Missy Di-