

TOWN OF CHATHAM, MA

SENIOR CENTER COMMUNITY FORUM

*DETAILED COMMENTS
FROM NOVEMBER 9, 2021*



NOVEMBER 22, 2021

Pierce-Coté

A REGAN
COMMUNICATIONS
COMPANY

FIVE QUESTIONS:

1. Do you want a new Senior Center in Chatham? Why or why not?

COMMUNITY VOICE PORTAL:

eChatham: I believe the existing building could be renovated or a small addition to the community center to share the facility services.

Liz: I think we could do more interaction with other local entities such as the library. The community center would be a good location as it is central and seniors me enjoy some kind of activity with others in the building. A lot of seniors are active and use the gym then could go to the center for another activity. The current COA management is not listening to the new generation of seniors which I am a part of. I am tired of cooking and do not want recipes or cooking classes I want to be engaged learning new things by interesting speakers and doing activities in the community. I dislike the newsletter that seems to dwell on age death and dying I do like the monthly meals that are tasty and it means no food shopping or cooking.

Janice Susan: The voters in this town voted it down and for good reason. We do not need a new Senior Center.

Dan: At the town meeting the voters said “no”. Adhere to the results of the meeting. Focus on the real issues of the town such as water quality.

Ann Ryan: At this time there are more pressing issues that need to be addressed such as affordable attainable housing, coastal resiliency and PFAS/water.

EMAIL:

Stephen Curran: The need for a Senior Center has been discussed for over 6 years. The fact that Chatham’s population is significantly over age 65 and the existing Center is inadequate for the needs of today’s seniors makes its replacement a real need. The COA Director initiated an in-depth survey early in her tenure, which was performed by an independent agency at UMASS Boston. I believe the needs and recommendations from that survey should be reviewed by the Select Board and updated as necessary (see Question 4). The decision to go forward with a new Senior Center should be based on facts not opinions.

Frank Messina: Yes, a new COA facility is long overdue as the existing facility has outlived its usefulness to serve the ever-increasing number of seniors that require services. There is no question an overwhelming of Chatham Citizens support a new facility.

Barbara Matteson: A new Senior Center? Yes, I definitely think the town needs a new Senior Center. The existing one has enough serious deficiencies and a poor layout, specifically with those load-bearing support columns in the media/video room, lack of privacy and office space, as well as a tired, dilapidated and depressing feeling throughout the building.

Lynne Pleffner: Yes I do want to see a Senior Center in Chatham. Why? Socialization is important as we age and as we lose partners and close friends. The Senior Center and its activities would help to ease that transition. The challenge for the Senior Center and its activities is the different age.

Judy Patterson: I do not believe there is a need for a new building for a Senior Center. With the ongoing cost of fixing our water wells, I believe the best option is to fix up the current COA. As of today, November 5th, no one has been utilizing the current COA. Even the folks that run it said they were pleased the way everything worked during COVID with online forums, etc. There is no reason they cannot go back inside and utilize the current building.

Usha Sellers: Yes a new center would be an asset to the town and would bring Chatham in line with many other towns. As well an increase in the senior population, makes the center a natural and a good return to taxes financed by seniors.

ANNEX SPEAKERS:

Joan Craig: A senior center is important to seniors and others, however I do not believe it needs to be a stand-alone center. I would like to see a collaborative for intergenerational individuals in this town as seniors like myself use other facilities.

Meredith Fry: I think we do need a place and the existing building if renovated would be great for our seniors. Make it a beautiful center. The building could be the center and have other classes for seniors in other locations.

John Poignand: Building has major deficiencies and the men's group no longer meets there; we need a new building. It has beams in it – you cannot have an entertainer as they cannot see the audience due to beams, the kitchen is loud and you cannot meet in the great room next to it; cellar used to have movies – many beams that impairs sight lines. The facility – there are 1500 people in this town who contribute to the Friends of the COA, so there is no shortage of people who would use it, but they do not come because of the building is an appalling mess.

Nancy Fields: We definitely need a Senior Center – John said so many of the reasons and I seconded his.

Frank Messina: the current facility is inadequate – and should have been replaced 10, 20 years ago. Seniors have been waiting their turn when. The Annex, police and fire stations were built. The 2/3rds questions is the hard part. It is dismal – I think it was a commercial building and they shoehorned them in – anywhere in the Commonwealth COAs are better than ours. The HVAC and how the building is heated.

Stan Mansfield: I am in favor of a new Senior Center – We are the anonymous group – Why we failed – due to 3 factors – location, size and cost. We are trying to correct past mistakes. Our group visited many Senior Centers in the area, we wanted to find out the programs they had and how they fit the seniors – if you saw this you would come to the conclusion that our COA was an embarrassment. The senior population is 56.6% and this is the best we can do. The current Senior Center is a residential house and has no relation to what a senior would need.

Lynn: Yes I do – socialization is important as we age and we lose our family and friends. Newsletter is awful – all about death and dying.

Mrs. Dory: No new COA. The building and the location is adequate.

2. What were the lessons learned from the previous proposed Senior Center sites which were not approved? What can we do better this time?

COMMUNITY VOICE PORTAL:

eChatham: Too expensive, bad location, too large, bad lot shape requiring a two-story structure requiring more staff.

Liz: There were many comments on the size and location which were ignored. I am a senior and do not want to center where I can go to cooking class or eat or take computer classes. I really do not know what programs were planned for offering in the proposal center however my friends and I would not go to a Senior Center.

EMAIL:

Stephen Curran: I think that one of the major reasons for the rejection at the June 12, 2021 Town Meeting was the vocal opposition of some of the more outspoken attendees. One of the dilemmas of Town Meeting is that it may not reflect the majority of the town's citizens.

A more concentrated effort to communicate the reasons and justification (costs and reasons for location) must be undertaken by the Select Board months before the before Town Meeting so that misinformation and rumor can be minimized, and the facts understood by citizens. There are a number of ways to communicate, such as Community Forums, listening sessions, email blasts, panel discussions at community organizations and local churches, the Town Manager's Weekly Friday Newsletter, The Flash. Etc. What can we do better this time: The Select Board should review what was done "effectively and correctly" to gain favorable votes for past town capital expenditures, such as the purchase of the Eldridge Garage parcel for parking, New Fire Station, the Town Annex and Police Complex, Monomoy High School, etc. Learn from those votes and designate a Town Employee whose full-time job is to communicate, coordinate and effectively communicate the decisions of the Select Board. You must decide as a Board how your decision making can

lead to the desired result or else admit you cannot accomplish the goal. For example, the purchase of the Eldridge Garage had a citizen "Task Force" work as a public-private partnership to shepherd this project through various challenges to a successful \$2.5 million Town Meeting vote. I recommend establishing a similar Task Force for a new Senior Center. Finally, the One of the Laws of Physics says, "Input equals Output". Get serious about this next proposal for a Senior Center because you only get three strikes before you are out.

Frank Messina: 1610 Main Street filled all the needs and met most of the concerns over the previous sites considered...it was the correct site!

The fact that it did not obtain 2/3 of the Town meeting, is unfortunate. A significant number of people we not sure if the meeting was being held due to the weather... and it was raining just minutes before the start of the meeting!

The Town/COA needs to do a better job in scheduling the next Town meeting to facilitate all the citizens of Chatham, especially Senior citizens. The Town/COA needs to do a better job in advocating for its decision and countering miss information.

Barbara Matteson: Clearly the taxpayers do not want a Taj Mahal erected at a cost of \$9 million. If more thought were given to the actual rather than purely potential uses, something smaller and more utilitarian might be achieved. I've seen a couple of proposals that make much more sense.

Lynne Pleffner: Middle Road is too curvy and gets icy - an accident waiting to happen for elderly drivers. Main Street in West Chatham - too massive - also driving could be an issue so to be on the safe side only right turns allowed. Otherwise you may find folks parking in the Shop Ahoy Plaza and that would cause issues. If we can't add onto the Community Center then Main Street is my second choice with a building that reflects the West Chatham Zoning Recommendations.

Judy Patterson: The previous design was over the top in terms of need and wants. It was way too expensive. People refused to listen to the public comments and did nothing but argue. In terms of moving forward, lower the expectations and do not expect taxpayers to fund millions of dollars. Our Town Manager has an extremely bad habit of hiring overpriced consultants to spend millions on pet projects. The time is now to put an end to this.

The previous design was too big and cost too much, people refused to listen to public comments. Forced to make a choice between clean drinking water and a Senior Center.

ANNEX SPEAKERS:

Stan Mansfield: Failures location, size and cost; location was sketchy, size too large and the cost too much. We want to make a good COA.

EJ Mckenna: The center on 28 had not acceptable outside areas for walking, sporting or spending time; the seniors today area looking for different activities – more active. I am a year-round resident. Nine years year-round. It was a small location and it left as the only option was inside activity, and we want outside activity.

Joan Craig: We want to see response to questions we have brought up – community center as it is under-utilized, has space to use and land for open space; the donated site was not good; frustration and misinformation on all sides – statistics, the question is there a need? To save it? Tear it down? You need to listen to us even if you do you not like what we are saying.

John Poignand: The last meeting was the result of not listening to seniors. 1,500 people were never surveyed for what they wanted; the town meeting was outside, and the rain was threatened, there is not a concerted effort to get out the vote; the failure was the weather, only 650 out and the reason – seniors stayed home. COA needs to survey their people/members.

Meredith Fry: We have already gone down the road for the community center – cannot take over the green space in the back; the COA does not want to be there.

David Mott: When we are talking about multi-million-dollar investment – seniors made 56.6% of the population; What was the usage of the Senior Center and do some research to get a solid understanding of the usage of the center; this is a big investment, back up with statistics.

Nancy Fields: There was a survey done in 2017 of the entire town of what people wanted in the COA and the recent proposal was not tied to that survey in the minds of the public. Example: The results are on the town website, and I would encourage people to go back and read that – this gives a basis for what we need.

Peter Barry: We need to step back and think of transparency; too costly, too small and in the wrong facility and that they had a town meeting that was in a field and the weather threatened rain. The critics were not rebuffed and there was misinformation. How can it be too costly if someone is donating the land; it was on the bus line.

Robin Zibrat: Watched the Senior Center discussion for many years; The reason why we did not come to fruition on the senior center is that we need to know usage - how many people use it? I thought the donated land had great feasibility and was close to the bike path; I think that proposal needed more effort as to what it offered rather than what it didn't have.

Herb Bassett: I do believe a COA is needed by all people in town; during COVID 600 new people came to the COA for help; it is amazing in a town in this size; it is obvious people believe that it is too expensive and big but we came close to the 2/3 vote.

3. Where should a new Chatham Senior Center be located? What is your reasoning?

COMMUNITY VOICE PORTAL:

eChatham: At the community center shared facilities – already has bathrooms, an elevator, exercise room, gym, conference rooms or use part of the elementary school.

Liz: Community Center

Debbie: Our 28,000 square-foot community center should suffice. Seniors represent more than 50% of our population and, therefore, they should have preferential use of this underutilized building. Maybe add a multipurpose room/ kitchen behind the gym for first floor convenience.

Dan: A new Senior Center is not needed and is totally unnecessary take advantage of existing unused space rooms at the community center. Further your question is worded in a biased manner and does not reflect the desires of the Chatham voters nor the annual town meeting results.

Ann Ryan: Community Center

EMAIL:

Stephen Curran: Location, location, location is better left to the real estate professionals in town. Hire a voluntary committee of realtors to advise you.

Frank Messina: Anywhere in Chatham “except attached to the Community Center and the recreation area”. It is a small town and could be easily reached by most citizens...there is no perfect location!

Barbara Matteson: I think adjacent and attached to the Community Center is the perfect place for an addition that could be the Senior Center. There are so many reasons:

- a. The Community Center is woefully under-utilized, and many of its obvious attributes would meld with needs of seniors, such as the gym, the fitness room and the aerobics room. Elevators are already in place.
- b. That location is closer to downtown, for all those who don't like the idea of seniors being pushed out into the wilderness of West or North Chatham, [although admittedly I was not one of those.] A curb cut onto Depot Road would provide less congested access during the 10 weeks of summer.
- c. There is already a large number of parking spaces available at that location, the land is level and wouldn't require much site work (saving \$\$), and there is enough room for a building sufficient in size without

interfering with the present use of the ballfields or playground.

- d. Scaling down the size of the building to fit in with the existing elements of the Community Center should result in a lower price tag, which will appeal to taxpayers. For a town the size of ours, I do not think a 9000 sf building is warranted, and evidently neither do the majority of our voters.

That said, my distant second choice would be to build on the existing site, and have the seniors utilize the Community Center during the rebuild.

Lynne Pleffner: I would love to see it at the Community Center. There are rooms there that COA could use plus in the afternoon there is a mix of ages which would be a win-win for both groups. Plus being in town gives an opportunity to go to the movies, maybe have lunch out, go walking.

Judy Patterson: New Senior Center should be located exactly where the current one is. No need to spend millions on a new location and a new building. Chatham needs to learn a lesson here and that is to utilize what we have and stop spending foolishly.

Usha Sellers: A great location would be near town Eldredge Library, which I imagine is visited by many seniors. It's a site that is central and familiar to most residents. Would also help in utilizing the programs and activities already offered by the library and bump their attendance. No need to duplicate services already offered by the town.

ANNEX SPEAKERS:

John Poignand: A proposal for a community center was never presented to me or others. We should look at it and if there is an intelligent design or not, it should be looked at and we should also take in to consideration the children who play outside of the community center in the summer. If there is a good design and it is cost effective, I am willing to hear it.

Peter Gruol: I was part of a group that did research and went out in the field going to other Senior Centers on the Cape; because of the issue of cost, make it reasonable – that the only reasonable area is the community center. Likes the idea of shared services; we believe in the slogan “Build it Smart”.

Meredith Fry: We have visited this location before; Peter's group of six people is fundamentally wrong; we have the Angler's field, it is very active and it is for the community, but to be an add-on to the space.

Elaine Gibbs: The community center was never properly vetted it was dismissed quickly. It is a 22,000 sq.ft, building and it is totally underutilized. We can handle crowds by scheduling. 8 million dollars versus scheduling changes is not a bad trade off and we need to remember there is an elementary school and the future of that is under discussion.

Herb Bassett: Elementary School should be considered; the original is not ADA is not compliant; He is in favor of using the community center – intergenerational use is a benefit to all.

Nancy Fields: I have concerns about retro fitting buildings HVAC would need to be wildy up graded; the community center might not be considered what needs to be done to bring seniors in. I liked 1610, I voted yes; In the summer, the community center - getting out of there will be very difficult and dangerous because of car traffic and people using the sidewalks.

Joan Craig: Community Center can become a life center – many areas are underutilized; need to explore other entrances/exits. As for green space, I know it was one of the areas this board and others were concerned about and it you remember the middle school was mentioned and there is green space there and that could be used to replace green space we might take for the community center.

Robin Zibrat: Concerns with community center with traffic - it is very difficult, no place to park and the exit is often blocked. There is not a full kitchen in the community center - and a full grade kitchen is very expensive.

Please note: Ann Timpson also comment on this question. She sent in comments via email on this and other questions after the forum. Please go to page 18 to read her response.

4. What type of new programming and amenities would you like to see at the Senior Center?

COMMUNITY VOICE PORTAL:

eChatham: None. They have more than enough programs. They can take advantage of many other clubs in town for socialization. It should serve as an emergency warming and charging station for the entire community it must be a multipurpose building – not solely dedicated to seniors.

Liz: The current program offering is limited. I would like engaging speakers not on grieving death and dying or cooking. Offer walking tours to Monomoy for birdwatching or identification of native trees. Offer senior groups tours to local museums. Have Senior Day at the elementary school adopt a senior. Someone with creativity at COA needs to be developing engaging programs we are not all 90 years old.

EMAIL:

Stephen Curran: Review the result of the existing survey conducted 5 years ago. If necessary, update information with a subsequent survey.

Frank Messina: The existing COA provides most of the required services required... they just need a more modern facility to provide them.

Barbara Matteson: I would leave that to the management of the COA, the Friends, and the senior members. I do think the presence of the SHINE representative is a draw for seniors of all ages, I must say. Possibly with the proximity and exposure to the Community Center, seniors who presently use the Stony Hill Road facility might find new interests heretofore undiscovered.

Lynne Pleffner: Frankly at this point in time the only reason I need the Senior Center is for SHINE and that is once a year. I would be interested to learn what others think would be good activities.

Judy Patterson: Programming and amenities can be combined with those at the Community Center. These two facilities should SHARE programs and not act independently of each other.

Usha Sellers: Lectures, movies and presentations by many local residents who have impressive backgrounds. Recruit volunteer high school students for one on one help with computer literacy and other multiple advances in technology, including climate change, pandemics, artificial intelligence, private space travel etc. No lack of interesting topics.

Christopher Hercun: I was part of the 365 task force and one major request that came of that was for a town pool. If you want to see votes for a new Senior Center, particularly from those in the younger age categories, you'll have to join it to something that they can buy into. A town pool is something that can be a cradle to grave activity center. It joins together the ideas of combining senior activities with those from youth without trying to attach it to the school system which will never be tenable. Wherever you put it, think big, think bold and think for the whole town when you're making the center otherwise it will never happen.

ANNEX SPEAKERS:

Herb Bassett: People are gregarious naturally – the COA helps facilitate this; cooking classes; men do not know how to cook, and they need this; outreach to seniors living alone is crucial.

Joan Craig: Let's think outside the box and consider a pool at the community center.

John Poignand: Place for seniors to socialize and enjoy themselves. The COA is unusable after 4pm - we should look into extending hours. Want a place were you can feel comfortable and chat with friends.

Meredith Fry: The community center would welcome any suggestions for classes. It is not a location for the COA, but we would welcome anyone to come, develop programs and use our facility.

EJ Mckenna: A swimming pool would be wonderful for all ages in Chatham. We should think of the need for good ventilation and also need respite services.

5. What else would you like us to know about the new Senior Center?

COMMUNITY VOICE PORTAL:

eChatham: I don't want a new Senior Center and neither do most people in town. It's too expensive, too big and is for a very small portion of citizens. I have not met one person over 65 that says they use it or would use it. A terrible waste of money. COAs for socializing are a fad and by the time it's built, no one will be using it there are many other resources in the community that offer the same.

Liz: This question is biased. It is not a given.

Biking Senior: Chatham needs an updated, accessible Senior Center. Our seniors have contributed so much to making Chatham special. I would use it regularly and I suspect many who are living alone would welcome a place to socialize, exercise and learn.

Dan: The question is inappropriately worded. The Chatham voters spoke at town meeting and said no. The concept of a new Senior Center was defeated. Elected officials should listen to the voters.

EMAIL:

Stephen Curran: I understand the Select Board is volunteer and part-time. However, do not take on a major project like deciding on a new Senior Center without the staff and resources necessary to accomplish the mission. If you intend to make a recommendation for a new center to Town Meeting voters, get the best and brightest citizens and professionals to advise you. The Town has done an excellent job sewerage the town, which is more than a 40-year project, fully staffed with engineers, contractors etc. The Select Board should take the same approach with the design and construction for a new Senior Center. If you want to be successful, be strategic about the process. A new Senior Center will last 40 -50 years, so devote the same amount of time and resources that are devoted to the town sewerage project.

Barbara Matteson: I think the town should decide on a budget for the new building, whatever and wherever we do, and stay within it.

Lynne Pleffner: Be realistic about the space needed for activities. Maybe we can have a split Senior Center. The Community Center for sports and some meetings and the Senior Center for other activities.

Judy Patterson: As far as what you should know – the previous location and building design failed, and if you go anywhere near this expense again, it will fail

as well. Learn to make use of what we have. A fire station and a police station are requirements – an overpriced Senior Center is not a requirement. Combine programs with the Community Center and learn to work together and not independently of others. I can not even begin to tell you how disgusted I am at the COA to even consider bringing this topic up again when we are in dire straits with our water supply. This to me, is nothing short of selfish people trying once again to get their way. To have our Town Manager go along with this, also speaks volumes. This is a discussion that should have been put on hold for at least another year and I am more than disgusted that you are charging forward with this again.

Usha Sellers: Must be an inviting and welcoming venue for senior attendees. Should accommodate those with mobility and hearing & related disabilities. Complimentary coffee, tea and water should be available. Also complimentary transport by a minivan for the town residents, since many seniors no longer drive.

Stephen Daniel: I began to track responses to No. 4 (What kind of programming/ amenities would you like?) but the answers were fairly individual (swimming, evening lectures, walking, birding tours, cooking lessons, no cooking lessons...) and there wasn't a lot of meaningful consensus. I didn't tabulate No. 5 (What else would you like us to know?) as I was cooking dinner.

Participants were given three minutes to speak, so some of the answers were, of course, more granular than can be captured by the headline responses. Nevertheless, I found the headlines to be interesting, especially viz. No. 2, where there was a distinct lack of positive responses to the question of lessons learned.

Stats/Outcome

1. Do we need a new COA facility?

- Yes—6
- No—5
- Renovate Existing—2

2. What have we learned from past efforts?

- Too Expensive, Too Large—3
- Too Expensive, Too Large, Wrong Location—4
- Not a Priority Given Other Needs—2
- Case for Need Not Made—2

3. Where Should It Go?

- Community Center—8
- No Community Center—3
- Purchase Swim Club—1
- Current Location, Do Nothing, (“Stop Spending Foolishly”)—1

John Bain: Watched session last night. Various thoughts come to mind. First encounter 2000 when moved from New Jersey. COA had program helping with

Mass taxes. Over the years bus trips, birthday celebrations, men's coffee club, blood pressure screenings etc. I'm very fortunate to have a wonderful wife' Many of the COA members are widows and widowers. Some years past my wife ran the Chatham food pantry and I was a volunteer. Quite a learning and loving experience. The Town of Chatham has been very fortunate to have such skilled volunteer retirees living in town. As they have paid their dues to the town-it's time for the town to provide a first class COA facility in return. Having such a facility would be a real estate plus for prospective home buyers. Rather than trying to replicate the old building-think outside the box-How about a room for nurse practitioner? Seniors are a part of the Chatham Family. You must make it happen!! I'd bring up another vote for 1610 Main Street I believe the Town Police call many Seniors each morning. Get Legal to authorize election to have police proxy vote for these people. One last idea- Have owner of mega mansion with lots of parking donate property to town. No donation buy property.

John Poignand: To question one the answer is a definite yes. As a resident of 24 years and a person who has participated on the friends of the COA board, I have learnt that the Senior Center provides a valuable service in spite of an inadequate uninviting building.

I saw nothing wrong with the Main Street site but realize some people had strong reservations about that sight. It was unclear why these reservations against this site were strongly held.

Is this land in the way of the airport's emergency landing strip?

The center currently operates from 8:30 to 4:00pm. Several of the courses I agreed to teach received request for evening courses. However, this was not allowed. The building currently has a generator but provides no respite for people who have lost power after 4pm. I sure if allowed volunteers would be willing to staff the building in such situations. I suspect that the elderly might like a place to gather or an evening for social events etc.

In previous attempts to gain a vote for the center, the COA had not arrived a consensus of its members as to location and its need for a senior day care facility.

Finally, don't pick a day, threatening rain, to hold an outside vote. I suspect many stayed hope at the threat of rain. Perhaps you should have a write in vote.

Linda Devonshire: I propose that the town purchase the Chatham Swim Club for use by senior citizens. Swimming is an exercise people who can't otherwise walk well can do.

Stairs are a real challenge to seniors. Activity rooms should be on the first floor and offices on the second. Having offices on the second floor afford more privacy too.

More focus should be on relatively healthy seniors with cheerful programs and less emphasis on death, ticks and illness. Programs at the Eldredge library are good

examples of cheerful programs that keep your spirits up.

The Senior Center should hire as many seniors as they can. There are seniors in town who need the money.

I would reconfigure the existing building ,see what programs could be held at the community center and the library. Old people like to mingle with younger people.

Michael & Ann Westgate: The current COA is not adequate. But the one proposed in West Chatham was too grandiose. The seniors currently utilizing the Senior Center are relatively small in number. There is a much larger cohort of seniors reaching their 60s+ who are much more active. They would be better served at a slightly expanded and reconfigured community center. The best model for a Senior Center we know of, nearby, is the one in Harwich. There, all generations can be served under a single roof, with a single drop-off and pickup. They can benefit from interactions between grandparents, parents and children. We have looked at the current schedule for the community center and it is not heavily scheduled. Admittedly covid is influencing its use but the following shows only the gym is well used during the day, for pickle ball in particular. Use of the non-gym rooms is quite sparse as is shown below. We picked today and tomorrow as examples. Tuesday seems to be the heaviest use. Summers would be busier, with more kids during the day, but some adult activities could probably be rescheduled to other days to even out the programming. With almost 11 acres, in the middle of town, adjacent to rescue services, the community center is an ideal location. It would take some adjustments of personnel and scheduling, together with a challenge to architects, to maximize the use of this property. This would consist of reconfiguring some of the existing rooms and a small addition to accommodate staff with private offices and visiting professionals. For example, the small conference room on the first floor might be converted to offices. Many of the town committees now choose venues other than the community center for their meetings.

Importantly, a kitchen would permit community functions as well as meals provided to seniors.

The Town has, according to the Assessors website invested about \$7 million dollars in this building since 2006. It was built in 1924 and contains over 28,000 square feet. It is 100% heated by gas, 100% air-conditioned, 100% sprinklered and 100% accessible. It is a valuable and under-utilized building. The other big issue is whether Chatham is to have a swimming pool. Paradoxically the Health Club that opposed our getting a swimming pool here twenty years ago is now being converted to storage lockers! If we are going to spend a lot of money on a center for seniors and the community as a whole, we should look into the feasibility of a pool.

Chatham kids need to know how to swim, whether for recreational or commercial boating. Seniors benefit a lot from aerobic exercises.

Andrea Keating: Since the property, which the town owns on Old Harbor Road, sits vacant and depresses the neighborhood, why not try to sell it and use that money to purchase 1200 Main Street. I realize Old Harbor Road was an estate donation and there are stipulations but surely, if you can house a town office there then certainly you could use the property to help with a down payment on the new Senior Center. The old New England pizza and other building could be renovated not only for a new Senior Center but also for housing. There is parking and it's close to town. I believe the Senior Center did not receive the votes at last summer's town meeting because the water well problem took front and center. It was textbook marketing: raise an issue like drinking water, discuss how expensive it will become, knowing 100% of residents agree and people made a choice, clean water or a new Senior Center.

ANNEX SPEAKERS:

Joan Craig: Collaboration within all ages groups are great and should be pursued. Collaboration and intergeneration. Allow the opportunity for the park and recreational department to be a part of the planning process for a new center. Take a real good look at a collaboration between the Council on Aging board and the park and recreational department as well as the school committee because we can collaborate with them on that to free space up there that some individuals wanted as an alternative for a Senior Center- it's not being utilized right now.

Stephen Buckley: Review the studies that were done on the town website (five different documents) that somebody could pull up about the community center that can bring everybody up to speed who hasn't been intimately involved with the past 5 years. I covered under those studies about possibility of using some part of the community center. I'm curious why it's not being utilized now, why they're not using the space now it's not in the existing Senior Center is there some problem with logistics or something that would be a big question why.

Pamela Speciale: I represent the younger side of seniors. There is nothing to do in Chatham at night. I want to see programs and lectures at nights and weekends. Pickleball was the only thing available at the community center at night. We have a culturally rich community - how about past careers lectures. We need a swimming pool, I would love to swim laps after work and children could join swim teams. Let's get people together outside the hours of 8am to 4pm.

Meredith Fry: In 2019 it was vetted it was found that that was not the proper location for the COA and again the COA did not even want to be in the community center. There is a huge traffic problem in the summertime. Seniors welcome at the community center but not a permanent solution.

Tim Dinge: My mother and I benefitted from the senior center advice and counseling, especially financial and medical services - helped him get a vaccination at CVS. He would look at the community center, maybe the parking could be expanded and put another entrance there. I thought that renovation of the current COA was not an option at 2019 town meeting. I liked the 1911 Main Street spot.

Elaine Gibbs: Community Centers belong to taxpayers, not vetted in 2019, need to have open attitude, think outside the box. We are starting from scratch, I hope everyone will have an open mind. Maybe move programs that are downstairs to school over across the street so that a 5,000 sq. ft. space can be used for seniors.

Herb Bassett: I hope an expanded building offers more services. As my wife and I age out, it is good to know, services at the COA are here for us and we are going to use them.

Dave Mott: Still not a consensus on location and the COA needs a location. The key to all of this is to find a location. Construction expenses all-time high. Supply issues too. So, where are the seniors located? Having a downtown location is smart. Theatre etc. a lot of resources in Chatham. It's too bad that we have spent too much time in conflict. Let's focus on one thing, get it right and build consensus on it.

Georgia Mazarakis: I am intimately familiar with the ballpark field. There is plenty of room for everyone. Like Elaine Gibbs said, I would like see everyone work together and think outside the box. The gang of six proposal was very modest. I would like to see the senior center in the community center.

John Poignand: Someone said that the COA does not use the community center and that is not true. The men's group meets there to have coffee and discuss politics. I encourage we have open minds to diverse plans. Our failure is that we have not reached consensus.

Barbara Goldrick, Ph.D.: The majority of full-time residents in Chatham are seniors. They should be considered and heard. The Town meeting that voted against the proposed West Chatham COA did not accommodate that majority due to rain and an outside venue. The solution to where the COA should be is to revisit the proposal for the West Chatham site by it placing back on agenda for the next Town meeting and offer rides for our town seniors to get there to vote. Then we have the two thirds vote that we need. I have been a Chatham resident since 1999.

POST FORUM:

Connie Lyman: When the COA moved to Stony Hill, they recognized that the property was problematic but it was purchased anyway. The 1610 Main site is problematic as well. Again with issues that will not rectify with time.

It would seem that the Community Center, presently under utilized, would offer a good alternative. It's centrally located, near the FD and parking is generally not a problem. (As someone who uses the fitness room regularly on a year round basis,

the only time parking is an issue is when Womens Club, Mens Club or Garden Club is meeting and they're the same demographic. Also, weekends in the summer when COA isn't open). As for the comments that it would affect the childrens summer program...thats mornings for 6 weeks and caters to many children that don't even reside in town. The Community Center, as it's name implies, serves the entire community. It would also appear to be the most cost effective.

Stepping Stones Road also seems to provide a good location. Both locations are situated such that they are centrally located to the majority of the towns population.

While COA does an outstanding job as a referral agency, it's programs seem to be lacking in more active activities. It didn't have much to attract "young" seniors.

As for a swimming pool, not a good idea....three words: cost, maintenance and liability.

Thomas H. Clark, Jr.: I want to touch upon the issue of providing an updated and modern facility for our seniors.

I never gave much thought to the Senior Center issue until I was volunteering for the Senior Medicare patrol, a nonprofit funded by Federal Health and Human Services. My tasks took me all over Massachusetts to give speeches and talks about how seniors could avoid Medicare fraud. As a result I was able to view in detail a multiplicity of Senior Centers all over the state. In general, they were pathetic. It was really sad.

Having watched the to-and-fro of Chatham politics on the Senior Center issue, it is evident that the way forward involves community organizing, preservation of Chathams tax base, and design of the Senior Center. They go hand-in-glove.

I have noticed that a relatively small number of individuals have organized opposition to the Senior Center (and other projects) despite what I will assert is the overwhelming support for such a center in Chatham. The Town Meeting organizational structure of government can, unfortunately, be made subject to the whims of the few unless those who support the Center get organized so that the true support in Chatham for a new senior center is made manifest.

The supporters need to step forward and get organized. Nothing new here. The opponents have already done that, which is why they have influence vastly in excess of their percentage of the voting population. Saul Alinsky (the original theoretician re: community community organizing) laid out the theory and execution of such activities many decades ago. We need to make sure that the few don't drown out the many.

Second, Chatham has been blessed in a manner of speaking. We have significant structures being built along our coast, dwellings and properties that help support our Town government through the property tax, and which provide sufficient tax

revenues to support a quality senior center, among other local improvements.

Third, the Town needs to implement land preservation methods that assure the survival of these assets which will help the town address important funding issues over time. Unfortunately, the narrow jurisdictional boundaries of the Conservation Commission make clear that the Commission cannot assure that steps are taken to effectively minimize the impact of the ever-growing frequency and severity of storms and flooding. Storms, flooding and erosion will impact a wide swath of properties; protection needs to think in terms of neighborhoods and more, not merely individual lots. The concept of a so-called living shoreline implements the use of nature to help preserve or minimize the harm to coastal properties from storms, flooding, and nor'easter's. The Town needs to consider how to do that effectively.

The only way to make certain that these properties and their improvements survive into the future (so that their property tax revenues will continue unabated) is to develop integrated mechanisms to preserve these lands to the extent possible and to minimize harm. Nature can actually help in this manner if we implement such strategies. This will mean broader environmental in building code regulations that can provide for the protection of areas or regions of land, much broader than the narrow focus of the Conservation Commission's jurisdiction and authority.

Thank you for the opportunity to address this issue.

Lou Hieb: One factor that has caused frustration, confusion and controversy has been equating/coupling a Senior Center and the location of the Council on Aging. It could be more helpful to separate two functions which are very different. The council on Aging is a non-profit organization that receives local, state and federal funding and is tasked to provide in-home services, nutrition and wellness programs and transportation for residents 60 years of age or older who would be at risk for illness, disease, or accidents. Their mission is to promote the physical and mental well-being of seniors. These are important and needed services especially for the elderly and they need a place to provide these services.

On the other hand many seniors, which generally have been considered folks over 55, are looking for physical and social activities. The goals of both groups of seniors could be accomplished either by having them in the same building or separately - this is where the "thinking out of the box" could be helpful. Recognizing these differences and publicly discussing them should help our thought processes as options are evaluated. Thank you.

Gloria Freeman: Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments about the possibility of a new Senior Center. I was in attendance, via Teams, during the COA Public Forum on November 9, 2021.

I feel that it is important to note that I was disappointed with the manner in which the Moderator "handled" citizens. While some were treated with playful humor and pleasantries, others were interrupted and treated quite abruptly and rudely.

We are neighbors and members of a community, so a little kindness and courtesy should be extended, and of course, all participants should be treated equally.

Question #1: I am not convinced that we need a new senior center. I have not found the COA to be helpful when I have reached out to them on numerous occasions. Only once was I able to get a helpful answer to a question. In consideration of others though who find such a facility helpful and useful, I would support a new senior center in Chatham only if the size and cost are significantly lowered.

Question #2: Considerably more reasonable expectations should be had. Entitlement should be off the table. ("It is our turn.") Each item being considered should be vetted individually by a group of individuals who have been active in the discussion of a new senior center, and not primarily by the COA Board or any individuals beholden to it. There are knowledgeable people in the community who could help. To name a few: Joan Craig, Debbie Aikman, Elaine Gibbs. There should definitely be a new architect and project manager. Previous ones would not listen and were intentionally rude and aggressive in their efforts to provide a bigger, more expensive facility. The community has said no, more than one time, to the numerous amenities that were wanted, but not needed, and to the size of the facility. Current facilities should be utilized. There is considerable unused space at the Community Center. My hope is that numbers will not be distorted in an effort to achieve more space and amenities. That happened in the past.

Question #3: I tried to attend all meetings during the past years that were related to the COA. From the start I advocated for a place other than the current Stony Hill location. I was one of the original advocates for the facility on Stepping Stones because of the location. It could have been one story, and it introduced multi-generational as well as other opportunities. I believed and still believe that 1610 is and was an unsuitable and highly inappropriate site. I won't go into all the reasons. I now believe that because of the expense of providing potable water - quality and quantity - that the only place that will pass a Town Meeting vote is the Community Center.

Question #4: After two recent visits to the Community Center, I believe most of what is needed is already there. It is all a matter of planning and scheduling. I do not agree that we should come up with a dollar amount first. Focus on what is needed and the projected costs of the entire package, including furniture and staffing before bringing anything more back to a vote.

Question #5:

- No exaggerated statistics, please.
- Nothing unnecessary. Not what a small group thinks is necessary - or the architect - but vetted by an independent group - not of experts but of Chatham voters.
- A fair assessment of the Community Center, which was totally empty

during my visits.

- And the promise to listen to citizens and not marginalize them.

Thank you again for the opportunity.

Anne Timpson: Dear Select Board and Town Manager, I am sending my speech to Public Forum on Nov 9th to you directly as I was cut off several times and would like you to actually read what I have to say as there is a ground swell of support for creating a multi generational Community Center- COA Building. I do not have access to the community forum website due to “ internet browser issues”.

Good Evening Ladies and Gentlemen: Everyone appreciates the time, research and work you have all put into the search for the perfect site for our seniors...I would like to revisit discussion started in November 2018 proposing the construction of a new COA Center at the Community Center Site.

From the inception, this project has been skewed by an over zealous estimate of Chatham seniors and their needs at a COA center.

In Chatham: the population of seniors over 60 is approximately 2,941, year-round population is approximately 6,000.

Mr. Bargman’s Firm used Wellesley as a comparable for COA site needs in Chatham.

In Wellesley the population of seniors over 60 is approximately 5,429. The total population is 29,000...Wellesley is not a viable comparison.

Building codes for municipal buildings require specific numbers of parking places based on the square footage of a structure, and traffic studies are based on requisite parking spaces. As long as we work with the premise that we need 68 parking spaces and 10,000 square feet square footage, we are faced with site issues that are not necessary and have already caused much wasted expense , time and man power.

It is time to put the fiscal brakes on and rethink size , site location and cost for this capital project.

We have 9 wells for our drinking water and they will all need to be upgraded to detect and filter out magnesium, iron and PFAS. It will cost millions.

If one takes the premise that 4,000-5,000 square feet would be ample for the proposed footprint plan for a new COA Center addition, then The Community Center is the ideal location. There will be no need to eliminate a ball field nor encroach on an historical sand pit referred as the “gaga pit”.

If it is the goal ,and it should be, to keep this capital project as tightly fiscally supervised as possible, then an addition directly attached at rear of the

Community Center would be the least costly option, using much of the unutilized existing square footage in the present building.

This construction would be based on a plan which attaches a two story addition directly to the exterior of the reception desk wall of the present Community Center. It would extend three quarters of the way along the gymnasium wall. The Main Entrance would remain in the glassed in Lobby and could be moved to the center of front of Lobby as the new COA wing would project enough to give weather protection.

The COA addition would have entrances on both first and second floors. First floor Entrance with double doors would be located on wall behind the present reception desk. Second floor Entrance would be accessed by taking existing elevator up one floor, and traversing a gallery pedestrian walkway with ADA approved width and metal railing, creating a dramatic two story architectural feature to the main entrance. Construction would be simple as there is only a glass wall adjacent to the elevator where walkway platform would be installed. The ceiling of Lobby would easily be reconfigured as it is made up of drop panels supported by a floating grid.

A second less expensive design option would limit the addition to one story, using the existing elevator for access to all levels and adapting more square footage in the Community Center.

This plan, unlike the Bargman design, provides the following advantages and would be the least costly of all prospective sites discussed including Stony Hill Road. Here are the advantages:

1. We already have an elevator on site which serves all three floors .. the cost of a new elevator would be in excess of \$250,000 not including installation and yearly maintenance.
 - 1a. ADA coded bathrooms are already in place on all three floors.
2. We already have a lower level that is spacious with windows on three sides, and under utilized at present. This level has finished game and pool rooms, large ADA bathrooms, small kitchen and three large flat screen TVs and two large conference rooms. At present this space is used on weekdays by 14 children...90% of whom do not live in Chatham or Harwich. They arrive at 3:45 on weekdays and depart at 5:30. This square footage could be easily modified for multi generational uses. The after school program for children could be moved to vacant class rooms at the Elementary School.
3. A fully equipped exercise room is in place and sparsely occupied.
4. Main Floor and Second floor large and small conference rooms are underutilized including a large lecture room which is similar in size to a

- Bargman style Multi Purpose Room. Adjacent is a serving room , half of which could be reconfigured into an addition to the existing kitchen.
5. The Existing entrance from parking area could remain as the main entrance for both the present community center and the new COA addition.
 6. Site is flat and requires no complicated grading...keeping construction costs lower and construction time faster.
 7. There is plenty of existing parking for a 4-5,000 square foot footprint addition and that would save extensive funding for asphalt and gravel and other drainage infrastructure requirements for new road construction . At present there is parking for 100 vehicles.
 8. Parking for special club and group events could be scheduled for 4pm or on weekends when the COA center is historically closed.
 9. A COA addition would include an up to date generator with modules or transfer boxes to conduct power to the Community Center as well. This would provide for a seriously needed “warming station” for citizens without power during storms, potentially gaining grants from FEMA.
 10. The Community Center was originally designed to adapt to further architectural additions. Heating and Cooling systems are already in place and well located to hook up to additional construction, saving hundreds of thousands. Wiring for a generator is in place just waiting for permanent installation of a generator presently stored at the Fire Station.
 11. Attaching the new construction to the existing building minimizes heat loss as one wall remains unexposed to outside weather. This is another major cost saver during construction and for future use and maintenance, 12, No zoning changes requiring Town Meeting Vote 13. Near to rescue and fire facilities, post office, downtown shopping, theaters and many town celebrations,,all within waking distance.
 12. Easy access to bus and taxi service.
 13. One critical advantage to choosing this site...seniors would have easy access to their annual voting polls, and the town would have a more accurate summary of the populace.
 14. Potential for young people , scouts and others to contribute their time after school to teaching seniors technical skills such as computer and handheld device procedures.
 15. And finally seniors and young people would interface more often and with less transportation challenges. A teenager could drive their grandparent to the COA and play sports all at one location. Maybe it is time we brought

families, neighbors and new comers of all ages together in one in one warm and friendly environment. One headquarters that we can all make use of in the best of times and the worst, from snow storms and power outages to New Years festivities and local fairs and celebrations.

I vote for the Community Center with a revised plan, it will save millions. In order to get Town Meeting 2/3rds vote support we need a design that is both fiscally responsible and meets the approval of our entire community, not just a few boards. Thank you for your continuing efforts to bring us the best finished product.

EJ Mckenna: Dear Committee: I am retired and a full-time resident of Chatham. Here are my comments regarding the proposed Chatham senior center:

Seniors are not a homogeneous group. We range in ages and have a mryiad of needs and interests. These may range from athletic activities, such as walking, biking, hiking, golf, pickleball, to artistic, musical, or literary or other interests. Seniors like other groups of people, are diverse in interests and needs. In other words, we need a facility much like any other community group and most of all, many seniors do not want to be isolated from the rest of the population.

Question #1: I believe it would be in the best interest of Chatham citizens to build an Intergenerational facility that would serve all residents. This could be a new and upgraded community center. Within, this facility there could be rooms/offices serving the COA as well as other groups serving Seniors. The COA is only one of the many groups in Chatham that serve the needs of Seniors and other residents. While Chatham has many resources for residents, they are not centrally located or all easily accessible.

Question #2: I believe this should be located in an area with access to athletic activities such as walking trails, inside/outside volleyball/pickleball and in a location that could accommodate a town swimming pool. The Middle school Campus is approximately 23 acres of open space that could easily accommodate such a facility with the needed amenities. It would be necessary to reclaim part of this space from the School District compact which may be rewritten this year to accommodate the new financial agreement between the towns. Another location could be the Chatham Elementary School. The low numbers of students (even including school choice “out of towners”) point to the possibility that this building could be available in the near future. It is also a great location. The present community center is in too congested an area, traffic wise and seems too tight and chopped up to accommodate folks wanting access to the outside and would need an updated air flow system for these pandemic times.

Question #3: A new building could also accommodate a day care section for elders needing this service.

Question #4: A town swimming pool could be part of this campus and would

be a resource to be used by all ages and enthusiastically welcomed by a large number of residents. A pool could be used for lap swimming, water aerobics, water therapy, swim classes, and a practice area for the Monomoy school swim team.

Thank you for your work on this issue.

Paula Carroll:

Question #1: “No brainer” that we need a new facility, but renovating the current facility would be a teardown as the very structures—poles, beams, etc.—would require new building. There is also the problem of where people using the center would go during this process. Contrary to popular dismissive—Go to the churches, library, etc. — the elderly portion of the seniors do not do well with new places and how to maneuver steps, etc. Anyone who talks of renovation should be asked if they had ever crossed its threshold.

Question #2: Lessons learned from 1610: Advocates, and I was one, didn’t understand the power of the negative history of the contributor of the land. There were downright lies about the placement (I had no idea that our little airport had planes landing and taking off every 20 minutes!!) and other misinformation such as who was paying for the positive ads, signs, mailings, etc. There was the inevitable non-attendance particularly from the very population who would have benefited because of fear of weather and uneven outdoor space on Veteran’s Field.

Mainly, advocates and the town should have gone to the population before choosing a site early on and find out what the naysayers really wanted, aside from the CAVES (Citizens Against Virtually Everything). The forum the other night was a good start to the reboot. (And, by the way, I have been at meetings, etc. since the original Select Board meeting with opposition to the Community Center, and definite nay-saying on the current facility, and the result of putting the Middle Road property to a vote.

I will say that I was totally disheartened by the meanness of the NO group and embarrassed for this town with its perceived affluence and its guarded low tax rate. I have loved Chatham since the 50’s and have owned a home here since 1991, having added to the economy over the previous 20 years through rentals and general spending and had, obviously, never seen its underbelly.

(I also learned what many savvy political types know—you don’t go to a vote without being assured of the outcome!)

Question #3: Location should NOT be in the current spot! The Community Center has many good points; I am part of the group who did all the legwork of going to other towns and have considered an idea of an addition that would NOT interfere with the playground and “green space.” I would support the suggestion, also by one of the members of this group, that the Ga-Ga pit be moved, new lighting for

it, and put some money into the little league field which is rather woeful. This would make a win-win for people worried about the youngsters.

Question #4 & #5: I loved the suggestion made at the forum of partnerships which really could be done anywhere but I think the location of the CC really lends itself to movie groups; library offerings; restaurant/lunch clubs. I would add that a partnering with the Chatham Conservation for guided walks—this is in answer to some of the commentators complaining they were not ready for the grave and wanted more cerebral and active programs.

I also would really appreciate looking at Wellfleet and Falmouth (OK, not to that degree) with their cafes. Just as the Stop and Shop in East Harwich was a gathering of regulars in the Starbucks area (where the Eldridge Chaps held court), we should be able to bring in some existing coffee shop or the like. By the way, that is a community amenity and would be a great way to mix the population.

And, on that note, as I feel like a term paper deadline looms, I would say that, parallel to planning for the Seniors, a really good look could be given to the underutilized community center and promote programs held there now and in the future in a better way.

Once again, false information from one of the commentaries—the underutilization of this site and its stats was done way before COVID. Parking and exiting also have solutions, as does a proper kitchen. People need to realize these are all suggestions that will take planning and practical architecture.

Jan Whittaker: I was unable to make the meeting on Tuesday evening, but here are some thoughts about the COA. My comments/suggestions aren't really radical, but are out-of-the-mainstream and not in going along with the concept of one large building (and all its associated costs) dedicated to Seniors. Integration of all age residents into the community is very important and I think that many younger Seniors see it this way. This is a small, proactive Town – why isolate (sort of) older people in their own building. Are you all counting your days until you can go to the Senior Center and participate in Senior Center activities? Many people who are physically able want to be able to live in their own homes but stay active, exercise, go to the Library, dine out, etc. – just normal everyday 'stuff'. The COA staff has done a great job over the years and they offer some great programs. However, perhaps now it is time for change..

Question #1: Definitely think the Town needs new COA accommodations; definitely updated office space for staff, private areas where those with serious issues that need to be addressed could meet with COA staff or to hold small information sessions (SHINE, Medicare updates, etc.) Not sure a full-blown separate Senior Center with all the bells and whistles is what is needed.

Question #2: It's time to do something different!! The COA, for a number of reasons, seems to be a contentious project and perhaps a separate site is not

needed. Could the decentralization of services – especially the provision of socially based activities (dining, book club, mens discussion group, etc.) – be as effective and potentially more attractive to the ‘mature Chatham resident’ if sponsored/organized by COA staff, but integrated into normal Town life?

Question #3: Again, not sure a separate, stand-alone Senior Center is what’s needed. Why not integrate many of the COA programs into ongoing activities/programs in this very proactive Town. Perhaps the COA core staff could be housed somewhere in the elementary or middle school; a wing or area with a separate entrance. The School Board seems to be very proprietary re their space, but this Town strongly supports the school system and votes for the school budget every year with hardly a question at just about every ATM. Know there are leasing issues with the school buildings, but couldn’t this be worked out in a cooperative spirit. Intergenerational seems to be the buzz word for COA interactions, but really don’t see much of that in Chatham.

Question #4: With COA staff acting as planners/organizers (as they do now), why not decentralize and integrate many of the social activities into ongoing programs already established in Town.

EXAMPLES:

- A: Dining – is a large, well-equipped kitchen that would not be utilized a large %-age of the time really necessary? Could dining excursions be made to local Cape restaurants? I would like to think that the year round restaurants would welcome groups of Seniors in the off season, esp. in the November to May period. Perhaps some of the Churches or other non-profits (those with available/appropriate spaces) might be interested in hosting such groups from time to time. If kitchen space is not available, events could be catered by local restaurants/other providers thus giving more business to our own locals.
- B: Book discussion groups – the COA has an accomplished ‘volunteer librarian’, could that group not meet or Zoomed from the EPL? We have a terrific library in Chatham – why shouldn’t Seniors be encouraged (or transported) to go there?
- C: Mens or other discussion groups (or any type of small gathering) – is there not space at the Community Center, other Town buildings or even private buildings that might have availability/space to host monthly, or occasional meetings. Would/could CBI, other restaurants, museums, municipal spaces (basement Annex rooms), VFW, S. Chatham Village Hall, businesses with larger conference rooms, etc, be interested/enticed to offer space to select programs that might fit in with their mission?
- D: Exercise classes (fitness, yoga, tai chi, etc.) – would/could the Community Center or other private entities (Chatham Works, Body Strong, etc.) be interested in collaborating with the COA to offer classes aimed at seniors? There’s a lite fitness class now offered at the Comm Center which is well

attended. Perhaps other fitness instructors in town might be interested in teaching classes; keep our locals employed. Suggest classes be offered on a drop-in basis rather than a locked in commitment type program. The Friends of the COA are a great support to the COA and think they already offer support to some of the COA ongoing programs, including the Zumba programs.

Question #5: I realize there would be a huge effort and workload to shift to a decentralized model and a significant culture shift required for those who currently attend (or ZOOM in) the well planned and organized programs at the current COA people. However, think the Town taxpayers an many Seniors themselves might be ready for a new approach. Another large building to construct, insure, and maintain may not be the answer in today's times. Who would have thunk that a change in the traditional work-in-the-office practice would ever happen. Unfortunately, it took a pandemic to upset old ways but we've all adapted, as we have to the West Chatham roundabouts which were once considered totally unworkable.

All of the above thoughts/ideas may be worth what you're paying for it, but just wanted to put some new ideas out on the table.

Dee Dee Holt: Good Morning. I hope I'm not too late sharing my thoughts with you regarding the senior center. I haven't set up my account on the community forum yet. I watched the listen session and thought the facilitator did a phenomenal job -patience, one of his strengths. Below are my responses to the 5 questions posed. I've also attached a Word doc if that's easier to read.

Question #1: Yes, I think a COA is important to the seniors in Chatham. The services they offer meet the needs of older citizens, without which would go unserved.

Question #2: At the town meeting many speakers opposing the proposed COA gave misinformation and no one with knowledge of the facts responded. The Select Board who supported the project should have stated why they supported it and provided the facts.

I don't think the staff should do be the ones defending the proposal. The voice that was missing from the discussion was that of the folks who use the facility and can express how important it is to them and why that location is great. I personally take offence by claims that seniors can't navigate roundabouts. Ridiculous!

I don't know how much the COA solicited the input from the community at large (influencers) during the development stage. It doesn't appear they did—at least from what I've heard. That might have help garnered more votes in favor.

Question #3: I supported the site in West Chatham. It was free land and it's going to be developed no matter what. It was located in a village center where access was easy—slow traffic, no need to make a left turn, on a bus route, abutting recreation areas. Again, I think the town missed an opportunity to explain why they supported the site. One comment made at the Listening Session which I thought

was very important was that the current COA property could be sold to offset some of the cost of construction.

I believe strongly that the center should be located on already developed land and not on any parcel that is wooded and in its natural, wild state. I support a location near a village center, with easy access, on a bus route, and with recreational opportunities (much like the West Chatham site which is now off the table).

Considering the above, I support re-purposing the ball field behind the Community Center for the COA. Because of the ability to share resources, the new COA could be quite a bit smaller and therefore cost less.

I think the main opposing position to this location will be that the kids need the ball field. There are alternatives. Veterans Field is underutilized so some activities could be moved there before and after the A's season. Perhaps space at the Elementary School for activities. And there are 2 ball fields at Volunteer Park on Sam Ryder. The one closest to the parking lot is well maintained and obviously used. The other one is not maintained, and I doubt used much. The field is now used for soccer in the fall. Are kids bussed there? Not a deal-breaker to my mind.

I think the ball field is such an ideal location. The hurdles of parking in the summer and access can be overcome and get the support of the community. No site is going to please everyone. I think this site may displease the fewest.

Question #4: I've taken advantage of their computer lab courses, blood pressure monitoring, and help sifting through all the Medicare options. If the location is near the Community Center, they could offer more exercise and stretching classes, movies, meetings, etc. These could be offered without the COA design needing to include space to accommodate these activities.

Question #5: Build it smaller, include sale of the current property in the cost analysis. The Select Board and Finance Committee really have to get behind it and not allow misinformation to derail the project. Also, the COA needs to get their users to advocate for it and to show up at Town Meeting.

Roslyn Coleman: The forum was excellent. Here are the take aways that I heard:

- Folks seemed interested in a variety of locations that collaborate with what exists and what we need in Chatham: A SWIMMING POOL.
- If the health club has been sold...its programs could become part of the town's effort to support what already exists in Chatham
- Whether or not the health club reopens, THE TOWN NEEDS A SWIMMING POOL AND THE AREA ON STEPPING STONES WOULD BE IDEAL.
- The existing senior center site would be large enough when remodeled to house a day care center and private counseling and a warming center.

- The community center could house the staff focusing on younger seniors to design subscription programs that facilitate interaction in a broad range of activities.

Conclusion: The town should support several different senior centers around town that usually will include the rest of the community, too. I stand by the suggestions I made in the first place.

Here are my Senior Center suggestions:

- Fund the *Chatham Council on Aging* with a sum of money equal to the interest Chatham would have been paying on the new building had it been approved.
- Remodel the present building to include space for day care.
- Hire and charge staff with offering things in the building ONLY for the significantly disabled.
 - Offer Day Care each week described as a social club. Caregivers need time for themselves.
 - Offer counseling (individual and/or group) to families who must make care decisions for their loved ones.
 - Offer grief and support groups for persons who need it... for example Parkinson care and understanding.
 - Bring isolated, financially strapped Chatham folks into the building for programs and meals. Provide stipends for the truly needy. Hire an outreach worker to find and bring these folks in.
 - Provide transportation for seniors who need it for grocery shopping and the like.
- Hire staff to design and offer programs that connect seniors with opportunities that already exist in Chatham. The Council on Aging would designate a taxpayer stipend to partially pay for subscriptions so that participating Chatham businesses receive full value while seniors get a cost break. Transportation would be provided as needed or optional depending on the group. For example:
 - Work with the Orpheum to design a movie club to which seniors can subscribe.
 - Work with Chatham Restaurants to design a dining club to which senior can subscribe.
 - Work with Parks and Recreation to provide Senior Beach Days.

- Work with Chatham Conservation and Chatham Conservation Foundation to design natural resources exploration.
- Work with the Chatham Talent Bank to encourage seniors to volunteer...for example:
 - Connect former teachers with the age groups of their expertise.
 - Housing as seen from the perspective of seniors.
 - Provide transition groups for seniors who are in physical or mental decline.

Programs such as these would enrich the entire community and honor the creativity and experience that seniors have to offer. I hope Chatham will fund programs and people instead of spending on large buildings that may not be where seniors want to spend their time.

Joanne Donoghue: Comments after viewing the forum well conducted by Brad Schiff with thoughtful respectful comments by participants. My Forum question responses:

Question #1: The current Senior Center is a dreary small building. It is not a facility where offering a positive experience is easily achieved. Seniors need a bright outlook, activity, socialization, continuing education, expert advice, and medical assistance to a greater degree with many more taking advantage in an inspirational setting.

Question #2: The previous proposed center did not fail by a majority – if only we did not have to borrow money. Had the meeting been on a nice day...And we heard that the friends of the Senior Center (or the board) were donating towards the building, were there not opportunities for others? We are celebrating an anniversary of our library donated by Mr. Eldredge – is this not something that can be pursued to some extent.

Question #3: I liked the 1610 Main Street with a couple restaurants to visit after a class, obvious to those driving by since we have built our 2 new buildings out of sight of visitors. With some conservation next door, bike path too – all lending to a good location as would the community center.

Question #4: The most important component that the present Senior Center lacks is an organized volunteer program-volunteers will be needed in a facility offering the variety of programs that the seniors want with extended hours and volunteers bring participants.

Question #5: If the Community Center is given serious consideration while there is an attractive appearance for the front off the building it is wasted space – one

“unappealing” fair is held their in the summer-headlines in the May newsletter of the Dennis Senior Center-Shuffleboard is coming the to Dennis Senior Center – just one idea. The current Senior could work well for what they – Dennis-call the Golden Age Program-people in Chatham also take their loved ones there with dementia. Thank you for continuing to pursue this very important part of life in Chatham.