

Southampton Senior Center Building Committee Meeting No. 30

On July 17, 2025, Meeting No. 30 of the Southampton Senior Center Building Committee was held in the second floor conference room in the Southampton Town Hall. The meeting was called to order by Janet Cain at 12:31 pm. The following people attended the meeting.

MEMBERS	Janet Cain, Co-Chair	Libby Baldwin
	Dennis Vogel, Co-Chair	Karle Kushi
	Ted Palmer	Scott Szczebak, Town Administrator
	Kate DiSanto, COA Director	

MEMBERS ABSENT Darcie Gasperini
Chris Fowles, Selectboard Rep.

The following is a summary of the discussions held at the meeting.

1. Open Time for Public

- a. None

2. Approval of Minutes

- a. Minutes from Senior Center Building Committee Meeting #29 were approved with all members voting in favor.

3. Update on Public Safety Building Committee

- a. The Public Safety Committee is not meeting again until September. That committee previously determined that they will not be moving forward with another vote to fund the public safety complex project in the Fall so the project is being delayed. The committee is still determining whether to re-design the building, or maintain the current design.

4. Senior Center Funding - Town Approval Discussion

- a. S. Szczebak discussed the Town's financial concerns due to rising health insurance costs and underfunding for the schools. An override and/or a vote for a capital project to fund various items that are needed in the town will likely be required either in the Fall or Spring. S. Szczebak noted that it might not be ideal to include two funding requests on the same ballot.
- b. The Committee discussed whether the senior center building project should move forward in the Fall. Pros and cons discussed at the meeting are noted below:
 - **Pros**
 - The existing senior center is inadequate for the needs of the Town seniors, and the number of seniors in the town is steadily increasing.

- The existing senior center is too small to provide adequate programming for its seniors.
- The Committee has an obligation to move forward with the project since the project received partial funding from the Parsons Estate.
- The senior center project may have more success in passing a ballot vote since the proposed building is smaller than the Public Safety complex and will cost less to construct.
- The feasibility study has already been completed and we have the funds from the estate to hire the OPM and the architect.
- If the project does not move forward now, then it will likely be at least 3 years before it is voted on (due to other town financial issues), and possibly another 3 years before construction is complete.
- If the project is delayed, the financial impact on Town residents will be greater than if we move forward now.
- We should advance the vote now and let the Town's people decide if the project should advance.

- **Cons**

- Seniors are being hit hard financially now with funding being pulled for things like fuel assistance. Concern was expressed about the financial strain being placed on seniors now. Many seniors are coming to the current senior center and discussing their financial hardship issues. Some of our seniors will have a hard time paying for the tax increase, although they will benefit from using the facility and its services.
 - Residents may be hesitant in approving funding for a new senior center when the school override vote failed.
 - Members discussed that some residents believe that constructing the public safety complex is a priority for the town and the senior center committee should follow their lead. It was discussed whether the senior center vote should occur along with or after the public safety complex vote.
 - If the senior center moves forward before the public safety complex, how will the access road on the 0 College highway site be constructed? (Which project pays for it?)
 - There is a lot of work to be done to present the project to the Town in the Fall.
- c. D. Vogel made a motion to move ahead with a vote in Fall 2025 to fund a capital project to construct a new senior center. K. Kushi seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

5. Cost Estimate

- a. The Committee discussed the project cost estimate that was recently updated to reflect current building costs. Committee members noted that the estimate is too detailed for a preliminary design estimate, and that it is unrealistic to develop an estimate that is specific "to the dollar." It should be modified to round up each category to the nearest \$1,000. A suggestion was made to present a much simpler estimate in the information that is shown on the Town website. There are also some detailed items in the estimate that may not be included in the final design.

6. Next Steps

- a. The Senior Center Building Committee discussed the next steps for the project as follows
 - Meet with the Selectboard to request that they call a special Town meeting and a ballot vote in the Fall.
 - Simplify the cost estimate
 - Remove the outdated cost estimate from the feasibility study that is posted on the website and reference the updated estimate.
 - Go through the feasibility study for comments before the next meeting.
 - Develop ideas for a fact sheet and Frequently Ask Questions (FAQ)
 - Hold another Committee meeting to discuss next steps in more detail.
 - Talk to the Friends of the COA about funding for developing community engagement flyers and information about the vote.
 - Council on Aging could possibly host a informational meeting prior to vote.
 - S. Szczebak noted that the Building Committee cannot use Town funds to influence the vote.

7. Open Position Recruitment

- a. The Building Committee has a vacancy. Possible replacements for the open position were discussed.

8. Miscellaneous

- a. K. DiSanto and D. Gasperini will attend a meeting with Dodson and Flinker next week regarding progress on the conceptual layouts for the 0 College Highway property.

9. Next Meeting

- a. The next Senior Center Building Committee meeting will be held in person at Town Hall on July 22, 2025 at 10 am.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:11 pm.

Submitted by Libby Baldwin, Clerk, Southampton Senior Center Building Committee