

Richmond Recreational Needs  
Assessment Committee  
February 26, 2014 at 7:00 PM  
Richmond Town Hall – First Floor Council Chambers

Meeting called to order by Chairman Denise Stetson at 7:05 PM. Notice of the meeting and the agenda were posted in accordance with the Open Meetings Law on February 19, 2014.

Present: Denise L. Stetson, Town Planner  
Henry R. Oppenheimer, Town Council Liaison  
Iva J. Lipton, Elder Affairs Committee Liaison  
Carolyn S. Richard, Planning Board Liaison  
Dennis McGinity, Richmond Senior Center Liaison  
Robert Rock, Town Administrator  
Nell Carpenter, Richmond Recreation Director

Absent Lawrence Casey, Finance Board Liaison

Vacancy: Economic Development Commission Liaison

Mrs. Stetson introduced Nell Carpenter, who was recently appointed as the Town's Recreation Director and welcomed her to the committee.

Chair asked for any amendments or changes to the minutes of January 16, 2014 and January 22, 2014. Hearing none, Chair declared the minutes and the record of those meetings.

Chair introduced Timothy Babcock, VP of Operations for the Ocean Community YMCA, who in turn introduced Darnell Hayes, Director of the Arcadia Y, Mark Reynolds and Rita Cassidy, both members of the Y's Board of Directors.

Mr. Babcock explained that the Arcadia Y had been in its present location in the Chariho Shopping Plaza since 2001 and, due to the many inadequacies and constrictions of the present site, were seeking to re-locate and build a larger facility.

A Building Plan was developed for Ocean Community YMCA in 2007 by the Triangle 2 Corporation, a company which has served as an architectural and marketing analysis consultant to a number of YMCAs throughout the country. This evening's presentation is based on the research garnered from the 2007 Plan.

Mr. Babcock explained that the Y had three principal goals:

Healthy Living  
Youth Development  
Social Responsibility

A few examples of recently constructed/renovated Y's were presented in Power Point form. Most architecture emphasizes open floor plans and expanses of windows and glass walls.

When the Arcadia Y was first developed a number of community businessmen and other residents worked on a Facilities Committee, which explored siting the facility as well as raising the capital required to construct the facility. He especially noted the diligence of Edward Smith, owner of Chariho Furniture, who spent time visiting other facilities and fund-raising among the business community.

Another component of planning for a facility is a Diagnostic and Analysis process, which compares current statistics with projected statistics regarding number of Unit subscribers and their facilities needs and space requirements. (Unit = 1 household regardless of number of persons in the household).

As part of this Diagnostic and Analysis Process, there is an accompanying "GAP" analysis, which clearly shows the current Arcadia Y is inadequate for the community's present and projected needs. It cited limited interior and exterior capacity, undersized venues, building deficiencies and an inability to serve targeted groups, such as teenagers. One particular need cited for the local area is an indoor swimming pool, which the current facility could never accommodate.

A "Demand Rate Analysis" prepared under the 2007 Plan outlined the geographic areas which are served by the local Y's in Arcadia, Westerly and Mystic, CT. In general, it is assumed that subscribers do not want to drive more than 7 minutes one way to a community facility, which determines the general shape and size of the area. The outline of Arcadia covers a majority of the Town of Richmond, part of Hopkinton and a small part of Charlestown and Exeter. The Arcadia area in 2007 had an approximate population of 13,000, which included 4,768 households, a median age of 39.6 and a median income of \$67,011.

Mr. Babcock stated that the Arcadia had a 21% market penetration in its Area with a potential of 657 new Units. If realized, this would raise the market penetration to 34.8%. With many more urban Ys having a market penetration of under 10%, this is a very high percentage. It was also noted that 48% of the Arcadia Y's subscribers are Richmond residents.

Once the diagnostics and marketing analyses are updated, then a timeline for construction is developed. Mr. Babcock emphasized that no construction would begin until 80% of the capital construction costs are raised. He also explained that financing for the recent Westerly reconstruction came from a variety of lending sources, including grants, bonds and the sale of land in the Town of Charlestown.

He further emphasized that each Y is unique to its community's needs and that a Senior Citizens facility could be included in any building plans.

For an upgraded Arcadia facility, Mr. Babcock estimated that minimum land requirement would be 5 acres with a facility approximately 23,000 square feet. In 2007, the projected cost for this was about \$6M.

Mr. Babcock again emphasized the Y's desire to partner with the Town and bring the nationwide strength of the Y's organization to help with the project. He suggested either tele-conferencing or visiting other facilities which had been built in partnership with a municipality.

Richmond resident Bruce Olean, a Y member for over 50 years, spoke about his many positive experiences at the Y, and emphasized how the Y fostered a unique sense of "community".

Mr. McGinity felt the key question is what benefit or tradeoff will be there for the Town of Richmond if the land is leased or donated to the Y.

Mr. Babcock responded that YMCAs always make a community better. They stimulate economic development and provide employment opportunities. Any specific benefits, such as a dedicated Senior Center or reduced membership costs for Richmond residents could always be discussed and negotiated.

Planning Board members Phil Damicis and Charles More also commented that the Town should seriously explore such a partnership with the Y and called it a "win-win" proposal. They cited the Y's experience and expertise in operating community centers.

Town resident Joshua Commerford asked if the Y would include any sports' fields. Mr. Babcock responded that if sufficient and suitable area was available, fields could be added to the plan.

Mrs. Stetson re-capped some of the issues which would need to be considered with any development, including surveys and other site work. The canvassing work done by the Committee also needs further review.

It was agreed that the members would like to personally visit a Y facility which had partnered with a municipality, if one was located within a two hour drive from Richmond.

On a MOTION by Mrs. Lipton, seconded Mr. McGinity, it was voted to ADJOURN at 8:35 PM to the next stated meeting on March 26, 2014, or at the call of the Chair.

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Carolyn S. Richard, Secretary