

**Senior Center
Siting
Committee
Report
April 2, 2001**



TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION TITLE	PAGE
SUMMARY	2
COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP	3
PUBLIC PROCESS	5
SITE VISITS TO OTHER SENIOR CENTERS	7
OTHER PROGRAMMATIC CONSIDERATIONS	9
SITE SELECTION CRITERIA	10
SITES IDENTIFIED FOR POSSIBLE USE	12
COMMENTS ON POTENTIAL SITES	15
SITE SELECTION RECOMMENDATIONS	21
REFERENCE DOCUMENTS COMPILED BY THE COMMITTEE	22
APPENDIX	23

SUMMARY

The Board of Selectmen formed the Senior Center Siting Committee in May 2000 to conduct a comprehensive assessment of all potential sites in Lexington on which to build a new Senior Center. Properties to be considered could be either publicly or privately owned and either open space or presently developed. The charge to the Committee from the Selectmen directed that two or more locations were to be identified. Subsequently, the technical feasibility of building a Senior Center on these sites will be determined professionally by a firm chosen by the Selectmen to execute the direction provided by the 2000 Town Meeting.

This report documents the process followed and criteria used by the Committee in reaching its recommendations. There follows a description of the 15 sites considered most favorably by the Committee. Next, the Committee's pro and con assessment of each of these preferred sites is presented. The report concludes with the Committee's recommendations back to the Selectmen.

A critical part of the Selectmen's charge to the Committee was that "the Siting Committee shall also develop a series of public process steps...to hear from interested parties as regards to the siting of a new Senior Center facility". That public process procedure was established early in the Committee's deliberations, presented to the Selectmen in June 2000, was immediately endorsed and was conveyed to the public via an op-ed piece in the Lexington Minuteman. Public participation in the Committee's activities was substantial. It played a significant role influencing the Committee's analysis and distillation of the information it considered in coming to its recommendations.

In coming to its concluding phases, two factors emerged more strongly than others under consideration. One was the consensus position of the Committee that a proposal for a new Senior Center should include the use of the current Center in the Muzzey Condo complex as a future Adult Day Care facility. The other, which drew heavily on the numerous, cogent inputs received from the public, was the decision to exclude from final consideration any site deemed to be open space.

In summary, the recommendations of the Senior Center Siting Committee are:

1. Utilize the existing Center at Muzzey as the future Adult Day Care facility
2. Thoroughly evaluate the technical and logistical issues related to the Town owned parcel at 201 Bedford Street (the DPW site)
3. Thoroughly evaluate the technical and logistical issues related to the Walgreen's site (if negotiations with the principal leaseholder are favorable)
4. As a second-tier, or backup site, thoroughly evaluate the option of developing the Munroe Center for the Arts site to house both the new Senior Center and the Center for the Arts in a substantially reconfigured (and expanded) building

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The Board of Selectmen formed the Senior Center Siting Committee in May 2000. The objective of the Committee was to conduct a comprehensive assessment of all potential sites for a new Senior Center in Lexington. Properties to be considered could be either publicly or privately owned and either open space or presently developed. The purpose was to identify two or more locations that could then be professionally assessed to determine the technical feasibility of accommodating the proposed new Senior Center.

The Selectmen's charge to the Committee read as follows:

The Senior Center Siting Committee will review the programmatic and space requirements of the Senior Center using the functional and programmatic requirements developed by the Council on Aging. The Committee shall inventory and assess all potential site options (both developed and undeveloped) and identify at least two sites that might be acceptable to the community for further pursuit. The Committee shall identify the costs and benefits of the various options that they consider. The Siting Committee shall also develop a series of public process steps that will be followed by the Committee and by the Board of Selectmen to hear from interested parties as regards to the siting of a new Senior Center facility. The Committee shall present its initial recommendations to the Board of Selectmen regarding public process within four weeks of its creation.

The Committee comprised twelve members: five citizens representing different neighborhoods, two members of the Council on Aging, and a member each from the Board of Selectmen, the Planning Board, the School Committee, the Conservation Commission, and the Recreation Committee. Members of the Committee and their affiliations are:

Cathy Abbott

Cathy is the representative from the Board of Selectmen, and chairs the Senior Center Siting Committee. She lives in Precinct 7.

Scott Burson

Scott is the representative from the School Committee. He is also a Town Meeting member from Precinct 4.

Marilyn Campbell

Marilyn is one of the two Council on Aging representatives. She resides in Precinct 7.

Don Chisholm

Don is the representative from the Recreation Committee. He is also a Town Meeting member from Precinct 4.

Steve Colman

Steve is the representative from the Planning Board. He is also a Town Meeting member from Precinct 7.

Bebe Fallick

Bebe is the representative from the Conservation Commission. She is also a Town Meeting member from Precinct 6.

Don Graham

Don is one of the two representatives from the Council on Aging. He resides in Precinct 6.

David Harris

Dave is a citizen representative and a Town Meeting member from Precinct 4.

Ginna Johnson

Ginna is a citizen representative and a professional landscape architect and planner. She lives in Precinct 6 and was recently appointed to the Town's new Ad Hoc Tree Bylaw Committee.

Lauren MacNeil

Lauren is a citizen representative and a Town Meeting member from Precinct 2.

Anne Ripley

Anne is a citizen representative. She is also a Town Meeting member from Precinct 6.

Tom Ryan

Tom is a citizen representative and a professional landscape architect and planner. He resides in Precinct 4.

Liaisons

Both the Capital Expenditures and Appropriations Committees provided liaisons to the Committee. They were:

Shirley Stolz for the Capital Expenditures Committee.

Tom Griffiths for the Capital Expenditures Committee

Sheldon Spector for the Appropriations Committee.

Alan Levine for the Appropriations Committee.

Staff Support

The Town Manager's Office ably supported the Committee's efforts. Staff involved were:

Richard White, Town Manager

Patrick Leopold, Management Intern

PUBLIC PROCESS

The Committee firmly believed that a thorough effort of public outreach was necessary so that, as far as possible, all the ideas and concerns of the community could be incorporated into the site-selection process. As a Town committee, the meeting schedule was posted and all of our meetings were open to the public. In addition, the Committee was charged by the Selectmen to develop a series of public process steps to ensure that interested parties could provide input. In this regard, at the beginning of our deliberations, we prepared the “Senior Center Siting Committee Public Participation Policy Statement” (see Reference # 12) and presented it to the Selectmen on June 19th. This policy statement outlined a four-pronged strategy to insure that anyone who was interested in this issue or would potentially be affected by a new Senior Center had ample opportunity to participate in the Committee’s process. This strategy was implemented as follows:

1. The Committee wrote an op-ed piece that was published in the Lexington Minuteman on August 3, 2000 (see reference # 9). The article contained three main sections. In the first section, the Committee’s origins and mandate were described and its members listed. The second section reported on the information-gathering activities of the Committee. The remaining section invited input from the public, listed current Committee meeting dates, described where to find future meeting dates and outlined the Committee’s process for moving forward.
2. The Committee, through the Town Manager’s Office, e-mailed meeting schedules, meeting agendas, meeting minutes and other related documents to a list of concerned citizens that attended the meetings.
3. The Committee held two public hearings in September 2000 to report on the results of the its work to date. The first public hearing, attended by about 75 people, was held on the evening of September 14th at the Clarke Middle School. The second public hearing was held during the day on September 15th at the Senior Center and was attended by over 50 people. In these meetings, the Committee described the selection criteria used to categorize the potential sites into three ranked classifications. Each potential site was listed in one of the following groups: sites for primary consideration, sites for secondary consideration and sites viewed as significantly less appropriate for the siting of a Senior Center. Major portions of these meetings were utilized to solicit feedback, as well as obtain new ideas for sites from the community at large. The view graphs presented and the notes taken at the public hearings are on file (see Reference # 10).
4. As the Committee identified a select group of sites for serious consideration, residents who could be affected by a potential location for the center were notified by mail of such a possibility and provided with a detailed list of Committee meeting dates and locations. Committee meetings were held with

appropriate public notice, in which citizens at large, including neighborhood groups, presented their position as to the suitability of specific sites under consideration.

With the above procedures and with the support and assistance of excellent coverage of the Committee's meetings by Eva Heney of the Lexington Minuteman, we are confident that our outreach efforts were successful. Due to the large number of citizens who regularly attended our meetings and public hearings, we believe that the goal of attaining broad-based public input to the siting process was achieved.

SITE VISITS TO OTHER SENIOR CENTERS

The Committee determined that to carry out its assignment, it would be advisable to learn from the experiences of other cities and towns in Massachusetts. The Committee went about gaining this knowledge in two ways. First, we received and reviewed materials from the Lexington Council on Aging summarizing the COA's earlier investigation of other Senior Centers (see Reference # 1). Second, the Committee members paid visits to several centers. (See Reference # 11, that provides a summary description of each neighboring center visited).

The siting material received from the COA consisted primarily of the Town of Needham's analysis of 24 senior centers and summaries of the Lexington COA's Long Range Planning Committee's 1999 visit to six of them. The COA's principal conclusion was that the Peabody Community Life Center was the best model to follow.

Committee members visited five of the six centers the COA had toured in 1999: Arlington, Newton, Winchester, Marblehead and Peabody. The Committee also visited Danvers, which was under construction at the time of the COA visits. The Committee's principal findings were:

1. Dining and exercising are two of the most popular and well-attended activities. It is essential to have at least one large room with related kitchen and storage facilities. The size of the room depends on the number of participants anticipated at the largest events and on the nature of the events. Accommodations for 250 seated people and the provision of a stage would be a reasonable estimate for Lexington.
2. A range of room sizes is needed. This could be accomplished by a combination of small rooms committed to specific uses or functions, and larger rooms with soundproof, movable partitions.
3. Significant storage space distributed throughout the building is essential.
4. A flexible design adaptable to changing program needs is more important than aesthetics.

The Committee, as a result of the site visits, debated some of the original requests of the COA:

1. The COA expressed a preference for a one-story center. A characteristic of the Peabody Center was long, apparently underutilized, hallways. A two story facility may prove to be more efficient and would almost certainly require a smaller site.

2. The COA requested a Center large enough to include the adult social day care (ADC) program now housed in a separate facility in Lincoln. This inclusion would require a separate entrance, separate sanitary facilities, and additional security measures. The popular ADC programs at Peabody and Arlington introduced site complications affecting other programs. The Committee suggested that a separate ADC facility might be preferable. As will be discussed later, there are specific reasons in Lexington's case to plan for a separate ADC facility.
3. The COA requested a parking lot large enough to accommodate 150 cars. Of the other centers visited, only Peabody could accommodate that many cars. The other centers, although expressing some frustration about parking inadequacies when holding certain large events, described a variety of measures and techniques designed to alleviate the problem. The Committee tended to feel that the parking situation in Lexington puts us into the latter camp, calling for innovative parking and site access solutions.

OTHER PROGRAMMATIC CONSIDERATIONS

The Committee was aware that it was beyond its charge to recommend either the deletion or addition of programs offered at the Senior Center. However, it recognized that it needed to be familiar with the range of programs offered and to understand the facility implications of each of the programs.

The current programs (see Reference # 2 for details) include nutritional services, large group programs, participation in the Lexington Community Education Program, social services, health services, adult social day care services, fitness and exercise activities, board and card games, a library, a computer club and a fix-it shop. The Senior Center also sponsors off-site bus tours.

The Committee was also sensitive to the fact that an inadequate facility in a poor location would discourage attendance and thus reduce the effectiveness of any programs offered. Conversely, an ample facility on an attractive site would encourage both attendance and the vigor and range of programs offered. (See Reference # 3 for the COA's assessment of future space needs).

The Long Range Planning Committee of the COA had indicated (Reference # 1) that it felt that quality of programs offered and room for expansion were more important than the specific location of the Senior Center within Lexington. There was a strong sentiment on the Senior Center Siting Committee however, that the Senior Center be located on a visible site near the center of Lexington. For this and various other reasons, the Committee ultimately dropped outlying sites from final consideration.

Agreements between the COA's position and the SCSC's position were more prevalent than disagreements. Both believed that a new Senior Center should place more emphasis on activities that would draw in more of the community. Both believed that the Center should be appealing to both older seniors in need, together with their caregivers, and to younger, more vigorous and self-sufficient seniors.

SITE SELECTION CRITERIA

The selection criteria were established to give the Committee a basis to evaluate sites for their suitability as possible locations for a new Senior Center for the Town. The criteria were established after visiting and evaluating several senior centers in other Towns as well as Lexington's Senior Center. The program developed by the Council on Aging was also evaluated prior to the establishment of the criteria.

After reviewing the list of potential sites against the list of selection criteria, the Committee found that there are several sites that met most of the selection criteria but no sites that met them all. Among the sites that met most of the criteria, the site selection criteria list was used to focus the discussion on the shortcomings of each of the sites. As an example, the criteria were used to weigh the cost of one site against the availability of another. The Site Selection Criteria were:

1. The property should be functionally accessible. Town residents should be able to get to a new facility on the site easily.
2. The property should have access to a well-traveled street. The traffic generated by the Senior Center can be most easily accommodated by one of the well-traveled streets in town, but the same traffic volume would be a safety concern on a minor residential street.
3. The property should be sufficiently large to accommodate the projected building size that might be up to 30,000 s.f. (including space for Adult Day Care) plus parking. Sites with sufficient on-street parking spaces available or adjacent parking lots available nearby should be a minimum of 1-1/2 acres. Sites that are not near on street parking or available nearby parking lots should be a minimum of 2-1/2 acres. These criteria were established based upon the projected program for the building and the parking demands for the facility.
4. The site should be owned by the Town or available for acquisition. This criterion was in keeping with the "willing buyer/willing seller" requirement set by 2000 Town Meeting and the Selectmen.
5. The site should accommodate acquisition, construction, and project completion in 4 years. This timetable was set to assure that the project could be immediately implemented, once approved by Town Meeting and by the voters.
6. The site should be visible and/or be located in a place of prominence. The facility should be a resource for all the town's residents and occupy a prominent location in the fabric of the town. A place of prominence would emphasize the public nature of the building and encourage the use of the facility during off-peak times, by all town residents.
7. There should be a bias towards adaptive reuse of a property as opposed to development of open space. The Committee felt that the Senior Center should not be built on open space if other adaptive reuse sites were available. This bias is consistent with the reaction of many town residents who spoke at the

Committee meetings and is consistent with the long-range vision of the town (see Reference # 13, Lexington 2020 Vision).

8. The scale of the facility (one or two floors with up to 30,000 s.f. of total floor area including Adult Day Care), the traffic created and the land use should be consistent with its surroundings. The site should be in a neighborhood of larger buildings near commercial or institutional land uses.
9. Development and purchase of the property should not make the project cost prohibitive. Sites should not have a large inherent site development cost due to environmental mitigation, for example.
10. The traffic generated by the Senior Center should reinforce or encourage the use of the present public transportation systems. Lexpress busses should be able to easily service the site, and preferably the site should be near an MBTA route as well.

SITES IDENTIFIED FOR POSSIBLE USE

The Committee initially identified more than 30 sites in Lexington that could possibly be used as the site for a new Senior Center. They included both public lands and private property, some with existing structures on them and some comprising open space. We used some initial screening criteria regarding parcel size and development potential to assign a priority to each site (A-High; B-Maybe; C- Low; X- Rejected). A map in Appendix A denotes the locations of the sites categorized A, B, or C. Appendix A also includes an exhaustive list of all the sites that were considered by or suggested to the Committee. In alphabetical order below is a short description of the A and B sites. The Committee did an on-site survey of each A and B site before undertaking its substantive discussions and considerations.

Bedford Street (No. 201)

This is a 9.6-acre parcel bounded on the west by Bedford Street, the Minuteman Bikeway to the north, and a mix of residences and commercial buildings to the south and east. It is presently the site of the Department of Public Works, which has one large, and two small buildings on site. There's a large, paved parking area on the south side of the main building. An open, flat parcel (about 2 acres) in front of the DPW main building on Bedford Street has the potential to be developed as a Senior Center.

Concord Ave. (No. 430)

This is a 5.0-acre privately owned, diamond-shaped parcel that is accessible from Concord Ave. It is bounded by Hardy Pond Brook on the west, residential properties and the Elks Club to the east, and the Swamin Swamp to the south. It has two buildings on the property and a sizable section of wetlands in its back section.

Harrington School

The School Committee's future plans include the replacement of the present Harrington School building with a new building elsewhere on the 12.1-acre property. After completion of that and the rest of their proposed elementary school projects, the current building could be made available for other purposes. Eight or more years from now, depending on the outcome of future Town Meeting and town-wide votes, a new Senior Center could be one possible use of the building.

Lowell Street

This is a 3.1-acre heavily wooded Town-owned parcel at the intersection of Lowell Street and North Street that has about 450 feet of frontage on Lowell Street and minimal frontage on North Street. It is located on the southeast corner of the intersection and is bounded to the east by property in Woburn.

Meriam Street Parking Lot

This is the 2.7-acre municipal parking area behind Depot Square and the commercial buildings along the north side of Mass Ave. It is bounded on the south by the Minuteman Bikeway, by Meriam Street to the west and a mix of residential and commercial properties to the north. There are presently no buildings on the site.

Metropolitan State Hospital

The Lexington portion of this former state mental hospital consists of 90 acres of land including a large complex of unoccupied buildings. The property is accessible from Concord Avenue in Lexington, near the Belmont line. The rest of the property is in the City of Waltham and the Town of Belmont. Lexington Town officials are presently engaged in discussions with the state and the other communities to develop a plan for reuse of the property by the communities and other parties. It is expected that it could be a decade or more before the site would be available for purposes such as a new Senior Center.

Militia Drive

This is a privately-owned 7.25-acre complex of 7 office buildings off Worthen Road and adjacent to Walgreen's. The individual buildings are 2 stories with between 60,000 to 70,000 square feet of floor space. Limited parking is available around each of the buildings. The possibility of building purchase or lease could be considered by the Committee.

Munroe Center for the Arts

This is a Town-owned 1.5-acre property on Massachusetts Avenue across from Bloomfield Street. It is bounded by a private residence to the east, the Munroe Cemetery to the north and an access path to the cemetery to the west. The building, the former Munroe School, now occupied by the Arts Center, comprises about 19,000 s.f. on two floors. The rest of the property provides parking and a small recreation field in back.

Muzzey Play Field

This is a Town-owned 1.1-acre open field adjacent to the Muzzey condominium complex on Massachusetts Avenue and across from Slocum Road and Rowland Avenue. It is presently used extensively as a youth soccer field. It is also immediately adjacent to the current Senior Center located in the Muzzey complex.

North Street

This is a Town-owned 2.8 acre wooded parcel at the intersection of Lowell and North Streets that has about 280 feet of frontage on Lowell Street and 800 feet along North Street. It is located at the southwest corner of the intersection and would be most accessible via North Street from the Adams Street end. It is immediately adjacent to the Town's 21 acre parcel of recreation and parkland referred to as the North Street Sand Pits.

Pelham Road (Highland Avenue)

This is a Town-owned 14-acre parcel of open land that is publicly accessible from the end of Pelham Road. It is also at the privately owned east end of Highland Avenue. It abuts the Armenian Sisters School and Museum of Our National Heritage properties to the north, residential properties to the east and west, and includes a portion of the Upper Vine Brook wetlands area to its south. The northern half of the property is dry and heavily wooded.

Waldorf School

This is a Town-owned, 10-acre parcel of developed land that includes the privately owned Waldorf School and the Adams School play fields used for soccer and other field sports. The Waldorf School's arrangement with the Town for the building (the former Adams Elementary School) is an arrangement such that every 20 years, the Town may repurchase the building by giving notice not later than 3 years prior to the expiration of the 20-year renewal period. That means that this year, the Town had the opportunity to repurchase the building by notifying the Waldorf School of its intention to do so no later than August 31, 2000. Because of this timetable, the Committee focused its early deliberations on the pros and cons of this site.

Walgreen's

This is a privately owned 2.2-acre property at the northwest corner of the intersection of Bedford Street and Worthen Road. The site consists of two buildings that presently house Walgreen's and Starbucks Coffee. The rest of the generally flat site is paved for parking. Ownership and leasing of the site is somewhat complex in that the owner (Royal Ahold) has a long-term lease with The Stop and Shop Companies which in turn has shorter-term subleases with Walgreen's and Starbucks for their respective buildings. Preliminary discussions with Stop and Shop have indicated a willingness to explore possible public-private initiatives to redevelop the site to include a new Senior Center.

Wood Street

This is a Town-owned 9 acre triangular shaped parcel of open land only accessible from a cul-de-sac at the end of Bates Road that is off Wood Street near the Lincoln Lab entrance. The Town acquired it in 1989, as part of the Pine Meadows purchase. It is bounded on the east by I 95/Route 128, to the southwest by residential properties, and by the Katahdin Woods conservation area to the northwest.

Worthen Road

This is a Town-owned 3.0-acre heavily wooded parcel on Worthen Road, under the jurisdiction of the School Committee, across from the high school football field and field house. Residences bound it to the rear (west) on Baskin Road and to the north by the Fitness Path/Bikeway which extends from Worthen Road, through Lincoln Park, to Middleby Road. The northern quarter of the site is low and seasonally wet.

COMMENTS ON POTENTIAL SITES

Prelude: When the Committee began its deliberations in May 2000, a working assumption was that the new Senior Center would include a co-located Adult Day Care facility. As our deliberations proceeded through the summer and fall months, and after visiting the centers in several neighboring communities, changes to that assumption started to emerge. Two factors played important roles in our considerations. The first was that there was no compelling evidence that co-location was essential or even desirable. The second was the realization that the current Senior Center in the Muzzey Condominium Complex could be suitably configured as an Adult Day Care facility. Such a use is one of the few options available to the Town based on its current agreement with the Condo Association regarding the use of the space. Thus, our final working assumption is that the new Senior Center, regardless of where it's located in Lexington, will not include a co-located Adult Day Care facility. It is our recommendation that the Muzzey complex be used for Adult Day Care. The anticipated floor space need for a future Adult Day Care facility is 3,600 s.f. Given the 9,000 s.f. of the current Senior Center, there's the possibility of using the remaining space by other Social Services activities. This reduced requirements for floor space as we considered the sites discussed below.

One of the dominant criteria established for this process (the 7th in the discussion above) was a purposeful bias away from the use of existing open space, if at all possible. Thus, in the discussions below you'll find for sites deemed to be entirely open space, reference to that fact is treated as a Con.

Bedford Street (No. 201)

Pro – This is an attractive site for a new Senior Center for several reasons. It's on a major roadway (Route 4/225), is serviced by the MBTA (Route # 62) and Lexpress (Route # 4) and it abuts the Minuteman Bikeway (aka Jack Eddison Bikeway). Placing a Senior Center on the landscaped area in front of the DPW Barn would result in a visibly prominent facility that would be consistent with and enhance the attractiveness of the surrounding area. Sufficient parking would need to be provided on site to meet the needs of both the Senior Center and the DPW. Availability of the land and site development costs should be expected to be among the most favorable of the site options we considered.

Con – The traffic volume on Bedford Street, especially during peak usage hours of a Senior Center, can be excessive and may require the installation/modification of traffic control options at or near the site. In developing plans for the site, the future needs of DPW and the Senior Center will need to be incorporated.

Concord Ave. (No. 430)

Pro – Some abutters have expressed support feeling a Senior Center at this location would be consistent with and enhance the attractiveness of the neighborhood. The site is good-sized, flat and fairly clear of trees. It is accessible from a major road (Concord Ave) and is near the intersection of Route 2 and Waltham Street that are major

thoroughfares. It is serviced by Lexpress (Route # 2). It's ample size, with room for expansion, may provide programmatic/usage opportunities not possible at many other sites.

Con – This is a privately owned parcel some distance from the center of town. Availability for acquisition by the town is uncertain and the property would be costly. A substantial portion of it is wetlands that have a history of misuse and may require remediation if the site were to be used as a Senior Center. Access to the site is limited to a 50-60 foot entrance on Concord Ave.

Harrington School

Pro – This option is highly attractive because of its potential reuse of an existing town building that is more than large enough to accommodate the needs of the Senior Center (with internal renovation and upgrading). The space available in the building could possibly serve the needs of other town-wide activities (indoor recreation programs, Center for the Arts, etc). It's located near two major streets (Lowell and Maple) and is serviced by Lexpress (Route # 3). Co-location with a new school at the Harrington site could provide positive intergenerational program opportunities.

Con – Near-term availability is a major detriment with this site in that the current School Committee planning timetable indicates it will be 8 years or more before the building is available for non-school uses. The location is in the far reaches of town. The building lacks prominence or visibility in that it's sited behind residences on Lowell and Maple Streets. Retaining the building after its replacement is constructed could cause the loss of several heavily-used recreation fields.

Lowell Street

Pro – This town-owned parcel is immediately available and could be developed within the Committee's 4-year criterion. It's in a light density, mixed commercial and residential neighborhood. It is serviced by Lexpress (Route # 5) and is located on a major roadway (Lowell Street).

Con – This is a heavily treed open space parcel in a remote corner of Lexington. Traffic density on Lowell Street (the only access to the site) raises safety and congestion issues for Senior Center users. Much of the site is low and resulting water/sewer discharge requirements may add substantially to site development costs.

Meriam Street Parking Lot

Pro - This site is centrally located close to the shops, restaurants and facilities in the downtown area. This could provide conveniences to Senior Center users. It is off a major roadway (Mass Ave.) and is serviced fully by both the MBTA (Routes # 62 and 76) and by Lexpress (all Routes). A center built at this site could be made visually

prominent and consistent with its surroundings.

Con – Accommodating a Senior Center and its parking needs with the existing use of the site as a municipal parking lot will necessitate a multi-level building with one or more

levels of parking underneath. The building would also have to be designed and built in compliance with Historic Districts Commission and Design Advisory Board dictates. Users of the Center would add to the already congested traffic flow in and around the downtown area.

Metropolitan State Hospital

Pro – This parcel has plenty of potential to accommodate a Senior Center with spacious parking. There is no neighborhood impact.

Con – The site remains under the control of the state until such time that an agreement can be reached among the communities of Lexington, Belmont and Waltham as to how the site shall be developed. The Senior Center would need to be incorporated into an overall master plan for the site, and approval of the plan by the state legislature must precede property transfer. The timetable for this process is uncertain but is expected to be at least 10 years. In addition, the site is remote, well off a major secondary road (Concord Ave) and not presently convenient to public transportation. While there are several existing buildings on site, their demolition (perhaps costly due to asbestos problems) must precede building construction.

Militia Drive

Pro – The buildings in this complex are adequately sized to accommodate a Senior Center (and some complementary Town functions). The site is centrally located near the intersection of Worthen Rd. and Bedford St., and is in close proximity to other senior interests. There is nearby service of both the MBTA (Route # 62) and Lexpress (Route # 4). Buildings in the front of the complex would result in a visually prominent Center that would be consistent with its surroundings.

Con – There is no evidence of a “willing seller” of any of the buildings and their likely market value, if available, is expected to be high. Though building reuse could be expected, major renovation costs would need to be incurred.

Munroe Center for the Arts

Pro – Reconfiguration of the site to serve as a Senior Center and a Center for the Arts is the biggest potential for this modestly sized site. It is centrally located (on Mass Ave) and is serviced by both the MBTA (Routes # 62 and 76) and Lexpress (Routes #1 and 3). With the likely use of the Muzzey site as the future Adult Day Care facility, its close proximity could be advantageous.

Con – The site may be too small (1.5 acres) to accommodate the proposed multi-purpose facility that would require ample parking space. Its development would eliminate an actively used T-ball field. Traffic volume on Mass Ave. raises safety and congestion concerns that could be mitigated with a reconfiguration of the existing traffic signal. With residences on three sides, an expanded, multi-level complex with structured parking may not be consistent with its neighborhood. (See Reference # 8 for expanded rationale)

Muzzey Play Field

Pro – A Senior Center on the existing soccer field would provide the best co-location advantages with an Adult Day Care facility in the current Muzzey Condo complex. This site is centrally located (on Mass Ave.) and is serviced by both the MBTA (Routes # 62 and 76) and Lexpress (Route # 1 and 3). A visually prominent building can be designed and built on this site to be consistent with its surroundings.

Con – Development of this site would deprive the community of a prominent piece of open space and an actively used soccer field. There are agreements with the Muzzey Condo Association regarding the rights to and use of this parcel that would have to be altered. There are traffic and parking issues that may be challenging to resolve. A multi-level complex with structured parking may not be consistent with the neighborhood.

North Street

Pro – This town-owned parcel is immediately available and could be developed within the Committee's 4-year criterion. It is in a light density, mixed commercial and residential neighborhood. It is serviced by Lexpress (Route # 5) and is located on a major roadway (Lowell Street) with an advantage over the nearby Lowell Street site of being on the south (Adams Street) side of the intersection of Lowell and North Streets. This site abuts a spacious recreation and parks parcel (North St. Sand Pits) that could be developed for passive recreation purposes appropriate for Senior Center user interests.

Con – This is a part of one of the town's largest heavily wooded open space parcels, and is in a remote corner of Lexington. Access from North Street, while less congested than Lowell Street's traffic, has safety issues due to a narrow, winding street surface that spans the Vinebrook. Concern was raised in the public meeting that development at this site might have an adverse effect on the Vinebrook and Burlington's water supply. (See Reference # 5 for expanded rationale)

Pelham Road

Pro – This town-owned parcel is centrally located, has ample usable space and can be developed within the Committee's 4-year criterion. Development could proceed immediately and construction costs should not be excessive.

Con – This is a heavily wooded parcel of open space in a highly residential area. It is accessible only from the end of Pelham Road and is not serviced by public transportation. Entry into Pelham Road at Mass Ave. is at a heavily traveled, dangerous curve.

Waldorf School

Pro – Conversion of the existing structure (formerly the Adams Elementary School, now privately operated as the Waldorf School) was an attractive alternative for the Committee's considerations. The building comprises about 30,000 square feet of floor space on three floors. It is on a major roadway (Mass Ave.) and is serviced by both the MBTA (Routes # 62 and 76) and by Lexpress (Route # 1). While existing parking is limited, available town-owned land exists for some expanded parking. The conditions of

the current agreement with the Waldorf School could, if the Town exercised its option, make the building available for renovation in 3 years.

Con – The Waldorf School has been an excellent addition to the Town in its nearly 20 years of operation at the Adams School building. They are an established and positive presence. Substantial costs could be incurred in reacquiring and renovating the building for a Senior Center. Expansion of parking could compromise one or more soccer fields (already in short supply). Traffic congestion in the area of the Waldorf School is a major concern. The COA is on record in opposition to the use of this site.

On August 3, 2000 the Committee recommended (by a vote of 6 to 3) that the Selectmen exercise the Town’s option to proceed with the reacquisition of the Waldorf School building for Town purposes. On August 14, 2000 the Selectmen voted not to exercise the Town’s option (2-yes, 2-no, 1-not present), foreclosing further consideration as a Senior Center site.

Walgreen’s

Pro – Redevelopment of this site, in partnership with the current land owner and tenants, would result in a visually prominent enhancement to the area and would result in a complex that is consistent with its surroundings. The site is ideally located (near the Town Center), on major roadways (Worthen Road and Bedford Street), with numerous nearby services and facilities. It is serviced by both the MBTA (Route # 62) and Lexpress (Route # 4).

Con – While positive exploratory discussions have been held with the principal leaseholder (Stop and Shop Co.), uncertainty remains whether a partnership can be formed for the venture and at what cost to the Town. With retail space expected to occupy a significant portion of the new building, access to close in, desirable parking may be an issue for some Senior Center users.

Wood Street

Pro – This town-owned parcel is immediately available and could be developed within the Committee’s 4-year criterion.

Con – This is a heavily treed open space in a remote section of Lexington. The only access to the site is via a secondary road (Bates Road) that presently has very low traffic volume. It has nearby (on Wood Street) MBTA service (Route # 76) but is not serviced by Lexpress. A Senior Center on this site would not be visually prominent and would be incompatible with its residential/conservation land/Route 128 surroundings.

Worthen Road

Pro – This town-owned parcel, under the jurisdiction of the School Committee, is centrally located on a major roadway (Worthen Road) near the high school complex, Hayden Recreation Center, and the Fitness/Nature Path. This proximity can provide numerous opportunities for intergenerational and recreation options for Senior Center users (see Reference # 6). The site is serviced by both the MBTA (Route # 76) and by

Lexpress (Route # 2). While the usable portion of the site may limit on-site parking, it is expected that sufficient supplemental parking will be available on Worthen Road. Development on this site would result in a visually prominent facility consistent with its Worthen Road surroundings.

Con – This is a visually prominent, heavily treed open space parcel that is integral to a larger recreational and park setting including the playing fields complex adjacent to Lexington High School. The parcel is under the jurisdiction of the School Committee. A portion of the site is low and may be found to be vegetated wetlands. Substantial traffic safety concerns exist for this option, especially during hours of high school usage. A substantial residential neighborhood abuts the upland (west) side of the property. (see Reference # 7 for expanded rationale)

SITE SELECTION RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee's assessment of the properties described above results in the four recommendations listed below. An overriding consideration, particularly after receiving in-person and written inputs from the public (see References # 4, 5, 7, and 8), was the preservation of existing open space. In the final analysis, we opted to exclude all such parcels from further consideration. It is the Committee's recommendation that the Board of Selectmen immediately proceed with the next step in the process, namely initiating a technical feasibility study and schematic plan that considers the four recommendations summarized below. Recommendations 2 and 3 below represent our co-equal primary site selection recommendations. Recommendation 4 is included as a "second tier" choice in case either of the preferred choices does not pan out. The recommendations are:

1. Utilizing the existing Senior Center complex at Muzzey as the future Adult Day Care facility.
2. Thoroughly evaluate the technical and logistical issues related to the Town-owned parcel at 201 Bedford Street (the DPW site).
3. Thoroughly evaluate the technical and logistical issues related to the Walgreen's site (if negotiations with the owner and principal leaseholder continue to be encouraging).
4. As a second-tier, or backup site, thoroughly evaluate the option of developing the Munroe Center for the Arts site to house both the new Senior Center and the Center for the Arts in a substantially reconfigured (and expanded) building. Use of this site for this purpose would be contingent on approval by both the COA and the Munroe Center for the Arts Board of Directors.

In a substantially developed town like Lexington, no site will clearly satisfy every siting criterion. It is the Committee's considered judgement, based on extensive research, public input, and analysis, that the DPW (Bedford St), Walgreen's, or a redeveloped multiuse Munroe complex could best satisfy Town objectives while prospectively accommodating a Senior Center well suited to Lexington's needs.

REFERENCE DOCUMENTS COMPILED BY THE COMMITTEE

(These documents are on file in the Town Manager's Office, Town of Lexington)

1. December 6, 1999: Lexington Council on Aging Long Range Planning Committee Proposal for a New Senior Center
2. September 13, 2000: What Is The Senior Center?; Lexington Council on Aging
3. August 3, 2000: Report to the Selectmen's Senior Center Siting Committee from the Social Services Department Space Analysis Committee; Lexington Council on Aging
4. Miscellaneous, 2000: Letters of Opposition to Various Specific Sites; Concerned Citizens
5. November 9, 2000: Senior Center Siting Committee North & Lowell St. Site Reasons to Reconsider; G. and J. Serebrani-Kesner
6. November 1, 2000: Review of Worthen Road Site for Consideration as a Senior/Community Center for Lexington; P. Kelley
7. November 1, 2000: Worthen Road Woods-An Unsuitable Site for the Senior Center: A. Dorner
8. September 7, 2000: Munroe Center for the Arts; M. Dietrich
9. Various Dates: Article(s) regarding the SCSC process that appeared in the Lexington Minuteman newspaper; E. Heney, reporter
10. September 14/15, 2000: Notes and Vugraphs Used by Committee Members During the Public Hearings Held on These Dates
11. Various Dates: Summary Descriptions of Senior Centers in Neighboring Communities
12. June 19, 2000: SCSC Public Participation Policy Statement
13. January, 2001: Lexington 2020 Vision – A Status Report of the Planning Process

APPENDIX

Map of Sites rated A, B, or C and listing of all sites considered

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