

**MEETING MINUTES  
BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
JOSEPH P. NORTON EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER  
January 31, 2019**

Present: John Danehey, Chairman, Maura Curran, Vice Chairman, Karen Canfield, Shawn Harris, Anthony Vegnani

Also present: James Boudreau, Town Administrator

The Meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.

**Acceptance of Agenda**

**Mr. Vegnani made a motion to accept the agenda for January 31, 2019,  
Second by Mr. Harris all in favor. Unanimous vote (5-0)**

Mr. Danehey explained that we are meeting tonight to discuss two very important projects for our community. The Selectmen wanted to discuss these projects thoroughly and are unable to spend the time needed in the very long Selectmen meetings we have held recently during budget season. This is an opportunity for all the Selectmen to discuss these projects.

**SCHEDULED ITEMS:**

**Proposed Construction of New Senior Center & Veterans Memorial Gym Rehab**

Mr. Vegnani said the Senior Center is one of the most important projects the town has to deal with right now. He thinks the project has grown to a scope above and beyond where he thought it would be to the detriment of the Senior Center and the cost has doubled. This was not the intention when we got into this project. He thought it would cost \$1M to take Gates down and it is now three times that cost. He wants to discuss this with the board. The seniors have waited long enough and the concerns need to be addressed. He does not want to knock down Gates, not refurbishing the recreation area, etc. He would like to see it at another location on that property. He thinks some things need to be done such as an elevator for the gym.

Mr. Danehey said the Veterans Memorial gymnasium has to be handicap accessible. Relocating the senior center is another discussion. Mr. Danehey said leaving it up leaves the cost to carry the old Gates building. Mr. Vegnani thinks the C wing has to go. Mr. Vegnani said the old master plan was to put Town Hall there. We have saddled the senior center with the cost of this and the two projects should not be tied together.

Ms. Curran said she agrees with the gym portion being much higher than we anticipated. We have a public building commission (PBC) who has been going through this since July. Ms. Curran went through some options that were discussed at past PBC meetings. The gym piece has gotten out of hand and that needs to be resolved. The minute you touch the A wing the costs increased significantly. To leave the building as is and put a new building up on another section of the property is doing a disservice to the community. Ms. Curran would like to stick with the plan and reduce the cost of the renovation of the gym area. It has to be handicap accessible,

space for recreation, etc. We need to back down a few million dollars from where it is now. It is going to be more expensive to do anything to Gates at a future date. She wants our community to be proud of this project. We always take a short cut and say we'll come back and do it later. Sometimes we cut off our nose to spite our face. Yes let's dial it back but the Gates building is cost prohibitive to renovate and we are just move the problem down the road to leave the Gates building there and do nothing with it.

Karen Canfield is glad we're having this conversation. She agrees with Ms. Curran moving forward with the current plan. She was shocked when the numbers came in for the recreation portion of the project. Putting it in another section of the property is not what we should do. The cost to do something with Gates later is cost prohibitive. Renovating that building is not the cost effective thing to do for the residents. This plan is the best use of the building. To renovate the recreation area was to create a whole new HVAC system for the buildings. We need to look at bringing costs down some way. It is not fair to throw the additional expense into the senior center project. Ms. Canfield would like to continue with the plan and look at options to reduce costs.

Mr. Vegnani said recreation is using the A wing second floor. We can add another building to that site. Ms. Canfield said we looked at those options. We have to deal with Gates at some point and do not want to kick the can down the road.

Mr. Harris has been on PBC for a few years and the committee for the new Gates school. He feels it is the tip of the iceberg and is not surprised it went from \$1M to \$3M with change orders. The seniors have been waiting a long time and this is our top priority and we need to get a facility that is done for the next 100 years without changing anything. He wanted to leave the old Gates building the way it is and renovate it over time. He hates to see it torn down and build new but we may have to go this route. Mr. Harris does not think we can reduce the cost of renovating the bottom floor of the gym. The HVAC system costs a lot of money also and he doesn't think we can reduce those costs. Ms. Curran said what portion of the \$5M is aesthetic and what portion is necessary of the \$5.7M. She would like this question answered.

Mr. Danehey said bringing the current project to a vote would be up to the residents. He is hearing the gymnasium should not be the focus of this project. He thinks we should do the bare minimum with the elevator and heating. Maintaining and retaining the classrooms they are currently using in the A wing. Mr. Danehey likes the building and would like to put town hall and the senior center there and that is not what the residents wanted. This is now what the Selectmen voted on last April. It was determined for a reason. We decided to deal with the Gates building and voted on it. It is the best location in town as the center of town. He would like the center portion used but it was too expensive at \$21M. Now we have a proposal and we need to proceed to have the town decide. We need to reduce the cost and move forward with this. There are many hidden costs if we use the existing Gates building. Trying to replicate it and build the senior center are his thoughts to move forward and we still have to deal with the gymnasium. Keep the plans as proposed and move forward with it.

Mr. Vegnani said we are here because we all doubt this is going to pass. This is why he wants to look at alternatives. If it fails it will be a big set-back and will take years. Ms. Curran thinks it's

unhealthy to say it's not going to pass. Educating and informing the public is an important piece of this project. Is it ready for April or do we wait until the Fall Town meeting. We want this to be a success. Mr. Danehey said the recreation piece is \$5.7M. If we can cut this by \$3M it would bring it down significantly. The plan has been vetted and is a good plan. Mr. Harris said we can cut the cost down just don't do the work under the gymnasium. Ms. Canfield said it is our mission is to make the best decision for this town. Our goal is to provide a senior center. We need to find a way to cut costs and proceed. It is a sound plan. Recreation is very important and we have an obligation to provide those services. The mission is to get this passed and let's stay true to the mission and goal as cost effective as possible. Mr. Danehey said we've made the gym part of the problem. Mr. Boudreau said the gym is used continuously and we need it. Mr. Danehey said don't tear down the A wing except heating and accessibility.

Mr. Boudreau said the decision was made to put the senior center on the Gates property. The seniors wanted something that was designed as a senior center. If you build it some place on the property you will still be left with Gates. The next project down the line is the schools. The town will never have the money to come back and renovate Gates. There will be no money to move town hall into the old Gates property. It will just sit there.

Mr. Danehey feels leave the gym and recreation area where it is and this should bring costs down. He would like to know those figures. Ms. Canfield said we want to know how to reduce cost in the recreation portion of the building, remove B & C and build the senior center. There was no connector added because of the cost. Linda Hayes, Director, Council on Aging said there was an elevation difference also to consider. Mr. Vegnani said the suggestions that they are making are not going to reduce the price. Mr. Danehey said he would like to know the costs and still move forward as planned.

James Hunt, 66R Mann Lot Road, said we have the school projects going on and asked if Gates may play a role in what part they may play for a school in the future. Mr. Vegnani said we moved out of Gates because the building is not functional as a school and does not meet the educational model.

Janet DiMatteo, 44 Hatchet Rock Road said Gates would be the best place for the senior center and we investigated other options. Dr. Price gave a presentation where we thought we'd like to be. Why did the Selectmen think back then that this is going to be a good idea. Why didn't the Selectmen have that where with all back then. Ms. Curran said moving the senior center to the Gates property is the best for the Town of Scituate. We have done our due diligence to look at this for a long term solution. They feel strong and confident in their decision to use the Gates property.

Maria Rama-Poccia, 121 Sedgewick Drive, asked why this isn't being considered for an elementary school. She would like to see this considered. Mr. Danehey said the Habeeb report has not been presented to the Board of Selectmen. The school committee determined the building was not adequate for education and moved the location of the middle school. The school is coming to the Board of Selectmen meeting on Tuesday, February 5<sup>th</sup> to present the plan for the elementary schools. He will ask the group at the Selectmen meeting if this is an option but he does not see this happening.

Gordon Price, 48 Mann Lot Road is appreciative what the town has done to date. He does not feel this will be successful if this goes to Town meeting in April. That will give us the entire spring and summer to educate the community that this is a need and not a want. Our neighboring towns are adding on to their senior centers. The \$19M number is a big concern. We need to pin down the numbers and see if we can make modifications. The plan as presented is an ideal plan and very comprehensive and we need more time.

Chris Carchia, 119 Stockbridge Road, Chairman Capital Planning met with the Council on Aging last evening. To push this for April town meeting should not happen. In his opinion, we need to slow down and fully vet the options and run through the process correctly. It is too soon to go to town meeting.

Mike Tarsala, 144 Branch Street, said we need to educate the public about the options. There is water inside the building. It is an abandon building and cannot easily be renovated. It can't be repaired and renovated; it is cost prohibitive to do this.

Patricia Murphy 50 Country Way moved back a few days ago. She retired from SPS and she moved out and moved back. Why aren't these school buildings being maintained? Why can't we work with what we have? Mr. Danehey said these are good questions. The buildings we are building are being maintained. The town and schools will work together to deal with this backlog problem of maintenance in the schools.

Ms. Curran said a lot of organizing and communicating is required and we are not ready for the Spring town meeting. She agrees with Dr. Price. She would like to stand behind what we have and educate people. We should put it before the town in the Fall.

Mr. Harris agrees with Dr. Price and thinks we should postpone to the Fall. Ms. Linda Hayes said the price will go up if we wait. She thinks this is a great plan with recreation and the senior center. The price has gone up including all of this. We are ready to begin educating the public and we are enthusiastic. Ms. Hayes is concerned that the price will go up if we wait. Mr. Vegnani said something else could come above it and he thinks if we're not ready we shouldn't put it there. He would only put it off if we look at other options. It grew into something more than what any of us expected. He wants to get the right plan before people. Mr. Danehey thinks we don't have enough lead time to make this successful for the April town meeting. Why don't we wait longer to make sure we have everything lined up. Ms. Curran said if we're asking to evaluate to bring the costs down we need to wait.

Jim Hunt, 66R Mann Lot Road, asked if the board would consider going back to the traditional model going back to the conceptual phase. He feels the concept is flawed. Mr. Danehey said we have to agree to disagree.

The opinion of the board is to delay but we will vote on this at a future Selectmen meeting with input from the Council on Aging.

Mr. Danehey said these are valuable discussions to do what is best for the town.

### **Proposed SHS Track & Athletic Fields Restoration Project**

We have learned a lot and this is a good plan. There are many different ways to pay for this. The proposal is to fund with \$5M free cash with CPC and borrow about \$3M through CPC. That is the funding proposal for this project. This is more aggressive than Mr. Vegnani would like. He would like to find another funding mechanism. He would like to minimize the debt the town would have to take on. We need to discuss and give our opinions on what is in the best interest of the town. Ms. Canfield was surprised about the funding mechanism and her concern was would we be hamstringing ourselves down the road. She is cautious about taking this option away. Gary Meyerson, 26 Summer Street, CPC Chairman said this is the undesignated CPC fund. Ms. Curran said this is a good use of CPC. It is not using all the CPC funds. We can only use the funds that we put into CPC. We have spent about \$22.6M since 2003 in open space, community housing, and recreation. None has been spent on athletic fields. Ms. Curran said we don't have to put additional burden on our taxpayers using these funds. This is what CPC is here for and this is a good project. Fields have been discussed for the past 20 years and nothing has been done. We lose a little bit of the state match but the numbers work and it is a way for us to accomplish a much needed project. Mr. Harris asked what % restores fields and builds new. Mr. Boudreau said we are not building any new fields we are going from natural to turf. Maura Glancy said four years ago we began looking at how we can resolve the field problem we've had for 25 years. This is the start of giving the ability to rest the other fields in town, let them grow, etc. We do have a field issue in town. This will be community fields. It is much needed and will help the other fields in town. Mr. Meyerson said with one new field it is like having three and we are maximizing the use of the fields. Mr. Danehey said we need a plan for the JV baseball field. Maura Glancy said she was given \$130,000 to do the field closer to the bell tower. Recreation would like to have a Babe Ruth field. Mr. Danehey said we need a JV component. The CPC project money will need to be rescinded and re voted. Mr. Vegnani said it does not give us all the fields the town needs but it is a great plan. Mr. Vegnani's concern is using CPC funds. Mr. Vegnani would put it in with the senior center and make it part of the override. Mr. Danehey does not want to tax the residents further he would like to use the CPC funds. Mr. Vegnani's only concern is the debt portion of the funding plan. Ms. Canfield said people have paid these taxes for this purpose already and this is what the money is for. Mr. Vegnani said he has no problem with the money that is there in CPC it is the 180 degree to borrow through CPC. Mr. Meyerson said the analysis is extremely conservative. The match is not in there. You will replenish the undesignated fund much quicker than what is documented. Although this has not been done in Scituate, a lot of towns have done this. The rate of return is very high. You are being paid to borrow money and it does not have to go to an override. It is a modest amount and if rates spike we can buy it back. This is a great opportunity to fund these fields. Tying it with another project will hamper this project. Karen Connolly, 30 Roundtree Lane, CPC member said this is "the what" if and CPC has been managed conservatively. We can do this without putting any additional tax burden on the taxpayer. She understands the concern but we will still be adding money. Chris Carchia, 119 Stockbridge Road, Chairman, Capital Planning Committee asked what happens if the town doesn't fund their part of the project. If the town doesn't fund the turf it jeopardizes the project. Darryn Campbell, 57 Acorn Street and President of Scituate Little League asked why we can't fund a baseball field. Mr. Danehey said it will come down to a timing issue. The cheapest option is to go to the baseball field behind the old Gates. The central field could be used as a little league field. Dan Fennelly

thinks it is unfeasible to do that and it raises major concerns. We also own land off Clapp Road which may be a potential solution. Mr. Campbell said we need a plan and funding to be in scope to replace. Dan Fennelly, 10 Highland Crossing said there were about 200 kids, 19-20 teams that need a field. There is also property behind the library where we could put fields in.

Ms. Curran said this was a very productive discussion. Mr. Danehey said there is not a lot of time during the Selectmen meetings to have this type of discussion and that is why the decision was made to hold this meeting tonight. Mr. Danehey would like the Council on Aging to attend the February 19, 2019 Selectmen meeting to continue the discussion on the senior center.

**OTHER BUSINESS:**

1. Adjournment and Signing of Documents

**Motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:30 p.m. by Mr. Harris second by Ms. Canfield Unanimous Vote (5-0)**

Respectfully Submitted,

Lorraine Devin, Recorder

**List of Documents for January 8, 2019 Board of Selectmen Meeting**

- Agenda

Board of Selectmen Meeting Minutes for January 31, 2019

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

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John F. Danehey, Chairman

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Maura C. Curran, Vice Chairman

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Karen B. Canfield, Clerk

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Shawn Harris

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Anthony V. Vegnani