REPORT OF THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN AND COUNCIL ON AGING

This is a Report of the Board of Selectmen ("BOS") and the Council on Aging ("COA") regarding the history of the Tolles-Parsons Center ("TPC") (previously known as the Senior Center). Given the passage of time since the last update on the proposed Center and the current request for construction funds, this Report will include a thorough review of the work completed to date.

History of Council on Aging

The National Council on Aging originated in 1950 in response to concerns about rising health costs and the impact of mandatory retirement. The Older Americans Act was enacted in 1965 to promote the development of senior centers for coordination of services and to improve the lives of older Americans through:

- Work and volunteering
- Healthy aging practices
- Providing access to benefits and
- Ensuring their ability to remain independent.

In 1972, Wellesley's Town Meeting established the COA "to coordinate and implement programs designed to meet the needs of the elderly." In 1973, a Senior Needs Assessment Survey was conducted and the results focused on the needs of the seniors in town related to transportation gaps, the need for outreach, a drop-in center and a program coordinator.

By 1974, the COA saw its purpose as:

- A clearing house for various senior programs offered by civic, fraternal and religious groups in town;
- Obligated to create specific programs for seniors including Mini Bus program, Meals-on-Wheels and a merchant discount program.

Wellesley Friendly Aid and Wellesley Community Center

In 1975, the COA rented a single room in the Wellesley Friendly Aid ("WFA") building and hired a Program Coordinator. In 1982, the COA moved to the Wellesley Community Center ("WCC"). The staff included a Director and part-time assistant in one office and provided information and assistance on issues including health insurance, social security, housing, employment, legal assistance, financial assistance, fuel assistance and nutrition information.

The COA remains housed in the WCC, a non-profit and privately-held and managed facility, and employs a Director, Assistant Director, Health and Human Services Administrator, Program and Office Assistant, Senior Activities Coordinator, nine-part time employees and over 225 volunteers. In FY2017, the Town will pay approximately $129,000 to the WCC for rent and custodial services for office space, one dedicated room in the basement of the facility, two additional rooms that are available to the COA from 9-4 each day and access to two other rooms on an as requested, as available basis. This is a $12,000 increase (more than 10%) over FY16.

Chronology of Tolles-Parsons Center

In 2005, the Town received a bequest of $825,000 from the estate of Mary Esther "Billie" Tolles. The bequest specified that the funds be used to found, construct and equip a free-standing senior center in Wellesley. This bequest prompted a review of the current facility and services.

Formation and Findings of Senior Center Study Committee 2007-2009
In January 2007, the Senior Study Committee was appointed by the Board of Selectmen. Their mission was to evaluate how the Town could best meet the evolving needs of Wellesley's senior population.

During the period January to November 2007, the BOS and COA had multiple discussions with the WCC to explore the possible renovation and expansion of the WCC to accommodate the expanding needs of the COA. Several plans were developed and discussed and the parties concluded that there was not a sufficient convergence of interests to support the approach.

The Senior Center Study Committee initiated a comprehensive review of senior support in Wellesley and opportunities for improvement, as well as a review of other location alternatives. The review consisted of focus groups, interviews, public forums, surveys and benchmarking, including visits to senior centers in other towns.

It was found that the level of support for seniors in Wellesley was lower than that of neighboring towns; programs were difficult to coordinate and confirm; dedicated space was extremely small, impacting the number and types of programs that could be offered; physical access to programs and offices was severely limited given accessibility issues; and as a result, participation rates were quite low.

Based on these findings, the Senior Study Committee concluded the following:

- In order to age well, individuals need to maintain an active, healthy and socially-engaged lifestyle. Seniors are increasingly seeking opportunities to learn, socialize, exercise and otherwise remain vital.
- The quality, size, accessibility and availability of facilities impact a town's ability to provide senior support. Well-designed, thoughtfully planned senior centers are attractive, welcoming environments that flexibly support concurrent activities. Accessibility is vital and the opportunity for social interaction is essential.
- Communities that have invested in a new or renovated senior center have seen a significant increase in participation, including senior volunteers, to support an expanded program.

The Senior Study Committee undertook a review of possible sites for the Tolles-Parsons Center and in April 2008, Town Meeting authorized $50,000 for an assessment of the needs of the Town's senior population ($25,000 from free cash and $25,000 from the Tolles bequest) and to initiate a feasibility study for the construction of a free-standing senior center at 496 Washington Street, the former American Legion (AL) property.

Feasibility Study in 2008
In September 2008, the architectural firm of Sterling Associates was hired to conduct a feasibility study which included a needs analysis, review of program plan and space requirements, options review (site and parking), estimated operating budget and preliminary floor plans. The results of the feasibility study suggested that the AL site would readily support a two-story facility of approximately 12,400 square feet. The structure would be fully compliant with the Town's zoning by-laws including footprint, building height and setback requirements. A preliminary design concept was developed which provided offices for the COA staff and visiting support professionals, the Town's Veterans' officer, a drop-in area, socializing spaces, a number of flexible spaces for various size activities and programs, a kitchen and a large hall that could be configured or subdivided for various uses.

It was proposed that the parking needs of the proposed center would be met through a combination of 34 on-site spaces, on-street parking and increased use of senior transportation.

Design Work in 2009-2010
In 2009, by a 157-58-3 (72%) standing vote, Town Meeting appropriated $600,000 for a detailed building design at the AL site. During this phase, a building program review and benchmark study on design was completed by the newly formed Senior Center Building Committee.

This phase of work carefully considered the vision and goals of the Tolles-Parsons Center. The vision was to enable and enhance a healthy lifestyle, provide opportunities for interpersonal connections and increase overall well-being.

The goals of the Tolles-Parsons Center were to:

- Provide the adequate size and type of spaces necessary to enable a sense of place and to promote aging in place;
- Expand programs to meet the needs and interests of the population and encourage and expand participation;
- Provide welcoming and flexible spaces conducive to multiple activities;
- Foster intergenerational participation.

Building Program Review
The Building Program Review included the following:

- A detailed review and summary of the activities and services being provided at that time, the anticipated number of participants and the types of spaces needed to accommodate them;
- A summary of potential activities in anticipation of growth in offerings and in the rate of participation;
- The development of a floor plan which had the flexibility to accommodate the current activities as well as activities and programs for the future.

The major findings of the review were:

- New facilities yield increased participation and utilization with a 20-25% utilization rate;
- Socialization, drop-in area is key;
- A vibrant lunch program is important and attracts seniors for other activities;
- Spaces should enable concurrent programming and be flexible to enable multiple uses;
- Private meeting spaces are highly utilized.

Based upon the information gathered and findings, five categories of spaces were identified as necessary to accommodate activities and programming:

- Informal drop-in area/gathering spaces;
- Spaces for scheduled activities and programs all designed for maximum flexibility;
- Meeting spaces;
- Dining/food preparation spaces; and
- Office/administrative spaces.

Benchmark Study on Design
The Benchmark Study on Design included a descriptive summary of information collected from site visits and research focusing on the design, adjacencies and use of spaces. The study compiled information on best-practices and design elements which were effective and efficient to be incorporated into the design for the Tolles-Parsons Center.

Traffic and Parking Study in 2009
A Traffic and Parking Study was conducted by Howard Stein Hudson in 2009 and a report issued in January of 2010.

The site plan for the project included 34 on site parking spaces (including two handicap spaces). Forty-seven public parking spaces exist on Washington Street adjacent to the site but the number of space would most likely have been reduced to 41 as a result of curb cuts and site planning.

It was determined that the new vehicle trips generated by the Tolles-Parsons Center would not adversely impact the study area intersections.

With regard to the adequacy of parking, five parking demand scenarios were considered and conclusions were made based upon parking counts. Under all scenarios, which included a funeral at St. Paul's and a large event at TPC, the use of public spaces on Washington Street would have been necessary.

Proposed Acquisition of 494 Washington Street
As a result of the concerns over the adequacy of parking at the AL site, the Selectmen engaged in negotiations with the owner of the property adjacent to the AL site, 494 Washington Street. This lot when combined with the AL site, totaled 41,924 square feet (almost an acre).

A price of $1,270,000 was negotiated with the owner and the proposal was presented to 2010 Town Meeting. Town Meeting did not approve the purchase price of $1,270,000 but agreed that it would offer $1,000,000. The owner declined the offer.

Further Discussions with WCC
During the period 2010-2011, the Selectmen, COA and WCC engaged in further discussions regarding the viability of the COA remaining in the WCC on a long-term basis. The land on which the WCC building is located is owned by the WFA. Additionally, the property includes a building which houses the WFA and a private counseling organization, a building used by the Wellesley Service League and the Wellesley Historical Society with adjacent parking.

Renovation Options

The WCC proposed three specific options involving renovation to the current WCC facility. These are briefly summarized:

- Option 1
  - Ground level addition and conversion of some existing space to meeting rooms.
  - Construction cost estimate of $2,538,000
  - Cost to Town of $2,138,000
  - Cost to WCC of $400,000
- Option 2
  - Similar to Option 1 above with larger addition to lower level
  - Construction cost estimate of $2,513,000
  - Cost to Town of $2,113,000
  - Cost to WCC of $400,000
- Option 3
  - Larger addition to accommodate Drop-in room, reception area, activity spaces, small kitchen, and COA office space
  - Construction cost estimate of $3,113,000

- Cost to Town of $2,713,000
- Cost to WCC of $400,000

The BOS rejected these options as they did not fulfill the needs of the program. But the disproportional financial contribution without ownership or control was the key element that made these options unattractive.

Tear Down/Rebuild Option

Another option proposed by the WCC involved tearing down and rebuilding the facility to provide adequate COA office space and adequate activity spaces. The total construction cost was estimated at $4,425,000, with the Town contributing $4,025,000 and the WCC contributing $400,000. While this was a conceptually viable option, this option was rejected again due to the large financial contribution by the Town without any ownership or control of the facility.

Condominium Approach

A “condominium” approach was also explored which would require tearing down and rebuilding the facility; the WCC would own and control one floor of the building and the Town would own and control another floor of the building. Several concerns were raised including but not limited to the fact that the land is owned by WFA and the financial contribution would have to be equal between WCC and BOS.

After consultation among the Board and with Town Counsel, it was determined that the condominium approach would not be pursued.

In summary, although the existing WCC facility may have met the historical needs of Wellesley's senior population, our senior population has grown and changed over the years to the point where the configuration of the building no longer provides adequate space, including rooms equipped for designated purposes, to meet the seniors' needs. Additionally, if the Town were to make a significant capital investment in a new facility, the BOS believes the Town should own and operate the facility.

Campus Vision

In an effort to find a resolution that would be feasible and appropriate for the WCC and the senior citizens of Wellesley, the BOS proposed a “campus concept” at the current WCC site that would provide spaces for senior activities, the COA, the WCC, the WFA and other community groups. The long-term goal was a new facility to replace the WCC facility and the WFA buildings on the WFA property that would enable the WFA, the WCC and the COA to continue their missions. The new facility would be owned and operated by the Town of Wellesley.

The COA, BOS, WFA and WCC met to discuss the possibility of a new facility with the following criteria:

- The new facility to be owned and operated by the Town of Wellesley;
- The new facility to provide spaces for the WFA and WSA, as well as the WCC and COA and their activities, and other organizations to be determined as the project progressed;
- The WCC to continue its mission in the redeveloped facility as a tenant of the Town;
- The Town to consider the consumption of alcohol in the new facility.

After further discussion between the parties, it was clear that the COA and WCC were both trying to expand their services that the site was not large enough to accommodate all of the

parties' needs, and that sufficient synergies did not exist among them. Other concerns included insufficient parking, likely cost increases over what had been projected for a senior center, and the determination that it was not reasonable to ask the Town to pay for a building that would not be used solely for municipal purposes.

Consideration of Other Sites
During 2011, several sites were evaluated to determine whether another site was viable. These included:

- Property owned by Wellesley College – Washington Street; North 40
- Town land on Turner Road near Morses Pond
- Town land near Ouellet Field off Cedar Street
- Town land near Prospect/Walnut Streets
- NRC land near senior housing on Morton Field
- Sharing space with Recreation Department at Warren Building

After careful consideration of each site, it was determined that none of the sites was a viable alternative.

2012 – A New Look
In spring 2012, the Board of Selectmen reaffirmed that a senior center was a major priority for the Town. Given the passage of time since design work was performed in 2009, concerns raised about the need for a senior center, and the increasing numbers and diversity of the 60+ population, work needed to be done to include new insights and updated information to support healthy living and aging in place. To that end, a review process was developed to review the mission of services and programs for older adults.

Planning Committee
A Planning Committee was formed to review the mission and vision of how Wellesley will meet the needs of older residents, provide updated and supplemental information on the population, services and programs for current seniors as well as the "new seniors" (baby boomers), and to assess the current design. This Committee included:

- Terri Tsagaris, Chair, Board of Selectmen
- Ellen Gibbs, Vice-Chair, Board of Selectmen
- Susan Kagan Lange, Chair, Council on Aging Board
- Gayle Thieme, Director of Senior Services, Council on Aging
- John Schuler, Board, Council on Aging
- Harriet Warshaw, Board, Council on Aging and former chair of Senior Study Committee and Board of Selectmen
- Frederick Wright, Professor of Marketing, Northeastern University, former Recreation Commissioner

The Planning Committee analyzed the demographics and found that by 2030 the 60+ population will be 92 million or 25% of the U.S. population. In Wellesley, seniors currently account for 19%; they remain in the workforce longer, and have a broad range of needs, priorities, interests, and activity levels.

Further benchmarking was conducted, Wellesley's current model for delivery and depth of programming was evaluated, and discussions were held with many town departments and organizations. The following findings were made:

- COA's services and programming for the 60+ group are delivered from a central location which is inadequate;

- The need for services in this population is increasing dramatically;
- Services and programming town-wide for this group are delivered by multiple departments in relative isolation, resulting in some redundancies;
- Coordination of outreach between departments is sporadic and inconsistent.

In addition, the Planning Committee found that:

- 60+ adults want to "age in place" and remain a vibrant part of the community;
- 60+ adults who participate in senior center programs experience a sense of well being when they have a place to socialize, learn, exercise and contribute to community;
- Social interaction enhances mental health and is key to sustaining a high quality of life;
- Regular physical activity contributes greatly to the fitness, health, functioning and quality of life;
- Many 60+ adults rely on senior centers and other aging and social services for their basic needs;
- Baby boomers or "new seniors" have different expectations and needs than those that guided the development of the current system;
- Programs must be innovative and expanded to meet the changing needs and interests: adventure, travel, continuing education, cultural events, evening and weekend programs, opportunities to give back to community;
- We must accommodate all 60+ adults with more of everything – multi-service, a wide range of programs for young, old, fragile, active, retired and working adults.

Based upon these findings, the Planning Committee reached the following conclusions:

- Demographic review: individuals aged 60+ is a growing demographic group that increasingly encompasses a broad spectrum of interest, needs and capabilities;
- Delivery and depth of services and programming can be greatly improved, expanded, and made more efficient by:
    - Creating a central location or hub with appropriate, flexible and thoughtfully designed spaces for offices, services, programs and gatherings for individuals 60+ now and into the future;
    - Integrating and supplementing program delivery across Town departments through evolving relationships, collaboration and leveraging use of multiple venues;
    - Increasing partnerships through communication and coordination among departments to ensure effective, efficient and expanded outreach and programming.

The Planning Committee's research affirmed the importance of housing the COA administration and mandated and core services in an identifiable, dedicated, accessible location. A new vision – The Collaborative Model - was designed with a centrally located service infrastructure, strengthened and expanded through collaborative programming and use of multiple venues.

Parking Plan

As discussed above, concerns were raised about the adequacy of parking at the AL site. After further reflection a revised plan was suggested which proposed using 8700 square feet of Wellesley Housing Authority (WHA) land and reconfiguring the police station parking lot. The plan would have added 32 additional spaces, 20 for the TPC and 12 for the police (98 existing spaces to be increased to 130). The crosswalk currently located in front of the police station would have been relocated to bring it closer to the AL site and will include a pedestrian activated light.

The New Vision and Paradigm – The Collaborative Model
The research of the Planning Committee demonstrated that many departments and organizations contribute to the well-being of our 60+ population and encourage generational integration. It also recognized the importance of housing the COA administration, and mandated and core services in an identifiable, dedicated, accessible location. These findings resulted in a new concept for the Tolles-Parsons Center – the collaborative model – a service infrastructure with a central location strengthened and expanded by collaboration with other departments and use of multiple venues. This model was developed in an effort to address the growing number and diversity of the 60+ population as well as to increase coordination and collaboration with other departments and organizations by integrating the 60+ population with all generations across town to avoid isolation of seniors, and taking advantage of other spaces in town.

In this Collaborative Model, the Tolles-Parsons Center would serve as the center for COA's mission, services and programs, providing a welcoming and accessible focal point for weaving together the resources of the entire community. The COA staff and volunteer offices would be located and social services and outreach programs for basic needs of some individuals 60+ will take place at the TPC. Additionally, social and recreational activities, life-long learning opportunities and fitness and exercise classes would be housed at TPC.

In order to accommodate all 60+ adults and to expand and enrich the opportunities, it will be necessary to go beyond the walls of the Center and utilize other spaces in Town such as the Library, Recreation Center and schools. The Planning Committee spoke with representatives from many departments including Recreation, Schools, Library, Board of Health, Police and Fire as well as the colleges, private schools and Waterstone at Wellesley in Lower Falls. All were enthusiastic about partnering and collaborating with the COA to institutionalize this collaborative model.

The Review Committee
In order to review the findings of the Planning Committee, the Selectmen created a Review Committee and appointed the following members:

- Heather Sawitsky, Chair
- Jean Boyle
- Tim Driver
- David Himmelberger
- Dona Kemp
- Phil Laughlin
- Todd Himstead
- Kathleen Woodward

The Review Committee was charged with the following:

- Evaluate the collaborative model
    - Creation of central location with appropriate, flexible and thoughtfully designed spaces for offices, services, programs and gathering for individuals 60+ now and into the future;
    - Integration and supplementing delivery across Town departments through evolving relationships, collaboration and leveraging use of multiple venues;
- Review the vision, service delivery approach, programming and space; requirements necessary to meet current and future needs of population;
- Assess 496 Washington Street site as the central location of COA mission, vision and goals;

- Evaluate town-wide resources and how other town departments and organizations might contribute to expanding and strengthening the mission, vision and goals of the COA.

In sum, the Review Committee supported the Collaborative Model and concluded that the AL site was a reasonable and favorable location for the Tolles-Parsons Center. The Report of the Review Committee is included as an exhibit to this report..

Final Proposal from WCC
In February 2013, representatives from the WCC met with Town officials to present a new proposal for locating the TPC at WCC. WCC proposes to construct, own and control a new building adjacent to the current WCC building to house the TPC, with a bridge housing a café to connect the two buildings. An additional 65 parking spaces would be created at the rear of the parking lot.

The Town contacted a representative of WFA and inquired as to whether it would be interested in leasing or selling its land at 219 Washington Street directly to the Town so that the Town could design, construct, and own the TPC at that location. Before moving forward with negotiations between the Town and the WFA, the Town conducted its own due diligence to evaluate whether a new building with adequate parking could fit on the site.

Wellesley Community Center Proposal
The key elements of the proposal were as follows:

- For the WCC to construct, own and control a new building adjacent to the current WCC building to house the TPC under a lease agreement;
- To connect the new building with the current WCC building by a second floor bridge/café;
- To provide an additional 65 parking spaces at the rear of the parking lot abutting the Cochituate Aqueduct (owned by the Town).

In order to evaluate the WCC's proposal, the Town engaged in due diligence and thoroughly evaluated the following:

- Zoning;
- Traffic and pedestrian safety;
- Parking;
- Proximity of site to town services;
- Lease versus ownership of land and cost;
- Site development.

After careful consideration of the issues, the BOS concluded that the Town was best served, both financially and in the delivery of senior services, if the TPC were built, owned and operated by the Town, on Town-owned land, at 496 Washington Street.

Further Appropriation
At the 2013 ATM, an additional appropriation of $165,300 was requested by the PBC to accommodate programming and design changes, a new traffic study, parking lot design and engineering at the police station, building code review and update and revisions to the Project of Significant Impact application ("PSI") to the Planning Board ("PB"). By a ballot vote of 147-42-3 (76%), TMM approved of the additional request which was to take the project through final design, permitting and request for construction documents.

Original Project of Significant Impact (PSI) Application
Wellesley has a well-established and unique PSI process. Although in many communities, town projects are exempt from their own general site plan permitting, Wellesley chooses to put its municipal projects through the PSI process, demonstrating that the Town adheres to the same guidelines that it imposes on private developers

The PSI process is overseen by the Planning Board (PB) and the proponent submits a PSI application which includes a Municipal Systems Impact Analysis completed by the architect and engineering professionals to be reviewed by Town departments:

- Water by the Board of Public Works (BPW)
- Sewer by the BPW
- Storm drainage by the BPW
- Electrical service by the Municipal Light Board (MLB)
- Traffic, pedestrian and bicycle safety by the BOS (including peer review by the Town's traffic engineer)
- Fire protection and life safety by the Fire Chief
- Refuse disposal by the BPW

Written recommendations of the review departments are subsequently reviewed by the PB and the PSI Applicant before a public hearing. During the course of the PSI process, including the public hearing, the PB may propose specific design alternatives and/or negotiated improvements to municipal facilities in order to meet minimum service standards.

The PBC and BOS filed their original PSI application in August of 2013 with the Planning Board. After two evenings of public hearings, the applicants failed to garner a super majority vote of 4-1 by the PB and the request for the special permit was not approved. The PB cited issues with traffic, parking, pedestrian safety on Washington Street and storm water drainage.

Re-Filing of PSI Application
At the 2013 STM, the BOS requested a supplemental appropriation of $308,855 from Free Cash to the Permanent Building Committee (PBC) to accomplish two objectives:

(1) modify and update the PSI with respect to the TPC as a stand-alone senior center; and

(2) make necessary TPC project modifications to meet the PB statutory standard of making "specific and material changes" in order for the PB to reconsider the application for the Special Permit.

In a standing counted vote of 130-52-3 (70%), TMM approved the supplemental appropriation.

Purchase of 494 Washington Street
In order to address the concerns of the PB, the BOS sought once again to purchase 494 Washington Street, the property abutting the AL site, which would increase the site to about one acre. Town ownership of the Property would allow for the construction of 34 additional parking spaces on the Property, eliminating the need to expand the police station parking lot across the street. Additionally, demand for on-street parking on Washington Street by TPC visitors would be greatly reduced, significantly lessening the need for special accommodations between St. Paul's Church and the TPC, particularly on days when there are large funerals at the Church or major events at the TPC.

The acquisition was overwhelmingly approved by a vote of standing counted vote of 168-35-1 (82%) by TMM. A subsequent referendum to reverse TM's action failed and in June 2014, the Town purchased the property.

New Application for Special Permit for PSI

As a result of the purchase of 494 Washington Street, design and site changes were made to the combined site. It was determined that a brand new PSI application would be filed with the PB that would represent the enhancements to the project and address the previous concerns of the PB. The new PSI application was filed in October 2015 and the special permit was granted by the PB in December 2015. Subsequently, permitting was completed with approvals from the Design Review Board and the Zoning Board of Appeals. The PBC is seeking bids for the construction of the TPC and the BOS will request construction funds at the 2016 ATM. If ATM approves of the proposal, a debt exclusion vote will take place in the spring of 2016.

Board of Selectmen

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Council On Aging

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Sandra Budson
Sr. Alice McCourt
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Dianne Sullivan
Terri Tsagaris

EXHIBIT I
REPORT OF THE TOLLES-PARSONS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Introduction
The Council on Aging (COA) currently operates its senior program in leased space at the Wellesley Community Center. It offers a lunch program and provides support services and programming as space and staff permit. Based on 2011 data, 5 residents on average participate in the lunch program every day, and 65 residents come to the center each day for services or programs.

Several years ago, the COA proposed the construction of a stand-alone senior center at the former American Legion site to provide dedicated space for its programming and services. There have been criticisms of this proposal, including 1) there is a declining need for COA services since the number of seniors in Town is shrinking, 2) the construction is unnecessary due to the a low demand for the COA services, which do not align with the needs or interests of most Wellesley seniors, 3) there are underutilized municipal spaces and resources that could house the COA and its activities, and 4) the American Legion site is too small and doesn't have enough parking.

In response to these concerns, the COA rethought its model and developed a new proposal, originally referred to as the "hub and spokes" model, and more recently named the Collaborative Model. Its focus is to collaborate and coordinate with other Town departments to supplement programming and resources housed at the center. The Board of Selectmen appointed a group of eight citizens to review and evaluate this model.

Charge of the Committee
1. Evaluate the "hub and spokes" paradigm, and its focus on collaborating with other Town departments;
2. Review the programming and space requirements necessary to realize the vision;
3. Evaluate the offerings and resources of other Town departments which could be coordinated with the offerings of the Tolles-Parsons Center; and
4. Assess the 496 Washington Street site as a central hub for the activities of the Council on Aging.

Composition of the Committee
The committee members were selected because of their knowledge of the community and/or their interest and knowledge of aging issues. Members range in age from their 40s to their 70s to insure that the views of both current and future seniors were represented. The committee members had not been previously involved in the planning of the senior center project and bring a fresh perspective to the discussion. The members and their backgrounds are listed in Appendix A.

A summary of the activities of the committee is found at Appendix B.

Threshold Question: Does Wellesley Need a Stand Alone Center?
From the outset, the committee thought it was important to consider the stated opposition of citizens who think a stand-alone center is unnecessary.

Is the Number of Seniors in Wellesley Shrinking?
The 2010 US census counted 5,429 residents in Wellesley aged 60 or older. This represents 19.4% of the total population of the Town. In 2000, the US census counted 4,780 residents

aged 60 or older, which was then 17.9% of the Town. Thus, over the last 10 years, the number of people living in Wellesley over the age of 60 has grown, both in terms of actual numbers and as a percentage of the population. To give some context to these figures, the number of children receiving services from the Wellesley public schools as of October 1, 2012 was 5,032.

All national demographic projections reviewed by the committee predict a significant increase in the number of people aged 60 and older for the next 30 years. We assume Wellesley's population will follow national trends.

Are Senior Centers Outdated?
When senior centers were built in the 1960s, they primarily served as social service agencies, focusing on the needs of low income and frail elderly. Fifty years later, there is still a need to support vulnerable seniors. But there are many other seniors who do not need traditional social services, and will not access a center that is seen as primarily designed for those in need. These seniors are, and seek to remain, socially and physically active, intellectually curious, and involved with their communities. An attractive center designed with the needs of seniors in mind would give them opportunities to socialize, exercise and to pursue both old and new interests.

There are ample examples of senior centers who are addressing the needs of active seniors. These centers have rethought their assumptions, their programming and their physical space to meet the needs of independent seniors, while continuing to support their most vulnerable citizens. In short, they have created a new paradigm, offering a broader array of physical, recreational and educational programming, which involve the seniors in the design, planning and implementation of the programs. The new proposal by the COA represents recognition of this paradigm shift.

If It Is Built, Will They Come?
The committee considered the pros and cons of recommending another survey of Wellesley seniors' interest in a new center. However, the committee decided against it after speaking with an expert in survey research. He explained that a survey sent out to all citizens in a town will not accurately forecast demand, especially for innovative services. The people who respond are likely to hold strong views on either end of the spectrum. Unless there is a carefully designed sample selected to poll, and carefully designed questions that remove bias, a survey is not a good planning tool. Such a survey would cost thousands of dollars, and in the view of the committee, would first require an education program to inform residents about the COA's proposed model.

The expert suggested that for the Town's purposes, the committee could get an indication of the community's likely response by measuring the response of other communities to their new senior centers, and Wellesley's response to its other new facilities. The committee identified the following patterns that seem to be predictive indicators of Wellesley's likely response:

1. The four senior centers we visited which had been built within the last 5 years each experienced a **tripling** in average attendance after the new building was opened. The committee had telephone conversations with six other new senior centers, which reported similar increases.
2. Wellesley has experienced a sustained upswing in use when it has built a new building to house an activity in the last 10 years: the Library, the Warren Recreation Building, and the PAWS pre-school building.
3. The programming that the COA has recently done that is representative of the type of programming it would like to offer regularly has been extremely popular and has attracted numbers far in excess of its average number of participants. Examples are the

lecture series co-sponsored by the COA and the Library (85 attendees), the golfing tournament at Nehoiden (34 participants), the upcoming seminar series offered by Alan Schecter, retired professor at Wellesley College (the 30 spaces filled quickly, with a waiting list of 33).

4. When we visited the new Natick Senior Center, we saw several Wellesley residents participating in programs – people who do not attend Wellesley's senior center.

Are There Other Municipal Sites That Could Be Used?
The Warren Building is not a viable alternative for the Senior Center. Although the building looks large from the outside, there are not that many program spaces inside. There are some rooms open during portions of the day, but the building is fully utilized by children's camps throughout the summer. There is no room for the administrative offices of the COA. Parking restrictions imposed on Warren severely limit the number of cars that can be on site at any given time. The building layout and parking limitations at Warren do not allow for a gathering area for seniors, a key component of most centers.

The Community Center, which has housed the senior center for many years, was designed for civic groups who needed a place to meet. Its shortcomings as a senior center have been reviewed and acknowledged by the Selectmen, who fully explored the possibility of remodeling that space with the Wellesley Community Center in 2011. At that time, the Selectmen concluded that the Town would not finance the costs of the needed renovations at the WCC without ownership or control of the building.

Does the Washington Street Site Work as the Site for the Hub?
The site at 496 Washington Street is compact but viable. Assuming a building footprint of 6,000 sq. feet, there is parking on site for 34 cars, including 2 handicapped spaces. There is parking on Washington Street for 41 cars. There are plans to expand the parking on land abutting the police station parking lot, which will yield another 20 spaces, for a total of 85 spaces.

There are concerns that there is not enough on site parking under this configuration, and that parking on Washington Street and across the street is too dangerous. There are also concerns that the traffic on Washington Street will be chaotic when there is a funeral at St. Paul's and on early release days from the St. Paul's School.

The committee visited several senior centers that had limited or no on-site parking, and the centers still worked well. As a general matter, the committee observes that the Town has a traffic and parking challenge even without a senior center, and the only way to address these issues is to alter behavior by carpooling, walking, or developing a transportation system that will allow people to access town center without using their cars. The committee also thinks that no site should be required to meet the demands of infrequent events, such as large funerals.

The committee has developed a number of suggestions to help improve the parking and traffic:

- Reconfigure the parking spaces on Washington Street by making the parking spaces deeper, so that when a driver opens the street side door, the door does not swing out into the traffic lane. It would require moving the sidewalk on Washington Street, but it would be a significant improvement to Washington Street.
- Install a pedestrian cross walk and light close to the expanded police station parking lot, with a timer adjusted to the needs of senior citizens.
- Use the COA van to pick up and deliver seniors to the site.
- Explore the possibility of using the specialized vans used to transport special needs students to Sprague to transport seniors with mobility problems during school hours.

- Develop a sticker system for cars so that seniors with mobility issues would be given a priority right to park on site, not on the street.
- Use the sticker system to give seniors an exclusive right to use some of the spaces on Washington Street between the hours of 9 and 4.
- Work with St. Paul's to design a pick up system for early release days that minimizes the disruption on Washington Street. This could include a mutual determination of the safest pick up point and/or giving parents an exclusive right to park on Washington Street during the pick up time.
- Work with St. Paul's so that a system is devised to notify the COA of funerals occurring during the hours of programming so that Washington Street spaces would be cleared for funeral use.

We think that there are a number of very positive aspects with the Washington Street site. First, it is close to the town center and most people will already go near the site as they run their general errands in town. Second, it overlooks a lovely park. Third, St. Paul's would gain access to an additional 54 off street parking spaces on weekends and holidays when the center is not in use. Older parishioners who attend morning mass could easily take advantage of the morning coffee, socializing and programming at the center which could be scheduled to accommodate those attending mass.

The Proposed Collaborative Model

The Collaborative Model envisions that the new building will serve as the central location for COA administration, supportive services and socialization. It will have a kitchen and dining space for the lunch program, and program rooms with flexible layouts to permit a range of activities. One of the most important features of the new building will be a dedicated and attractive area where people can meet, have tea or coffee, and visit with each other throughout the day. This gathering area is seen as key to developing and maintaining a sense of community among the participants in the programming.

The programming offered on site will be supplemented and enhanced by programming collaborations with other Town departments.

Although there is already some collaboration, the committee thinks that ongoing communication and coordination among the various departments will yield a wider range of programs for all ages. This type of collaboration will require active oversight by the Board of Selectmen, which should consider appointing some members to the COA with the expectation that they will serve as liaisons to these other departments. Residents who have previously served on the boards of these town committees would be especially effective.

Currently there is duplication in programming offered by the Recreation Department, the Library and the COA. Duplicated programs could be eliminated, new offerings could be developed, oversubscribed programs could be expanded, and a master calendar of all offerings could and should be developed. The collaboration goes beyond finding rooms in buildings; it should review the talents and resources of each department and make sure they are fully utilized, whether in a classroom, a field trip, or during outdoor activities.

<u>Building sites.</u> Sites that are most likely to be part of the collaboration are:

- The Library:
    - The computer room for computer training
    - The Wakelin Room for large concerts and lectures
    - The Warren Building
    - The gym and dance studio for vigorous exercise programs and indoor walking

    - The art and ceramics rooms for painting and ceramics
- The Wellesley Community Center for larger lectures and dining events
- The Wellesley High School for its cafeteria and auditorium

Programming transferred to the Center. As part of the Collaborative Model, some programming and services currently offered elsewhere could be moved to the new senior center, consolidating core services on-site and providing exposure of the offerings of other departments to the seniors. These programs include

- Wellness Clinics offered by the Board of Health
- Some book groups run by the Library staff
- Duplicate bridge and bridge lessons that are oversubscribed at Warren
- Exercise classes designed for the needs of older individuals
- Introductory classes offered by other departments that would subsequently continue off site at the Warren Building or at the Library

Wellesley at Home. The Senior Center could also serve as a resource for the newly formed non-profit, Wellesley at Home, Inc. This is a group of Town residents who have formed an organization to support them in their desire to age in place, and is part of a national movement to organize support and social activities for seniors who want to age in place. Currently Wellesley at Home offers social opportunities and referrals for other services for its members. Its leadership has expressed its enthusiasm for working with the COA to develop programs responsive to the interests of its membership.

Other Programming Resources. In addition to using the physical spaces operated by other Town departments, the Committee sees great potential in programming that takes advantage of other Town resources and human assets. These programs could include

- Outdoor programming through the Recreation Department or the Natural Resources Committee, such as walks, orienteering, surveying plants and trees
- Volunteer opportunities for students: computer trouble shooting, yard clean ups, intergenerational bands
- Volunteer opportunities for seniors: tutoring, advising about career options, mentoring those with entrepreneurial aspirations

This model represents more than a plan to make efficient use of available space. It reflects an intention to provide an expanded roster of offerings that could never all be given in the 12,000 square foot building proposed for Washington Street. It will give intergenerational opportunities to seniors who seek them, reduce traffic and parking issues on Washington Street, and allow the main building to function primarily as a place of social engagement and core programming specific to seniors. It will allow the COA to continue to develop new programs to satisfy the evolving interests of a much broader group of elders. It would provide an expanded frame of reference for all Town departments.

Required Physical Space. The planning for the senior center is still in an early phase. After reviewing the schematic drawings, the committee has concluded that the proposed building will support the core activities of the COA and will not overbuild or duplicate other resources in Town. In terms of refining the schematic design, the committee encourages the COA to remain focused on the following elements:

- A comfortable designated space for people to relax and visit that is not part of the main foyer
- Adequate office space for staff and counseling
- A kitchen that is sized appropriately for the anticipated dining program

- Flexible activity spaces that do not duplicate specialized facilities located in other municipal buildings
- A bright and airy environment

Summary
The need for community resources for seniors has not disappeared, and will only increase in the next two decades. The social phenomenon of having a large cohort of aging people is new, and will require new kinds of community support. It is clear that seniors will have to take charge of their futures. But the community has to provide some support. Just as the baby boomers required towns to build additional schools and playing fields in the 1950s, these boomers will require additional resources to enable them to remain healthy and active members of the community.

The COA has developed a paradigm that would provide these resources to a broad cross-section of seniors. The potential for collaborative programming is evident, and the building schematics align with the programming concepts. Other communities have successfully implemented similar models. We encourage the Board of Selectmen to move forward with the construction of a new senior center without further delay.

Respectfully submitted,

The Tolles-Parsons Review Committee

Heather Sawitsky, Chair
Jean Boyle
Tim Driver
David Himmelberger
Todd Himstead
Dona Kemp
Phil Laughlin
Kathleen Woodward

APPENDIX A
MEMBERS OF THE SENIOR CENTER REVIEW COMMITTEE

Heather Sawitsky, Chair, has been general counsel to a retirement community for 15 years. She has a Masters in Public Health and is focused on developing innovative support and long-term care options for seniors. She was the Town Moderator for 7 years and is currently a Town Meeting Member.

Jean Boyle is the vice president of Wellesley at Home, Inc., a nonprofit dedicated to supporting seniors who wish to age in place by developing a range of programs and contacts for services. Jean has lived in Wellesley for 20 years, participating in many COA offerings. Her background is in marketing and communications.

Tim Driver is CEO of RetirementJobs.com, a career website for people over the age of 50. Its brand and advocacy, helping older Americans more easily engage with their communities, have been recognized in the private and public sectors, including the US Senate and White House. Tim has been a resident of Wellesley for 11 years. He and his wife Lisa, a teacher at the Upham School, have 3 children in the Wellesley schools. Tim also serves on the Wellesley Library Foundation Board and the Wellesley Baseball Board.

David Himmelberger is a near lifelong resident of the Town, who has previously served on the Advisory Committee and Board of Selectmen. He is currently serving as a Town Meeting Member and he and his wife Katie have two girls in the Wellesley school system. David is an attorney with a solo practice in Wellesley.

Todd Himstead is a father of two WPS students who has lived in Wellesley for 16 years. He has been a Town Meeting Member since 2006, a member of the Sprague Field Task Force, and engaged in diverse neighborhood and school efforts for over a decade.

Dona Kemp has been a Town Meeting Member for 25 years, a director on the board of the Wellesley Housing Development Corporation since the board was formed in 2000, and a former member of the Advisory Committee and the Community Preservation Committee. Dona has also served as the President of the Massachusetts League of Women Voters.

Phil Laughlin has been a Town Meeting Member for 10 years. He served as the Vice Chair of the Human Resources Board; Vice Chair of the Advisory Committee; and was a member of the Ad Hoc Facilities Maintenance Committee.

Kathleen Woodward has been a Town Meeting Member for 14 years. She has two children in the public schools and for many years has been active in school budget issues at the grassroots level. Kathleen is a practicing environmental attorney.

APPENDIX B
OVERVIEW OF THE COMMITTEE'S WORK

The committee has met weekly for the last two months. At those meetings, it has received input from the following groups:

- The Tolles-Parsons Planning Group
- The Council on Aging,
- Architect Bill Sterling, who developed the schematic design for the new center
- Citizens who had expressed concerns about the construction of a new center
- Representatives of the Library, Recreation and Health Departments

The committee visited the existing site of the Senior Center at the WCC, the proposed site on Washington Street, and the Warren Building. It also toured senior centers in the following towns:

- Belmont Senior Center
- Hopkinton Senior Center
- Malden Senior Center
- Natick Senior Center
- Needham Senior Center

The committee did additional research, reviewing population data, provisions of the Older Americans Act and the Nutrition Services Program, and the work of the National Institute of Senior Centers (NISC), its accreditations standards, and its most recent position paper on the future of senior centers. Members reviewed the programming and building designs of other senior centers that the NISC cited for their innovation and best practices. It reviewed the written comments of citizens who had expressed their concerns about a new center to the Board of Selectmen. Last, but not least, it conducted telephone interviews with representatives of the following senior centers to learn more about their most successful programming, benefits of a new building, cross programming initiatives with other groups, and increases in utilization:

- Agawam
- Duxbury
- Franklin
- Marshfield
- Mashpee
- Northboro