

The Great Room subcommittee would like to express our appreciation to Kathy Weld and Ford Spalding for their guidance in this process.

DOVER SPACE SURVEY

The Great Room subcommittee has been charged with reviewing currently available “great room” space in Dover and assessing the community need for a new great room with kitchen facilities. For the purposes of our review, we decided that great rooms were those that had a capacity of at least 100 persons.

We conferred with the Alternative Sites and Gym committees so as to reduce duplicative work. The identified list of spaces reviewed by our committee were as follows:

- BC Connors Retreat
- Charles River School , including new space in development
- St. Dunstan's Church
- Church of the Most Precious Blood
- Grace Church
- Elm Bank
- Sherborn Community Center

Subcommittee members contacted each of the sites to determine what types of activities are held there, along with times and days and whether there are unmet needs or capacity to absorb additional uses. Although we were not able to collect specific rental history for all sites, we did obtain an overview of the situation at each. These venues provide rooms that can accommodate 100 – 275 people. Kitchen facilities and/or catering are available. In most cases, reservations must be made well in advance in order to obtain a weekend time, particularly during the school year, with the exception of Elm Bank, which has a slow down in the colder months (December – March). Fees range from a few hundred dollars at the churches and school to over one thousand dollars at the Connors Retreat and Elm Bank. While it is possible to reserve these spaces for public or private functions, most took care to point out that priority goes to the church or school needs, and these needs can utilize a significant portion of the calendar.

DOVER SPACE EVENTS

In addition to surveying what is happening at current comparable great room spaces, the subcommittee also brainstormed a list potential activities and functions that could be held in a Dover Community Center great room, in order to determine any unmet needs:

- Dover Sherborn Education Fund Gala, Chickering Auction, Police / Fire annual dinner, other community fundraiser dinners and auctions
 - All are currently held at out of town venues.
- Dover Cub scouts annual dinner
 - Currently held in Medfield
- Town sports teams annual dinners
 - At least some held out of town
- Cultural exhibits – craft show, train show, art show

- Not happening or held out of town (Needham) or on reduced basis in town churches.
- Town-wide holiday events
 - Currently held at local church or outdoors with town house as back-up
- Entertainer performances – magician, music, puppet/mime, comedy, dance
 - These are held variously at the schools, library, Caryl, often with inadequate seating and performance area.
- Movie night – children and/or families, seniors
 - Not happening; this is something that could be added with new space.
- Teen center for weekends and vacations – live bands, dances, movies, entertainers, “hang out” spot
 - Not happening in Dover – What does Dover offer its teen / pre-teen youth to do in town?
- Private receptions and parties
 - Held in various places, including town public and private space and out of town; at least some of these may move to Great Room.
- Council of Aging functions, such as luncheons or meetings
 - Currently held at Caryl or Fireside Room in Town House; these rooms are considered too small.

Although we were able to identify a number of activities that might use Great Room space, the committee felt that it was important to note that most – though not all – of these functions have a current home, some in town and some out of town. The people of Dover have learned to make do with what is available, whether that means moving to an out-of-town location or using space that is smaller than desired, more “worn” than desired, lacks sufficient catering capacity and so on.

CONCLUSIONS THUS FAR

Thus, in terms of fulfilling a need that is not currently accommodated in some fashion by Dover space, the list is relatively short:

- Function space within Dover to house community activities that currently do not happen within the Dover community (such as dinners and youth evening programs)
- Space that can be used for consecutive days or weekends – the great room type space that exists in Dover can be used for a single day – it is generally difficult to secure a spot for weekday uses, Friday – Sunday reservations or consecutive weekends, as might be needed by theater or dance recitals or exhibit shows.
- Space for future community-identified needed/desired activities as the town continues to grow and add to its youth, adult and senior populations

The committee concluded that this exercise has not yet demonstrated an irrefutable need for a great room, but felt that a Dover Community Center Great Room would be utilized as Dover-related functions shifted from other locations, within Dover or otherwise, to the community center. Through discussion, the committee also thought that the diversity of the activities that we identified would not necessitate a “high-end” function room and that

a multi-purpose type room would be more practical, as it could accommodate these activities and could broaden the list of potential uses to include recreation / gym activities. The uses we identified are predominantly night and weekend type activities (which is when one might expect to draw such a large crowd in Dover), and as such, it is possible that new great room space could double for park & rec space for certain programs / times on weekdays or weekends.