

**Caryl Community Center Building Committee  
Report and Recommendations  
July 1, 2010**

**Background**

In the fall of 2001, the Dover School Committee consolidated all its elementary grades in one new building at the Chickering School site. The Board of Selectmen assumed responsibility for the care and custody of the Caryl School building by vote of the citizens at the 2002 Annual Town Meeting. Since then, it has been the policy of the Board of Selectmen to keep the building open for a variety of community uses, bringing in rental income wherever possible, and making only such repairs deemed essential, during the process of developing a town-wide consensus for the future of the building and site.

The following are the key milestones leading up to the formation and work of the current committee:

- **March 2002:** The Caryl Reuse Committee completed its report and recommendations for adaptive reuse of the Caryl building, prescribing extensive renovations to accommodate a mix of elderly housing and community use, at a cost of \$5.5M. That proposal was defeated at the 2002 Town Meeting.
  
- **April 2003:** Don Mills of Mills Whitaker Architects presented to the Board of Selectmen a Deferred Maintenance Study which listed maintenance issues that needed to be addressed and the probable costs of making those repairs over a 10-year period.
  
- **March 2004:** Architect Don Mills updated his previous report, providing the costs and building code implications of addressing the deferred maintenance issues in a single integrated project. This update also included additional items that could be bundled in a single project.
  
- **May 2004:** The Board of Selectmen formed the Committee to Study the Future of the Caryl School (CSFCS). Its report to the town, dated March 16, 2005, presented 6 options for the town to consider:
  1. Make basic repairs & maintain existing & alternative uses (cost range \$2.3m - \$4.8m).
  2. Renovate for current & alternative uses (cost range \$4.4m - \$8m).
  3. Tear down the building and build new for community and municipal use (cost range \$8.6m - \$12.2m)
  4. Sell for private development
  5. Lease for private development.
  6. Tear down and leave undeveloped (cost range \$300,000 - \$500,000)

The CSFCS report included the results of public opinion research based on extensive interviews with municipal and community leaders; and a town-wide survey (39% response rate) to assess citizen opinion regarding the future of the Caryl building and site.

- **May 2005:** The Selectmen formed the Dover Community Center Building Committee (DCCBC) and charged it with responsibility for “the strategic planning, design, and construction of one or more buildings to provide space for a variety of current and foreseeable community, civic, and municipal activities and uses.” Its work was to be divided into three specific phases:
  - Phase I: Strategic Plan
  - Phase II: Conceptual Design
  - Phase III: Final Design and Construction
  
- **May 2005 – September 2006:** The DCCBC completed Phase I and part of Phase II of its charge. As directed in its charge, it addressed a priority list of uses; a space program; and the financial and program implications of 1) full renovation, 2) hybrids of new construction and major renovation of specific portions of the existing building, and 3) completely new construction. Its *Preliminary Design Study for the Dover Community Center* recommended that a new building would best meet the long-term program needs of the Town. However, the estimated total project cost of \$18M (which included escalation costs for a 2008 construction date) was considered prohibitive during initial presentations to citizens, and the proposal was never brought before the voters at Town Meeting.

#### **Formation of the Caryl Community Center Building Committee and Subcommittees**

*(Note: In May 2009, the Selectmen voted to name the building The Caryl Community Center, and the building committee was renamed The Caryl Community Center Building Committee [CCCBC]. This name and acronym will be used for the following sections of this report, in order to distinguish the expanded committee and its work from the previous one.)*

- **June 2007:** The Selectmen amended their original charge to the DCCBC. The revised charge enlarged the committee and increased active citizen participation with the formation of four subcommittees to explore in greater depth the issues raised by citizens about the earlier community center proposal:
  1. **Alternative Sites Committee** was to explore the feasibility of meeting some or all of the needs identified by the CSFCS and DCCBC at sites other than the Caryl site, including a residential conversion, and other town-owned property such as Whiting Road, the Town House, the Library and schools.
  
  2. **Public-Private Partnership Committee** was to identify and explore the feasibility of entering into partnerships with non-municipal organizations to develop, finance and/or lease some or all of a facility on the Caryl site.

3. **Gym/Physical Activities Committee** was to research the need, usage and projected income from the physical activity spaces in the community center (i.e., full-size gym, dance & movement studio, and the multi-use activity rooms), and to provide information on the usage and availability of other gym space within Dover.
4. **Great Room Committee** was to research the need, usage, and projected income from a “great room” with a kitchen, including providing information on the availability of other similar spaces in Dover, and to present a thorough justification and vision for the great room’s use.

### **Work of Caryl Community Center Building Committee (CCCBC)**

**June 2007 - March 2008:** The subcommittees completed their assigned tasks and submitted the results of their research to the CCCBC (see appendix):

**Alternative Sites Committee** recommended that a Dover community center remain at its current Caryl School building site.

**Public/Private Partnership Committee** recommended:

- **that** the Caryl building and site should not be sold.
- **that if** the Caryl building/site was not to be used, the Town should look into leasing it.
- **that if** the entire building is not used by the town, the excess space should be leased for income purposes.

**Gym/Physical Activities Committee** concluded that a high school size gym must be a part of Dover’s community center and should be located at the same site.

**Great Room Committee** concluded that a large function room with character should be part of the community center.

The CCCBC reviewed and discussed these subcommittee reports, along with the reports of earlier committees. The committee approved and accepted the conclusions of each of the subcommittees.

### **Renovation Plan**

Taking into account the results of the CSFCS town-wide survey, the initial citizen reaction to the 2006 *Preliminary Design Study*, and the statewide and national economic downturn, the CCCBC determined to focus its efforts on a renovation plan for the Caryl building.

- **January 2009:** The Committee requested and received from Don Mills, of Mills Whitaker Architects, a report entitled “**Dover Caryl School – Renovation Items**” (see appendix). The report provided an updated list of renovation and upgrade items, along

with alternatives; and an order-of-magnitude budget for a) the separate components, and b) an integrated single project. It examined:

- Existing Conditions – including observation of the building and reviews of various past documents;
  - Renovation Issues – including review of the possible scope of renovating existing finishes and the building envelope where needed;
  - Building Systems Review – including review of code issues related to accessibility improvements, seismic upgrades, septic modernization and automatic fire suppression systems; and functional upgrades to mechanical, electrical and life safety systems;
  - Project Budgeting
  - Summary Report
- **March 2009:** Based on that document, Don Mills presented for consideration two versions of a renovation plan and the design and engineering costs associated with creating each one. (See appendix, **Dover Caryl School – Renovation Plan, Versions I and II.**)
- Version I would provide schematic drawings and thus the more reliable basis for accurate cost estimating; cost: \$170,000.
  - Version II would provide sufficient information for order-of-magnitude cost estimating but would not include design drawings; estimated cost: \$85,000.

The CCCBC preferred Version I, but felt it needed to continue to gather more information, as well as get a better sense of constituent support for various community spaces and programming, before it could go to Town Meeting with a request for funding.

- **March 2009 – January 2010:** The Committee's work continued on two fronts. The Building Subcommittee focused on the scope of a renovation project and considered the pro's and con's of the following scenarios:
- Upgrade all existing mechanical systems; upgrade the building to meet code requirements; upgrade bathrooms; and make cosmetic improvements.
  - Renovate as described above, plus add an athletic/gym facility, either as a stand-alone structure or included within the building envelope.
  - Demolish part of the building, renovate the rest, and add an athletic/gym facility, either a stand-alone structure or included within the building envelope.
  - Compare the cost and functionality of the first three scenarios to that of demolishing the entire existing building, and building new to include an athletic/gym facility.

Concurrently, the Program, Management and Operations Subcommittee focused on further updating and confirming the program needs of current and potential users. It also collected information from other community centers regarding their programming and facilities; their management and organizational structures; and their use policies and fee structures.

- **January 2010:** At the request of the Committee, Mills Whitaker Architects provided a conceptual drawing for the inclusion of a full-size gym within the 1931 section of the existing Caryl building.

### Conclusions

The Committee feels it now has enough information to move forward with the development of a plan to renovate the existing building.

- Plan options both with and without an athletic/gym facility to include renovation and/or new construction.
- Plan options with a partial or a full renovation.
- Estimated costs for all options.
- Scheduling scenarios for all options.

The issues we face are:

- When is the right time to ask the Town for funding to include design and schematic options along with estimated costs? The estimated design costs to create the plan are \$85,000 - \$170,000 (Versions I and II, March 4, 2009). **With all the information in hand, a future “building committee” will be ready to move quickly to Phase II.** It was determined that the 2010 Annual Town Meeting was not the time.
- The Committee has not sensed a strong community demand to develop a community center facility beyond what is currently offered in the existing Caryl building. What is there seems to be working for now. We now await further direction from the Board of Selectmen as to when to move to Phase II.

### Recommendations

- 1) Use the existing Caryl building as a community center. The Selectmen have renamed the building **The Caryl Community Center**. They have continued the current use of the building as a community center occupied by Parks & Recreation and the Council on Aging; paying tenants such as the Center for the Development of Children (formerly the Dover-Sherborn Child Development Center), Erin’s School of Dance, and Parent Talk; and community organizations such as the Dover Mothers Association, Dover Foundation, Open Fields, scouts, and garden clubs.

- 2) Designate operating and capital budget expenditures annually to maintain and upgrade the building and its internal spaces. It should meet the needs of the users and be safe, functional, and attractive for their use.
- 3) Understand that the mechanical systems have met their functional lifetime use. Their useful life is short, they are not energy efficient, and they could fail at anytime. When this happens, the Town will be faced with the decisions about whether to simply close the building, whether to replace only the failed system, whether to embark on more extensive renovations, or whether to build new.
- 4) Appoint a committee composed of representatives from the Board of Selectmen, Building Maintenance Department, Parks & Recreation, Council on Aging, and citizen volunteers, to advise the Selectmen on the operational, maintenance & upgrade aspects of the building to meet the community uses of the building.
- 5) Finally, we urge that prior to forming any future study or building committee, the Town make a commitment to seriously consider a capital expenditure that would fund renovation of the existing building and/or the construction of a new building to support the functionality of a community center. The Town has plenty of documentation as to what needs to be done and what estimated costs would be. The next step needs to be one of action.

We believe that the current and future users of the facility will help determine community support and interest in moving beyond the present maintenance stage.

Respectfully submitted:

Ford Spalding, Chairman  
Dave Billings  
Samantha Burman  
Jane Hemstreet  
Dick Malcom  
Alison Piper  
Geoff Sauter

Scott Seidman  
Nancy Simms  
Nancy Weinstein  
Kathy Weld  
Dana White  
Carol Lisbon, liaison, Board of Selectmen