

Town Meeting 2015 – Article 11 Remarks –

Slide #1 – Title Page

Mr. Moderator, fellow citizens: As Jim said, my purpose here is to provide a brief history – review for some, new for others – that will give voters a context for the Selectmen’s Facilities Upgrade Plan and the specific proposal before us tonight.

For 15 years, the Town has wrestled with the issue of what to do with the Caryl building and site once it was no longer used as a school.

Slide #2 – Background – 2002

First out of the box was a “big vision” proposal for 12 units of senior affordable rental housing on the left side as you face the building from Springdale Avenue, and mixed-community use space on the right side; a combination of all new construction for the housing, and minimal rehabilitation for the community space. This proposal was defeated at the 2002 Town Meeting.

At the same meeting, the Selectmen assumed the care and custody of Caryl from the Dover School Committee, and in so doing, inherited 10-plus years of deferred maintenance issues. They issued their charge: to use Caryl “as is”, making only minimal repairs as necessary, pending a permanent solution as to its best use.

Slide #3 – Background, cont’d – 2003 – 2007

In 2003, Selectmen commissioned a *Deferred Maintenance Study* which outlined a \$2.3 million, 10-yr. plan to address the much-needed improvements. At the time, both the Capital Budget Committee and the Warrant Committee questioned the wisdom of this incremental (some would say “bandaid”) approach and suggested that a one-time total renovation would produce a better result.

And so in 2004, the Selectmen requested and received an updated, single-project version of the plan, with a cost range of \$3.3 million to \$4.8 million, depending on whether certain options were included.

Faced with these numbers, the Selectmen called for further study, and formed the *Committee to Study the Future of the Caryl School*, charging it with conducting a more in-depth study of all possible options for the use of the Caryl building than had been done in the past. This Committee identified 6 potential options for the property; and conducted a comprehensive town-wide survey, as well as extensive interviews with all stakeholders, town officials, and community leaders, all of whom were encouraged to share their ideal vision for the Caryl building and site. The result was an extremely thorough and well-documented

report, including the types of spaces that would satisfy the program needs and demands expressed in the survey.

In 2006, the Dover Community Center Building Committee considered the findings of this previous study, costed out the various options, and ultimately recommended a facility of all new construction as the best solution to the use of the Caryl building and site, the one that would best meet the vision for community use, and the program and space requirements. This was the Big Vision, the Big Program, with the Very Big Price Tag of \$18.5M. It stalled in the roll-out stage, due primarily to that Very Big Price Tag, and never went to Town Meeting.

In 2007, the Building Committee's membership and scope of study were both expanded. This committee's report ultimately confirmed the previous committee's conclusions regarding program, space requirements, and the recommendation for new construction at the same Very Big Price Tag – and so it was never put to the voters.

Slide #4 – Background, cont'd – 2007 – 2011

Given the failure of three “big vision” projects, the Selectmen resumed their incremental approach to making necessary improvements, focusing on making the building safe, attractive, and user friendly.

At three consecutive Town Meetings – '07, '08, and '09 – voters overwhelmingly approved funding for a series of major roof and masonry repairs that were needed to restore the structural integrity of the building and seal its exterior to prevent further damage. Later – in 2011 – the underground oil tanks were replaced. These have been the only truly major capital outlays for this building since the Selectmen assumed control.

Slide #5 – Current Usage

Since 2007, the usage of the building has increased amongst users of all ages; the Council on Aging has consolidated all of its operations there; and the building has been renamed the Caryl Community Center to reflect its actual use.

This slide shows current usage by square footage and percent of total building space. Seventy-five percent is occupied by 2 Town departments and 3 tenants, all of whom have their own dedicated space. The three tenants have license agreements with the town for which they pay rent that substantially offsets the operating costs of the community center. The remaining 25% of the space is available for shared community use, and is being used by various community groups, including our theatre groups – Open Fields and Dover Foundation – for

rehearsals, the Dover Mothers' Association, scouts and garden clubs for meetings, and by individuals for private events such as birthday parties.

From the use statistics for all entities listed here, I can honestly say that several hundred Dover citizens of all ages, per week, fall, winter, and spring, use the Caryl Community Center for a variety of activities. The numbers have increased as improvements have been made. Virtually all the parking is in the rear of the center, and the majority of foot traffic is through the back entrance, so a casual "drive-by" on Springdale Avenue would most likely not give an accurate picture of the amount of activity taking place.

And so, over the years, as voters have spoken through their votes at Town Meetings, and a recession has come and lingered, the original big visions have been adjusted and have become very practical: To meet the clear need for space, space that is no longer available elsewhere in Town, our goal is to use the building we have, gradually bring it up to code, improve its functionality, upgrade its infrastructure to the level of other Town buildings, and make it a truly vibrant and welcoming community center for its hundreds of multigenerational users.

At this point in 2015, the Caryl Community Center faces the need for three important infrastructure improvements, which have been forecast in Capital Budget reports over the past several years and which are addressed in the Selectmen's new Facilities Upgrade Plan for the Caryl Community Center.

Now I would like to turn this presentation back over to Selectman Jim Dawley who will speak to the Plan and specifically the request in Article 11.

Thank you.