



FINAL REPORT  
OF THE  
STANDISH COMMUNITY BUILDING  
DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING COMMITTEE

VISION

To recommend to the citizens of Standish a multi-generational facility for all ages which will be self-supporting, with a minimal tax consequence.

Committee

Paul Mosley, Chair

Linda Brooks, Recreation Director

Claire Drew, Secretary

Elizabeth Edwards

Wayne Newbegin, Council

Janice Raymond

Jeffrey Richardson

Larry E. Simpson

Margaret Spencer, Council

Susan Walker

AUGUST 2008

## Committee Activities and Actions

Interest in a community center (c.c.) for Standish began in the late 1990's with the implementation of the Council/Manager form of government. The existing town hall was severely overcrowded and very inefficient. An unsafe and unhealthy working environment existed, especially in the Dispatch Center in the basement. This area was subject to flooding in heavy rains and had a dangerous mold infestation.

Consultants were employed by the Council to analyze the over-all condition and to make recommendations for remodeling, enlarging or moving to a new location. Their recommendation was to seek a new location due to water table, potential sewerage problems and lot size. The fire station on the same property needed enlargement due to size of new apparatus, and consideration to combine the station with the Sebago Lake Village Company was underway. The building at Sebago Lake Station was too small and on land leased from the Portland Water District. Combining the two would allow the town to view other areas of town in need of fire coverage with better insurance rates. This resulted in a new location for a Municipal Center which would also be a public safety building for EMS and the consolidation of the two engine companies.

What to do with the old town hall became the discussion topic in town. A community center was suggested by a group of interested citizens but was finally rejected because of the same reasons a new town municipal center was necessary. (Appendix 1) However, the thought of a community center grew and the emphasis shifted to a different location if the citizens approved.

Proceeds from the sale of the old town and fire station were approved by the Council on March 11, 2003 and were placed in a dedicated reserve fund for a community center. (Exhibit A). A vote by the Council on May 13, 2003 appointed a special Community Center Committee (Exhibit B) to determine what interest, if any, Standish citizenry had in such a center, and if so, what type of facility and programming they envisioned and would support. This Committee enjoyed the input from two very knowledgeable, teenage students appointed to the committee... a first for Standish.

June 2004 to April 2004

Gorham's Recreation Director, Cindy Hazelton, and South Portland's Director, Dana Anderson, met with the Committee to discuss the necessary steps and procedures to obtain citizen input and acceptance. This included potential mistakes which can be made. Overall, their theme was "this must be a community driven effort and not just that of the Committee."

Visits were made to Cape Elizabeth and South Portland to obtain ideas, good and indifferent, on any design, programming and operation of their facilities. These visits were very worthwhile.

These meetings and visits resulted after the Committee's first meeting on June 4 at which it was determined we needed some outside, professional advice to accomplish our mission and achieve our goals while meeting the citizens' desires and direction. Timing, resources, planning and management were topics discussed. The process leading to community support was a strong point with Dana.

Extensive work and thought went into the development of the telephone survey. (Appendix 2) Questions needed to be straightforward, concise and easy to present by those conducting the telephone survey. The survey was also placed on-line on the town's website. A mailing with a cost of \$709.44 was mailed to every Standish home introducing them to the project while seeking their input during, or outside of, the forthcoming telephone survey.

The Bonny Eagle Key Club assisted with the random telephone survey of nearly five hundred citizens which resulted in a very positive attitude for a center. Valuable demographics and opinions on existing and non-existing programs and facilities available within the town coupled with their desires for necessary programs and services were ascertained. Finally, whether they would be willing to financially support it was also addressed. With the exception of a T.V. room for the younger participants, there was overwhelming support for the vast opportunities a center might offer.

On April 11, 2004, the Council was presented with the report, results and conclusions of the survey along with Committee recommendations. (Exhibit C)

May 11 and September 14, 2004

The Council accepted the report of April 11, 2004 and unanimously agreed to appoint a new Community Building Development and Planning Committee. It was charged with recommending a location, a conceptual plan, and the estimated costs to construct, maintain and operate the facility. (Exhibit D and D-1)

May 2004 to August 2005

Preliminary locations, building designs and needs were thoroughly discussed and debated within the Committee, beginning with an elaborate list of every conceivable service or program which might be considered as part of the overall plan. Nothing was immediately "turned aside", and members were encouraged to "think outside of the box". A comprehensive list of Uses and Users was formulated. (Appendix 3)

Consideration was given to many possible locations immediately available to the Town. These included every parcel owned by the Town, land on either side of the Municipal Center and an offer by the Standish Kiwanis Club.

A "Statement of Needs" (Appendix 4) became a top priority especially for our architectural bidders. Another visit to South Portland followed by visits to Wiscasset and Skowhegan resulted in many beneficial thoughts concerning any plans for design and programming. Each visit offered different ideas, but all had some common denominators which we ultimately utilized in incorporating them into our plan. The greatest realization was the fact that the pool and fitness center were absolutely necessary if the center was to be self-supporting. This settled a division which had been troubling some members. The Wiscasset Center offered the best example for the Committee to use. The second greatest benefit was a compilation of "do's and don'ts" for any center development. Many of these were useful in our deliberations, and the remainder have been itemized and enclosed herewith. (Appendix 5) These should be reviewed and considered by any future committee appointed to implement this Report.

During this time period the Standish Kiwanis Club offered a portion of their land on Route 25 for a possible site. Considerable negotiations ensued but were unsuccessful, and the offer failed with mutual agreement. Both parties could not agree to a final Memorandum of Understanding (M.O.U.). (Appendix 6) The site and proposal had many benefits to both parties,

but several issues could not be resolved. Primary was the “right of first refusal” requested by the Town, but rejected by Kiwanis. This right pertained to the beach and the other buildings owned by the Club should they need to divest themselves of the asset. Several other factors influenced the decision to seek alternative sites. A center of town location was critical for voter approval.

September 13, 2005 to November 2005

Several meetings with Donald and Eleanor Boulter were held to discuss a portion of land that they owned. The parcel was approximately ten acres adjacent to the westerly side of the Municipal Center. The Boulders agreed to sell the land to the Town at the appraised value with the Town paying all costs for the appraisal and survey. The Council approved the recommendation to have the Town Manager obtain an appraisal and survey, which was to follow a Letter of Intent to Purchase by and between the Boulders and the Town. There were several other small contingencies concerning access to their back land which were not problematic. (Exhibit E and C-1) The appraisal provided by Lisa A. Carey, Beacon Appraisal Co. Inc., Scarborough, Maine estimated the real value to be One Hundred and Seven (107,000) Dollars. (Appendix 7) Subsequently the Boulders rejected the appraisal and declined any further negotiations.

November 2005

The Council upon the Committee recommendation voted four to two (one vacant seat) to authorize the Town Manager to negotiate a Purchase and Sales Agreement with James Cummings, Windham, Maine for an eight-acre parcel with the buildings thereon at the junction of Moody and Northeast Roads for \$325,000. This followed a Letter of Intent to Purchase subject to voter approval at the June 13, 2006 municipal election. Monies were to come from the Dedicated Reserve Fund for a Community Center derived from the sale of the old town hall and other land assets. The P&S Agreement was negotiated, written and executed by the Manager and Town Counsel, Kenneth Cole, Esquire (Appendix 8)

June 13, 2006

Standish voters approved the purchase of the Cummings property pursuant to the council order.

June to November 2006

Refinement and final draft of a Statement of Needs became the guiding factor for the firms bidding on the architectural design of the Center. Before this could be finalized, considerable discussion ensued on the size and type of pool, if any. Compromises were necessary on many designs, sizes and programming. All the bidders were very complimentary of the Statement of Needs and the efforts which went into it. It made their work considerably less complicated.

Five finalists were selected from competitive architectural firms submitting proposals pursuant to our Request for Proposal (RFP). Each made a formal presentation to the Committee and Council. Two were invited to return and answered a complex set of questions developed by the Committee. Both brought their Maine sub-contractors with them.

Numerical weights were given to specific portions of the Committee’s priority lists to assist in the final award. Every effort was considered to award the bid to a Maine firm (one of the

finalists) but the final award was given to a Boston firm which scored extremely high in the ratings and was deemed by far the best qualified and experienced to represent us.

November 14, 2006

Town Manager, Gordon Billington, upon Order from the Council (5 to 2) was authorized to execute a contract (Appendix 9) with Bargmann, Hendrie and Archetype, Inc. (B, H + A) of Boston, MA for a sum not to exceed \$70,000 with said amount to come from the previously mentioned Dedicated Reserve Fund for a Community Center. (Exhibit F) Assurances that all bid specifications were incorporated in the Contract was a concern of the Council along with the original \$75,000. bid. The final contract price resulted from negotiations with the Council with the major concern centering on the collateral amount earmarked for future educational efforts. (Exhibit G) The final plan was to be presented to the voters in November 2007, but this plan was not to be realized due to the magnitude of the project, problems encountered and the effort needed to have the proposal accurate and complete.

November 2006 to Present

Many meetings were held with Joel Bargmann and/or representatives from his firm to critique, formulate and approve a conceptual plan with all the ancillary needs to successfully fulfill our mission.

February 2007

Several committee members and Joel visited all of the present available meeting places reviewing their uses, sizes, etc. These included the Municipal Center, St. Joseph's College, Richville and Steep Falls Libraries, schools, churches, Kiwanis Club, Steep Falls Fire Station and the School House Arts Center. Considerable information derived from these visits was influential in the proposed design, function and size of the interior areas of the Community Center. (Appendix 10) It was, and still is, the desire of the committee not to interfere or offer services and programs in competition with those provided by any of these facilities. We especially do not wish to compete in any way with local businesses and non-profit organizations. A survey was sent to local businesses and to potential user organizations. The results revealed that many of the recipients were supportive of a community center. (Appendix 11)

May 2007

Final plans and details on the facility were nearing completion. Everyone was awaiting the arrival of spring so that delineation of the wetlands could be conducted. Once completed by B, H + A and their sub-contractor specialists, they made a recommendation to meet and discuss the evident wetland areas with Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). This was completed in June 2007. Their findings confirming the wetlands and some man-made vernal pools were communicated to the interested parties. Although man-made vernal pools and the small, existing wetlands were of no immediate concern to the DEP, they recommended a joint meeting on site with the Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) to discuss these potential hazards. (Appendix 12)

October 2007 and December 14, 2007

A joint meeting with all parties represented including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife (USF&W) was held on site to determine the site's suitability in October. They reconvened in December at the Municipal Center to discuss the results of the site walk and any possible remedies. (Appendix 13) Unlike DEP, the ACOE and especially the USF&W considered vernal pools a serious problem which needed to be dealt with through extreme setback requirements, mitigation on or off site or the purchase of land adjacent to the site which may or may not be suitable to allow use of the existing site.

Mitigation is the utilization of land on or off the site on which to develop similar wetlands and/or vernal pools thus allowing the mitigated site to be used. The Committee began to deliberate and explore these possibilities should negotiations with the ACOE and USF&W to use the site "as is" be unsuccessful.

It should be noted that vernal pools were not an issue in Maine until the Legislature in May 2007 passed legislation protecting vernal pools affecting certain wildlife habitat (mostly on the coast). This legislation took effect in September 2007 well after our project began and all the effort and monies were expended. Protection was given to the prairie shrimp, mole salamanders and tree frogs. Eggs from all these species were supposedly discovered by the USF&W representative.

At this time, the Council suggested we vacate the Moody Road site because they were opposed to mitigation for this property. The Committee was encouraged to seek other locations, although the Committee was opposed to this because it could mean starting the entire process over, and we wanted to further investigate possible mitigation.

October 30, 2007

A majority of the Council rejected the Committee's recommendation to a small change order in the Architect's Contract to spend one thousand dollars to perform a wetlands study on existing land behind the Municipal Center. This parcel contains about five acres, which is just about the amount necessary for a building and supportive parking. The 6 to 1 vote prevented this study although the amount had been agreed to by the architect. (Exhibit H)

January 8, 2008

On a four to three vote the Council ordered the Committee to cease any further use of the Moody Road site and to seek alternative locations. (Exhibit I) The Order rationalized that any site should be large enough to require further outdoor recreation facilities, and the current site could not accommodate this requirement without substantial mitigation. This appears to be a belated requirement for any site. It had never been a prerequisite for any parcel, although the committee acknowledges that any site with excess acreage would be a future potential asset. Factually, mitigation of the Moody Road site might allow the entire eight acres to be used for all types of recreation. This would meet the Council's requirement. In reality there probably are very few, if any, potential parcels without wetlands and/or vernal pools. All might need some form of mitigation.

January 22, 2008

Other sites were offered by private landowners but were subsequently set aside for several reasons. A proposal from the Twombly family on Route 25 had previously been rejected for a town hall due to extreme wetlands and a safety issue involving access from the middle of the hill with poor visibility. Another property on the Oak Hill Road from Peter Busque was deemed too rural and lacking necessary amenities. The third from Mark and Gail Plourde on Northeast Road adjacent to George E. Jack School had no price tag and involved a nice residence. The site with eight acres was long and narrow, presenting problems with building size, parking and setbacks.

The Town owns acreage on the Boundary Road nearly across from the Steep Falls Elementary School, and this was given very serious consideration for mitigation possibilities for the Moody Road location. This parcel is very wet, borders the rear of properties on the east side of Route 113 in Steep Falls, abuts the abandoned railway tracks and is the site of the reclaimed town landfill.

Previous consideration by a former Council to make this parcel available to the Departments of Conservation and Inland Fisheries and Wildlife were unsuccessful for very important factors which have to be considered by State agencies. It was offered to the Gorham Land Trust. They reviewed it and met with the Council but eventually rejected it for reasons other than its suitability for a conservation area. Ideally this is an excellent property to put into a Conservation or Land Trust.

A majority of the councilors are vehemently opposed to any mitigation efforts for the Moody Road site and refused to consider this parcel for mitigation purposes. Whereas it is town-owned and might allow for 100% use of the Moody Road site for which the Town has a \$400,000 investment, the committee supports further exploration.

January 30, 2008

A letter was received by Todd Delaney, Secretary for the Kiwanis Club, stating that the "board of directors voted unanimously to offer as we did two years ago some of our property to support efforts to create a community center. We do this at this time due to concerns over Moody Road property although we hope these can be resolved... if they cannot then to show our support we want to allow the town an alternative site to consider." (Appendix 14)

March, 2008

Even with the new directive from the Council the Committee fulfilled its previous assurance to the public and Council to conduct public hearing throughout the Town to obtain input, good, bad or indifferent on the overall plan. This was in addition to previous public hearings held along with the Council.

Four meetings were held at the Municipal Center, St. Joseph's College and the Steep Falls Fire barn. The two at the Municipal Center were televised live with the opportunity to take questions by telephone. These were on the Government Access Channel # 5 and were replayed later. One was in the evening and one on Saturday a.m. Weather became a factor, and attendance was low. Most calls and participants were in support of the proposal. Several good questions were asked with more positive than negative input. No comments affected the design. Several were excellent and should be implemented in the final business plan and programming. Overall the forums did not provide adequate feedback.

Projected costs to construct the facility were presented to the public for approximately \$8,678,000 with soft costs of \$890,000 included. This figure, especially the soft costs, could be reduced, and based on the current economy and market conditions, the overall construction costs and bids could be substantially lower.

Figures were presented based on an \$8 million bond to be voted upon by the voters in a referendum question. This amount also includes furnishings but does not consider any potential grants, donations, sponsorships, fund raisers, etc.

Examples of tax consequences for the construction bond (no taxes after three years for the operation) were developed. These used current property values at \$1,058,388,875 for the fiscal year 2008-2009 not including new construction and a projected mill rate of \$10.00/\$1000 valuation which is slightly higher than actual.

A \$250,000 home's taxes would increase \$140. for a twenty year bond or \$112.50 for a thirty year at a 3.50% interest rate which is current through the Maine Bond Bank. This amounts to \$11.67 and \$9.38 per month respectively or \$.31 a day. Total principal payment on a twenty year bond is \$562,889 and \$434,971 for thirty years. (Appendix 14)

Different scenarios were put forth on the business plan and its sample fee schedules. Good input was accepted in this area especially as it might relate to resident vs. non-resident, free and fee-based usage and times available. The sample which has been developed is very conservative and less than other similar types of programs and facilities in the area. With better-than-projected participation these operational income projections could be higher resulting in lower fees and/or a quicker time for the facility to be self-supporting. (Appendix 16)

#### March 2008

Following several conversations with DEP staff and media reports, we were contacted by, and eventually met with Donald E. Murphy, Wetland Scientist with New England Forestry Consultants, Inc. and the Small Woodlot Owners of Maine (SWOOM) to discuss the wetlands and vernal pool issues, the current laws and regulations and any and all types and possibilities of mitigation efforts and opportunities available to the Town. He had visited the town-owned sites and looked at maps and aerial views of the possibilities. He was very intrigued with the Boundary Road parcel and felt it offered an ideal opportunity for mitigation and that we should explore it.

He followed up his meeting with a written proposal (Exhibit J) for \$1500. to undertake a study in the spring of the existing wetlands and vernal pools on this site if this parcel was to be used for mitigation purposes. This was not acceptable to the Council. Several counselors indicated use of this parcel would remove a very valuable parcel from Town which in the future might be sold to a developer for considerable monies to be used for mitigation purposes if needed for a large development of any type.

#### March 2008

The Maine Legislature recognized the problems brought forth by the 2007 Legislation and amended the law, redefining the protected species and the definition of vernal pools. The latter could be of prime importance to the Town no matter what future efforts it might take in any development. Pools in Southern Maine which dry up before July 15 of each year are exempt from this law. It is believed our property meets this new definition, but it is currently uncertain if the ACOE or USF&W will honor it. (Exhibit K)

#### March 2008 to Present

The Committee acknowledges it has met all the directives presented in the original Order and that its mission is complete.

It affirms the final conceptual plan, its recommended location, the projected costs and the suggested sample business plan for a Standish Community Center as presented by BH+A.  
(Appendix 17)

A Final Report was drafted, edited and finalized.

August 2008

Final report presented to the Citizens of Standish and their Council for its acceptance.

Complete documentation of all correspondence, orders, plans and other pertinent documents pertaining to this Report are on file at the Standish Municipal Center.

## Summary

Since the adoption of a Manager/Council form of government the idea of a Standish community center has been under consideration through several Council appointed special committees.

Community centers provide a place for leisure activities which enriches the social, physical, educational, cultural and general well being of the community and its people. They provide extensive recreation programs for large numbers of people, regardless of age, sex, race, creed, social or economic status. Wholesome recreation is needed by all people, no matter what their age, and contributes greatly to their every day life. Having a community center in our town with all the varieties for use that the citizens and organizations of Standish have suggested would allow for leisure to be both satisfying and enriching. Opportunities for recreation of all types and a building that allows these activities to take place all year long are rewarding and essential for personal and social development between persons and groups of all ages.

The initial Community Center Study Committee in support of this concept, met with Cindy Hazelton, Gorham's Recreation Director and South Portland's Recreation Director, Dana Anderson, and visited the Cape Elizabeth and South Portland Community Centers. This resulted in a plan to obtain citizen input and acceptance of a Community Center for Standish. A comprehensive telephone survey was drafted and conducted with nearly five hundred citizens to determine their interest in a Center, the types of services they envisioned and whether they would financially support it. The results were very positive and led to a new, specially appointed, Standish Community Building and Planning Committee to further explore the concept.

This Committee began its work in October 2004. Its mission was to recommend a proposed site, develop a conceptual design, develop construction costs and submit a suggested sample business plan for the operation and maintenance of a facility.

Early in its deliberations a Vision Statement ensued as follows: "To recommend to the citizens of Standish a multi-generational facility which will be self-supporting with a minimal tax consequence."

Visits were made to South Portland, Wiscasset and Skowhegan Community Centers, where valuable information was obtained. Following these visits a compilation of "Uses and Users", list of "Do's and Don'ts" and a "Statement of Needs" was developed to assist in the planning process.

Many potential sites were explored including all town-owned land, abutting parcels to the Municipal Center and an offer from the Standish Kiwanis Club. Unfortunately negotiations with the Boulsters and Kiwanis Club failed. An eight acre parcel at the junction of Moody and Northeast Roads became available. A Purchase and Sales Agreement for \$325,000 with James Cummings was negotiated and executed upon the Committee and Council recommendation by the Town Manager and Corporate legal counsel subject to voter approval. This purchase was

authorized by the voters in June 2006 with proceeds from a Dedicated Reserve Fund for a Future Community Center.

Five architectural firms were selected to present their proposals to the Committee and Council. Two were invited to return and Bargmann, Hendrie and Archetype, Inc., Boston, MA was the unanimous choice. Every effort was given to select a Maine firm but none could provide the expertise and experience necessary. All the sub-contractors to the architect were from Maine.

Many hours were spent with Joel Bargmann and/or his associates to develop a conceptual design of the interior and exterior including types of rooms, sizes and programming for their use. Many thoughts and discussions were had, oftentimes leading to a compromise for unanimous committee support. This was especially evident with the pool, fitness center, all purpose area, gymnasium and the walking track above it.

The project was delayed due to wetland and vernal pool issues requiring spring time studies of the site and subsequent meetings with D.E.P., the Army Corp of Engineers and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Agency. This issue might be rectified with mitigation procedures either on or off the site. Off site mitigation using town-owned land on the Boundary Road is a possible solution. However, mitigation for the Moody Road lot does not have approval of a majority of the Council.

After several years and many hours of volunteer efforts and expenses, the Committee believes it has satisfactorily met the initial Council directives and reached its final conclusions and recommendations.

We conclude and recommend that the proposed Moody Road site is best suited for the Community Center for many positive reasons. Further, the Boundary Road parcel should be utilized for mitigation purposes potentially allowing complete use of the eight acres on the Moody Road lot. The conceptual design, costs and sample business plan developed by BH+A should be accepted and presented to the electorate as soon as possible. A referendum for a bond not to exceed \$8 million should be presented to the voters. We propose a 37,000 square foot building with net usable area of 34,500 square feet with a therapeutic, four lap pool and space, full gymnasium with a divider providing two side courts, a fitness center, a walking track above the gym, other rooms as designed and adequate parking in the front if possible. A new Committee or expansion of this current committee to oversee the construction and implementation of this Report is essential. Except for the payment of the construction bond, and possible operational costs for the first three-five years the community centers should be self-supporting through various financial activities including but not limited to grants, sponsorships, donations, fundraisers and certain user fees.

The Community Center Committee thanks the people of Standish for their support and suggestions making it possible for our members to complete the task that the Town assigned us.