



**TOWN OF NEWTOWN**  
**Fairfield Hills Master Plan Review Committee**  
**MINUTES**

**The Fairfield Hills Master Plan Review Committee held a Meeting on January 22, 2019**

**At the Senior Center, 15 Riverside Road, Sandy Hook CT 06482**

*These minutes are subject to approval at the next meeting.*

**Present:** Deborra Zukowski, Neil Chaudhary, Gary MacRae, Jeffery Jorgensen, Chandravir Ahuja, Bob Bowen, Rob Sherwood

**Absent:** Doug Smith, Robert Rau, Bryan Roth

**Public Attendance (*speakers*):** Ned Simpson – 42 Watkins Dr., Walt Motyka – 5 Kent Rd, Bryan Atherton – 7 Black Walnut Dr., Charles Gardner – 47 Walnut Tree Hill Rd., David Landau – 13 Wiley Ln., Jennifer Landau – 13 Wiley Ln., Melinda Reynolds – 19 Cemetery Rd.

**Also Present:** Bryan Atherton - Senior Advisor, Coldwell Banker Commercial NRT, Phil Clark - owner & president Claris Construction, Christal Preszler – Deputy Director of Planning for Economic and Community Development, Wes Thompson – Economic Development Commission Chair, Kim Chiappetta - Clerk

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m.

**Approval of Minutes**

Chair Deb Zukowski asked for an approval of the minutes.

Neil Chaudhary moved to delay the approval of the January 9, 2019 minutes to the next meeting. Jeff Jorgenson seconded. Motion passed with all in favor.

**New Business**

***Current and potential uses related to recreation and town services: Public Input***

**Write-in from Melinda M Reynolds – 19 Cemetery Rd.:**

Chair Deb Zukowski began the meeting by reading a write-in from Melinda M. Reynolds expressing her vision for the Fairfield Hills campus which included walking trails, arts, recreational sports, agriculture & gardens, and land bank for future municipal needs. She also expressed that she is not convinced more retail is necessary when there are existing vacancies in town. (See attachment A).

Deb then shifted the topic to public transportation coming through town and the possibility of the route including Fairfield Hills. Ned Simpson highlighted that the Healthy Community Effort did a survey of around 800 residents and the problem of transportation was highlighted. The Age Friendly Livable Community initiative also highlighted the same problem with a lack of transportation. There is interest to have a loop from the Borough into Sandy Hook. The Age-friendly initiative is trying to quantify needs and alternatives. Bryan Atherton said

that public transportation is very important as an economy or market grows. He gave an example of a successful company he is currently working with to find a location for 220 employees where there is access to public transportation. Christal explained that the bigger issue is public transportation funding, more than bus stop. Neil informed the group that he participated in the Age Friendly Livable Community workshop and also learned that the funds are not available for initiatives like movable stops. A HART representative at the Legislative Council workshop said no funds there. Wes also brought up Newtown's large geographical area and the lack of densely populated areas adding difficulty in determining bus stop locations. Walt Motyka asked if it would be beneficial to give additional funding to the existing HART bus for expansion. Deb explained that the HART bus requires a pick-up be scheduled in advance. Mike recommended first identifying where the major service is required. Deb noted that town leaders and other volunteers have been in discussion regarding the HART bus doing a loop. Ned mentioned that should FFH eventually include a bus stop, the roads must be designed to allow for buses to maneuver around the property as needed.

***Sports recreation – more, just enough, or fewer:***

Deb asked the group if there was any input regarding the amount of sports recreation on the campus. Christal asked the group to keep in mind there is also passive recreation that does not require facilities or courts where people enjoy things like going for walks. (I.e. Recreation is not just a building or fields, it is also a place.) There were no comments from the group.

***Commercial, mixed use (housing over commercial), and housing: Public Input***

Medical Mini Campus (Ned Simpson – 42 Watkins Dr.):

Ned Simpson presented a concept of a Medical Mini Campus on the Fairfield Hills Campus. (See attachment B). He explained the connection to the presentation was the Friends of Newtown Seniors (FONS) who are working on the Age Friendly Livable Communities Initiative which considers 8 domains, one of which is health and health services. The approach for the campus is to designate a plot that can be made into a medical facility and go out to the regional health systems to obtain a clinical partner, and afterward look for developers. Ned highlighted the location being close to i-84 and route 25 and that the land is workable, the aging population, and the aging physicians in town who will soon be retiring. A health campus is an economic power driver. Micro-hospitals are a growing development out of California that are moving eastward. A 2017 survey suggested 4% of hospitals in country were working on opening up micro hospitals. The Medical Mini Campus could include internists, diagnostic radiology, urgent care hours and provide training. The request is to make this a town priority.

Neil asked Christal if this presentation fits the campus and the concept of setting aside 8 -18 acres as a short-term plan. Christal answered that medical is already an approved use on campus and the Master Plan already has an area outlined for commercial use that can be earmarked for medical. The key is to have a plan that is fluid, but concrete in identify parcels. Walt Motyka said that during his prior term on the Fairfield Hills Authority they had to ensure proposals followed the requirements outlined in the Master Plan. Wes mentioned that there is another part of the original Fairfield Hills property outside of the campus that includes 25-28 acres, with 5-8 acres the town could sell, that could be an option. (6 Commerce Dr.) Bryan Atherton expressed that the presentation was great, but he questions if the demand exists for this type of medical facility. Newtown is not a market of population growth. He further explained that medical offices are located off of exit 9 because that touches more towns with denser populations. Gary noted that density has come up a number of times in discussions, and then the group discussed changes in the medical care service industry over the years. Jeff questioned if the presentation required the town to perform the outreach and who would be doing this work. The group discussed past proposals for medical on the Fairfield Hills campus and exit 9 medical buildings. About 10 years ago, several hospitals looked at Fairfield Hills, but pulled out due to business strategy issues, e.g.,

competition with physician practices. The business strategy has changed in last decade. Wes added that the medical was moved to exit 9 because of added costs due to existing buildings.

Walkable Business and Cultural District (Baxter Hankin – 16 Greenleaf Farms Rd, presented by proxy):

Deb presented to the group architectural drawings that were posted on the Facebook page “Newtown Neighbors Unite” by Baxter Hankin who is a Newtown resident currently attending Syracuse University for architecture. She noted the post was extremely well-received by many members of the group, and that many suggested something similar at Fairfield Hills. Although the drawings depicted a high-density a concept for the Church Hill/Queen Street area that would likely appeal to younger citizens, Deb used the drawings to get the group thinking about possibilities of the concept on the Fairfield Hills campus. The concept included commercial, retail, offices and housing, and outdoor spaces where people could walk or meet. Deb showed the group before and after drawings which illustrated the vision for the area. (Selected images are included in attachment E.) In the presentation, Baxter notes: “If this town center is to be built, it should be built in phases, not all at once. This decreases the risk of such a project, and allows the town to incrementally gauge how much demand there is for new construction on this scale. Additionally, it is critical that it is composed of small, irregular, historically inspired buildings that conform to slightly irregular narrow streets with sidewalks. This is precisely what creates the village-like character and economic driving force of historic New England towns. Additionally, public spaces must be included to give people a place to gather and relax.

Parking must be moved to the peripheries of the downtown, so that it does not infringe on the character and walkability of the town center. This parking should ideally be in parking garages in order to get the most value per acre out of the land in the center of town, and to maximize the amount of parking per acre. Some parallel parking on the streets for shorter visits to the downtown can be useful as well.

A town center of this sort is most possible through partnerships between the town, local real estate developers, and land owners. This has been done to create the town center of Storrs, CT, for example. The town provides the vision for the various developers to then each build their piece of the puzzle. The new town center benefits both developers and the town: profits per acre increase, and the tax base increases.

To ensure this sort of development more organically in the future, zoning is a useful tool. Form-based zoning codes can be implemented to ensure that new construction contains parking in the rear, and that buildings go up to the edge of the sidewalk and adjacent buildings, creating a more vibrant and walkable downtown with a village-like feel. This sort of place has increased economic activity, because people are more likely in such an area to visit more often and walk between multiple businesses during the same trip, especially if spending time and walking in this area is enjoyable.

In addition, housing is essential. If housing is built, the development can become a vibrant, complete community, with enough local residents to support new businesses. New office space may help this vision succeed as well. If the project does not include housing, the development may act like a mall that steals tenants from other buildings in town.”

Other slides gave examples where areas like this exist including Westport and Storrs among others. (Also in attachment E.) Deb recognized this type of project would raise questions regarding the aquifer recharge capability and would require further research, perhaps leading to a smaller, less dense version. Baxter’s initial thoughts, as provided by his presentation, include “This plan is designed for the area around the intersection of Church Hill Road and Queen Street. This is done to take advantage of the development already existing in this area. If the development is done here, it is easier for new retail and office spaces to thrive, based on the larger number of people who live nearby, the people who work in office areas such as Dental Associates, and people already a walking distance away on errands such as grocery shopping. The grocery stores in this area are especially helpful for the development of new housing, in terms of convenience for new residents who want to live in a walkable community. If developed in this area, this plan allows new residents the option to walk to the

grocery store. However, this location is difficult for creating this type of downtown, because it requires unanimous collaboration between developers of many adjacent properties.

It is more difficult in some ways to create a new walkable town center development from scratch in an area such as Fairfield Hills, because there is almost no existing housing or retail in this area to act as something to draw people in during the transition period when only the first few buildings have been built and are being rented out. This does not mean that Fairfield Hills is a bad location for this sort of masterplan. The advantages of this site include the location of the town hall, the walking path through the woods, a brewery, sports facilities, etc. In addition, Fairfield Hills has the advantage of town ownership, which gives Newtown more control over the final outcome of this downtown development. However, the disadvantages of a site such as Fairfield hills should be kept in mind and should be a source of some caution and careful planning.”

Write in from Kimberly O'Connor-Shellman – 12 Grand Place (attachment C):

Deb read a write-in from Kimberly O'Connor-Shellman who wrote that she has dreamed about Fairfield Hills since moving to town 10 years ago, and would love to see a market place that would contains artisanal vendors, coffee shops, etc. housed in a large open-air type market. This type of area would open the opportunity for an indoor farmers market. She continued to highlight the potential to provide a place for residents to meet, high school students to gather, and a tourist attraction. Deb noted that an artisanal market would be a regional draw if done well since there is none in the area, but also reiterated Bryan's point that you cannot simply build it and expect people to come.

Deb added that an artisanal market could be a regional draw. Communities on Facebook tend to be younger than in a physical community. The commenters may be more representative of those 50 and younger than 65 and older.

Charlie Gardner– 47 Walnut Tree Hill Rd:

Mr. Darton told everyone that he was impressed with number of positive comments Baxter received in Facebook for his concept drawings. He continued to say that Baxter put together compelling images on how the area could look, although it is difficult to conceptualize in reference to area covered. Mr. Motyka informed the group that when he was on the Fairfield Hills Authority that they put together a design guide which documented the requirements to keep the aesthetics of the campus. He further noted that there must be a balance between money spent by the town to maintain and develop the campus, and driving seniors out of town who can no longer afford the taxes. The group continued to discuss high density and the fact that there needs to be a demand.

Bryan notes that the success of the post shows that a picture is worth a thousand words. Walt continues with the concern that allowing any housing could 'open a door' to more extensive housing and so loose the integrity of the sight. Jeff shared his experience in Texas with the development of "micro-cities." This could change the dynamics of a town like Newtown. Missing a regional and cohesive view of how Newtown fits. Complication right now is that this is public land. Developers prefer working with private land owners, not government bodies.

Phil Clark – Owner Claris Construction:

Deb introduced Phil Clark to the group. Phil began by introducing himself as the owner of Claris Construction and complimenting Baxter's drawings. He explained that Claris has an office in Charlotte, N.C. where micro-towns are built. Being a former member of the Fairfield Hills Authority (FHA), Phil spoke of the Fairfield Hills Design Guidelines and how it informs the developer of the rules of the campus. Mr. Motyka also noted that it helps the developer plan their budget. Deb asked Phil's opinion of the micro medical facility, higher density mixed use and artisanal market. Phil informed everyone that Claris built the medical mile at exit 9 which is still

partly vacant although it is in a prime area. He then explained a presentation that Claris brought to the town for a development on the Fairfield Hills campus that would contain retail, like ice cream shop, on the first floor, offices on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor and apartments on the third floor. The apartments would have been affordable in an effort to keep youth in town. Phil noted that there was much opposition and that it was determined the project was not worth the challenge. Walt explained that there were constraints to this presentation. Jeff asked for further clarification of the constraints. Walt explained that earlier on there were so many constraints in place that developers would only come to Newtown to build homes. Phil says that Newtown is more open to development now. He continued to describe the presentation detailing the plan would include a fountain and gazebo. The group then discussed the need for a housing component in any commercial development to make it work and the opposition to it that exists in town. It will take private developers to make the property work. Neil noted that it is an assumption to say that the people who speak out are a vocal minority. It is unknown whether or not the small vocal group is representative of the remainder of the town. Deb says that the 2010 Master Plan Review Committee did an extensive survey that included trying to gauge the public's view about housing on FFH. It would be interesting to ask the questions again and see if there has been a change in perception. Walt is concerned that any type of housing means more kids and more taxes. Those struggling with taxes may support housing, but only if it is age-restricted. Wes says there is a state study that shows that high density housing also has minimal impact on the school. Neil asked if the study results apply to more rural communities with above average school systems. Wes said that the apartments tend to work as a pipeline to home ownership within the same community.

Chand asked if the economic landscape relating to commercial development at Fairfield Hills has changed over the last decade. Phil said office segment is very weak. Wes asks if the bigger the project, then the bigger developers would be more interested. There are big investors looking for larger-scale developments at this time. Concerns were raised with ensuring recommendations for development on campus consider other areas of Newtown to ensure that there is an overall benefit for the town, as opposed to just movement of business from one place to another. Phil says that added people would address that. Jeff noted that when visiting other areas, like those mentioned in Baxter's presentation, it is all about density. He continues by say that the committee should look into zoning restrictions that might limit density if the town wants Fairfield Hills to be an economic driver. Or, does the town want a park? Jeff asked Phil what a private land owner thinks about the town giving a \$1.99/year lease, and competing with commercial property. Conversation continued with the overall negotiation. Bryan said there were other costs that developers have to handle, like fixing the sewer and razing buildings at Fairfield Hills. As long as the negotiation results in a level playing field there shouldn't be the animosity from other property owners. Bryan shared information compiled by Rutgers about housing and school-age children. The number of children increases with 3 bedroom units.

Melinda mentioned reviewing the original Becker and Becker plans from the mid 1990's and noted that there was extensive housing. The current discussion seems like a rehash of that type of thing. Deb said that the developments from that time period included extensive single family homes, with 4 bedrooms that would likely have driven up the school age population. Melinda said that apartments over retail where the apartments drive the retail is a risk. You have to convince people that it will be aesthetically pleasing without hurting existing retail space or sit there empty.

Bryan told everyone that industrial and office drives demand for residential, and residential drives demand for retail. Shopping was once focused around the home but has shifted to around where people work. Plan retail, mixed-use, housing, and destination components need outside people coming in. Melinda thinks that mix-use is more palatable than a high-rise apartment building. Chand noted the many comments that density is a driver, and asked if given the layout of the campus would it be viable to do both micro medical and apartments. Neil reminded Committee members of a comment in the January 9<sup>th</sup> meeting that it would require 200 apartments to make the cost of demolishing a building worthwhile, and asked Phil and Bryan if this is accurate. Bryan explained that when a feasibility analysis, regarding taking down a building, is done the town must consider the

sewer use charge, retail expenditures, motor vehicle taxes and property taxes that are revenue generators. Neil clarified that his comment was focusing on developer taking down the buildings. Wes reiterates that it will be different if one “thinks big” as opposed to “thinking small.” Phil explained that the cost of money must also be considered. Back when Claris presented the interest rate was lower. He thinks it may be more in the 100 range, but has to “run the numbers” to be sure.

Deb said she has read there are many demographic forces going on such as millennials, and on-line shopping driving brick & mortar stores to go away. People now look for businesses that provide an experience. She asked if this sounds like a reasonable trend. Bryan pointed out malls that contain more food and restaurant experiences, and some that contain theme park components. There is still need for retail, but retail will continue to shrink so it must be experience based.

Mr. Gardner asked given the campus is publicly owned, how practical is owned single family housing. Deb replied that the committee is taking everything into consideration and one issue they are looking at is if the town can sell the land. It would likely be needed for single family homes. We, as a committee, would have to assess if there would be value gained for the loss of control. Phil asked if there was a demand for single family housing. Bryan replied that a feasibility analysis would need to be done. David Landau explained the cost of building compared to the sale price.

#### **Public Participation:**

See New Business.

#### **Communications:**

##### **LeReine Frampton:**

Deb told members of a communication from LeReine Frampton in which Mrs. Frampton explained the town had already voted that there would be no housing on the Fairfield Hills campus so housing is absolutely off the table. Neil asked if it were possible to obtain the counts of this vote. Three other points LeReine raised were: 1. the fairness to both the housing occupants and the community visitors to the campus, 2. the liability (example: campus resident is injured slipping on ice), 3. parking.

#### **Liaison Reports:**

Deb told members that Doug Smith will be meeting with the Director of the Community Center, Matt Ariniello, to discuss how the community center will fit in on property.

Gary attended First Selectman’s senior listening session and distributed an article from the Newtown Bee. (Attachment D)

#### **Discussion of Future Agenda Items:**

Deb told Committee members that the Board of Ed is looking into a regional educational program and are considering Newtown Hall for its location. This program would be for children who are currently being bussed out of the school district, and for children who reside outside of town to be bussed in. Deb will be talking with BOE Monday, February 11<sup>th</sup>.

Deb noted that the research portion of the process is now completed with the exception of a few loose ends.

Neil proposed "Development of a questionnaire" be added on the next agenda.

**Adjournment:**

With no further business, Chand made a motion to adjourn. Neil seconded and the meeting was adjourned at 9:19 p.m.

*Respectfully submitted,  
Kimberly Chiappetta, Clerk.*

# Attachment A

1/22/2019

Town of Newtown Mail - Submissions for Discussion tonight



Kimberly Chiappetta <[kimberly.chiappetta@newtown-ct.gov](mailto:kimberly.chiappetta@newtown-ct.gov)>

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## Submissions for Discussion tonight

1 message

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**Deborra Zukowski** <[debz.newtown.ct@gmail.com](mailto:debz.newtown.ct@gmail.com)>  
To: Kimberly Chiappetta <[kimberly.chiappetta@newtown-ct.gov](mailto:kimberly.chiappetta@newtown-ct.gov)>

Tue, Jan 22, 2019 at 11:34 AM

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Melinda M. Reynolds via Newtown CT** <[cmsmailer@civicplus.com](mailto:cmsmailer@civicplus.com)>  
Date: Tue, Jan 15, 2019 at 10:58 AM  
Subject: Form submission from: Contact Deborra Zukowski  
To: <[debz.newtown.ct@gmail.com](mailto:debz.newtown.ct@gmail.com)>

Submitted on Tuesday, January 15, 2019 - 10:58am

Submitted values are:

Your Name: : Melinda M. Reynolds  
Your e-mail address: [mmmreyn@gmail.com](mailto:mmmreyn@gmail.com)  
Subject: Expressing my opinion regarding FFH to the Committee  
Message:

Please let me know if you receive this and, if so, please distribute to all members of the Committee. Thank you.

January 15, 2019

Dear members of the Master Plan Review Committee:

Thank you for inviting the public to attend the January 9, 2019, meeting of the Fairfield Hills Master Plan Review Committee. The presentation given by Chris Hottos highlighting the difficulties that exist at FFH, from a commercial developer's perspective, was thorough and logical.

I have been a Newtown taxpayer since 1988 and I would like to express my support for the following uses of the Fairfield Hills Campus:

- Open space, walking trails, horseback riding trails
- Musical, visual, and performing arts interests
- Recreational sports
- Agriculture and gardens
- Land bank for future municipal needs

I am in favor of continuing to demolish all non-viable buildings on the Campus. I am not in favor of high-rise, apartment-style housing, nor am I in favor of commercial development. When I see retail space in our town sitting empty, I am not convinced adding more is necessary.

Thank you for volunteering.

Sincerely,

Melinda Reynolds  
[19 Cemetery Road](#)  
Newtown, CT



## Newtown CT Fairfield Hills Plan Review Medical Mini Campus

January 2019

1

## Pursue Establishment of A Mini Medical Campus at Fairfield Hill

**Explore the opportunity**

- Designate an area of 6 to 18 acres within Fairfield Hills for medical facilities
- Hold discussions with regional health system regarding how they can meet their population health obligations with medical facilities on land provided by the Town of Newtown at Fairfield Hills
- Seek support from Newtown developer(s) to be part of the project

2

## Advantages of FFH For a Mini Medical Campus

- Market exists for health services
- Location, location, location
  - I 84 Exit 11
  - Rt 25
- Proximity to Emergency Services
- Visibility not critical for medical facilities
- Relatively level land – Low site prep costs
- Land could be “given” to the project and still be a short and long term financial benefit to Newtown
- Health System’s need for larger service population

3

## Health Trends Facing Newtown

- Newtown needs to be pro-active regarding health providers in Town
- Aging population which has increasing need of medical care
- Physicians with offices in Newtown are aging
- Most Newtown residents get their health care in neighboring communities
- Transportation a major problem is senior health coverage
- Newtown not in Primary Service area for Regional Health System
  - Western CT Health Network (merging with Health Quest)
    - Yale New Haven Health
    - Hartford Healthcare
    - Griffin Health
  - “Newtown Medical Site” 0.4 miles from Bethel Univ. at I 84 Exit 9 for Brookfield
- Improvements to Newtown health delivery benefit all ages
- Health System need new facilities/locations to meet Population Health needs

4

## Hospitals Serving Newtown CT

5


## Health Providers in Newtown

Newtown – Not Somewhere Nearby

- No Hospitals
- No Other Inpatient Care (Mental Health, Rehab, Sub-Acute)
- No Diagnostic Imaging Center
- No Laboratory service location
- Physicians: 5 Internists, 6 Family Practice & 5 Pediatric
  - The 5 internists can service a panel of ~10,000 patients
  - Of the Internists and Family Practice MDs, only 2 are under age 50
- 1 Urgent Care Office (8 to 8 at southern end of Main St)
- 1 Dialysis Center (northern edge of Town on ML Pleasant Rd)
- 4 Physical Therapy Offices

6

### Health Care Is An Economic Development Driver



Newtown EDC Healthcare Web Page Features Danbury Hospital  
Newtown – Not Somewhere Nearby

7

### What Might Be At The Mini Medical Campus

- Micro Hospital
  - Fully licensed facilities
  - Focus on lower-acuity patients
  - Smaller number (10 to 12) of inpatient beds
  - Emergency Department
  - Basic Ancillary Services
- Urgent Care
  - Physician Offices
  - Lab (Blood Draw)
  - Radiology Services
  - Dialysis
  - Sub Acute Inpatient Facility
    - Wound Care
    - Ventilator Care
    - Rehabilitation
  - Mental Health
- Allied Health Professional Education

8

### Path Forward

Newtown has a great way to fill its region's health systems

- Next level market analysis
- Set FFH Medical Campus as an active Town priority
- Newtown delegation to the regions health systems:
  - Unabashedly supporting a FFH Medical Campus
  - Tenacious while low key and quiet
- Goal to create a co-laboration
  - Newtown – FFH sRe and support
  - Health System - design, open and manage facilities
  - Contractor – Invest and build
- Be driven by Health Planning

9

# Attachment C

1/22/2019

Town of Newtown Mail - Will be part of our discussion tonight



Kimberly Chiappetta <kimberly.chiappetta@newtown-ct.gov>

## Will be part of our discussion tonight

1 message

**Deborra Zukowski** <debz.newtown.ct@gmail.com>  
To: Kimberly Chiappetta <kimberly.chiappetta@newtown-ct.gov>

Tue, Jan 22, 2019 at 11:40 AM

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Kimberly O'Connor (Shellman)** <kbshellman@gmail.com>  
Date: Sun, Jan 20, 2019 at 2:36 PM  
Subject: Re: FFH  
To: Deborra Zukowski <debz.newtown.ct@gmail.com>

12 Grand Place

On Sun, Jan 20, 2019 at 9:16 AM Deborra Zukowski <debz.newtown.ct@gmail.com> wrote:

Wonderful thoughts! Thanks for voicing them.

I will ensure that your thoughts are a part of the meeting.

Would you mind sending your address so it can be a formal part of our conversation?

Thanks,  
Deb

On Sun, Jan 20, 2019 at 8:35 AM Kimberly O'Connor (Shellman) <kbshellman@gmail.com> wrote:

Hi Deborrah,

I saw your post on the Newtown neighbors page. I would love to attend, but that is bedtime for my 1 year old! I am not sure if this is what you are looking for but I have dreamed about FFH since we moved to town 10 years ago! I would love to see marketplace, like those you see out west, where it's all artisinal vendors, craft coffee shops, books, art, soups, etc all housed in a large open air type market. This would even open the opportunity to have an indoor farmers market to help with our local farms selling winter produce and goods. I think it would be a great meeting spot for locals, and it's right up the street from the HS so I would anticipate lots of students hanging there. I am very excited about the prospect of a brew pub, I know that may not come through, but would definitely be in support. I think having outdoor gathering spaces would be great, with seating areas for people to hang with a coffee or book.

I hate the idea of the buildings being demolished, I know it makes sense due to the age and asbestos etc., but trying to keep the same aesthetic seems really important

. I think FFH could be the hub of Newtown and make it a little tourist attraction. Come spend the day in Newtown! Shop,dine, wine, brew!

I doubt any of this is even doable, but it's what I have always envisioned when I am at FFH!

Thanks for reading. Looking forward to hearing what comes of the planning.

Best,  
Kimie O'Connor  
Newtown Resident

## First Selectmen Hosts Listening Session To Hear Seniors' Concerns

By ALISSA SILBER

After the departure of longtime Newtown Senior Center Director Marilyn Place in December 2018, the town posted a letter to the members of the center and Commission on Aging, seeking input from local seniors about what they are looking for in a new director.

On January 11, First Selectmen Dan Rosenthal hosted a special Listening Session at the Newtown Senior Center to hear senior feedback and welcomed a turnout of more than 50 residents.

"I appreciate everyone coming down today," Mr Rosenthal said, looking out to everyone seated before him. "This is really less about me sharing my thoughts. I want to hear from all of you, in terms of your thoughts going forward... I care about what you all have to say."

He prefaced the discussion by apologizing for the "abrupt" departure of Ms Place and said that in terms of people having questions, "I do accept full responsibility for people who feel that this is my doing. I can't change that, and [I] take responsibility."

Mr Rosenthal went on to say that he would not be speaking about the subject further.

He did let the seniors know that the town will also be facing additional changes with Social Services Director Ann LoBosco and Newtown Center for Support and Wellness Director Jennifer Crane both recently resigning after having done "an extraordinary job for the town."

"Ultimately, my goal is to make tomorrow better than today," he said about the opportunity the town has moving forward with the new positions being available.

Segueing into the day's meeting at hand, Mr Rosenthal asked that everyone be respectful to one another bringing forth their ideas and said that they would work together to help create the new director's job description.



More than 50 seniors gathered at the Newtown Senior Center to participate in First Selectmen Dan Rosenthal's Listening Session about a new director on January 11. —Bee Photos, Silber

### Senior Feedback

A common request that was brought up multiple times in the Listening Session was that seniors want a director who can excel at managing different personalities and needs.

Interpersonal sensitivity training was brought up as an option to achieve this as well as the can-

didate having demonstrated the ability to "work well with others" and have an "open mind."

While some seniors emphasized that they would like certain exercise classes, like Fitness Fury, to continue, others said the new director must understand that not all seniors have the same physical abilities and may want

gentler exercise programs, too.

A woman in the audience also brought up that she would like to see more bus trip opportunities in the future.

Pertaining to the new director's education, many seniors agreed that some form of higher education would be preferred — potentially in a social or senior service-related background.

Also during the discussion, seniors brought up a number of concerns for the new senior center facility that will be in the community center building at Fairfield Hills. The topic of building costs, costs for programs, program scheduling, and HVAC inquiries were brought up but not answered in length at the time.

In a conversation with *The Newtown Bee* after the January 11 meeting, Mr Rosenthal shared that he wanted to conduct the meeting to help dispel any of the fears or anxiety the seniors may have had over the recent changes and felt that the meeting was ultimately positive.

For more information about the Newtown Senior Center, visit [newtown-ct.gov/senior-center](http://newtown-ct.gov/senior-center).



At the start of the Listening Session discussion, First Selectmen Dan Rosenthal requested that everyone be respectful to one another bringing forth their ideas at the Newtown Senior Center on January 11.

## Attachment E

### Town Center Renderings for Church Hill, Queen St Area







**Pictures of places with a similar concept:**

Newburyport, MA



Westport, CT





Storrs, CT

