

THE FUTURE OF THE MONTPELIER SENIOR CENTER

Report given at the 6/16/10 Annual Meeting of the Montpelier Senior Activity Center

First - a word of thanks to the members and board members of the Montpelier Senior Activity Center: The City Council appreciates your patience as the Council grapples with its acquisition of the Senior Center and with the City's plans for the future of the Center. We hope that our lack of quick and decisive action has not been perceived as apathy or disregard for the Center or for the seniors of the community.

STATUS:

As you know, a committee supported by City Staff and hired consultants has been working towards planning and securing funding for a newly-renovated 58 Barre Street building, a substantial part of which will house the Montpelier Senior Center. This is a very complicated project that involves securing funding from many sources. Part of the funding is expected to come from a Capital Campaign, which will be carried out by current members of the Senior Center.

Recently a day-long meeting was convened on the future of the 58 Barre Street building and the Future of Senior Living in Montpelier. The meeting brought together current members of the Senior Activity Center, City Staff, City Council members, and representatives from various community organizations that support and offer services to seniors in this area.

Among other things, this group did the following:

- Identified needs among Montpelier senior which are not being met
- Talked about the existing structure of the MSAC, its strengths and its limitations
- Discussed whether there should be an expansion of the mission of the MSAC (to become a senior resource center or senior service center)
- Made a list of the values that should guide decisions about the future of the Senior Center
- Broke out into discussion groups (on the topics of membership, services, facilities, management, finances)

This was an important gathering of stakeholders that raised significant issues as well as questions about the future of the senior center in Montpelier.

The meeting did not result in a specific plan of action.

This past Monday, City Staff (Bev Hill and Garth Genge) and City Councilors (Jim Sheridan and Sarah Jarvis) met and developed the following plan, based on the ground work laid at the 5/13 meeting.

PLAN:

At the next Council Meeting we will seek approval from the Council for the formation of an entity called "Friends of the Montpelier Senior Center," a 501(c)(3), which will be set up to support fundraising efforts such as the Capital Campaign for the renovation of 58 Barre Street. The City will has been working with an attorney on this project and this attorney will help us

with the incorporation process. The money to pay the attorney will come from funds allocated to the feasibility study for the 58 Barre Street project.

We will also suggest a change in the existing organizational structure. We would like to see the creation of a Senior Center Board (akin to the Recreation Board) that would occupy a tier of city government in between the Council and the existing Senior Activity Center Advisory Board. This new Board would be responsible for issues such as governance, development, budgeting, etc. and would be the entity involved in the condo association that will be formed with the housing portion of 58 Barre Street. The composition of the Board will be representatives from City Staff, City Council, Senior Center Advisory Board, and representatives from outside agencies and/or community members.

We will also seek Council approval of the following Organizational Statement (which is really a plan for the future of the Senior Center):

ORGANIZATIONAL STATEMENT

The City of Montpelier values its senior residents and understands the importance of the existing Senior Center. Therefore, City intends to, as soon as possible, reconstitute the existing Montpelier Senior Activity Center in the soon-to-be renovated facilities in the 58 Barre Street Building.

The mission of the existing Montpelier Senior Activity Center is to “Enhanc[e] the quality of life for older adults in Montpelier through opportunities that develop physical, mental, cultural and social well-being.” This mission is carried out through daily classes, frequent trips, and regular opportunities for social interaction.

The newly-renovated facilities at 58 Barre Street will include a Resource room. At first the Senior Center will merely offer this space to (and coordinate its use by) outside agencies from the community. These agencies will use the space to offer services to seniors and to help seniors navigate and connect to existing community services / resources.

Once the Senior Center Board is convened it will explore whether the Senior Center should commit to helping a broader spectrum of seniors than those who are members of the current Senior Activity Center. The City does not intend to offer, nor does it have the financial resources to create, a senior service center. However, there is a desire in the community to explore whether the Senior Center could become a Senior Resource and Activity Center. In addition to offering activities, classes, and opportunities for social interaction, a Senior Resource and Activity Center could develop partnerships with community organizations, facilitate the use of existing services, and support or enhance existing services to seniors.

YOUR INPUT

Please feel free to contact me or other Council members, as well as the Mayor, or Assistant City Manager Bev Hill if you have questions, concerns, or comments about this draft, or about the plan laid out herein.