

Minutes

SACRED HEART REUSE COMMITTEE

Wednesday, July 2, 2008

The Sacred Heart Reuse Committee ("SHRC") held its ninth meeting on July 2, 2008 at 7:30 p.m. at the Community Center. Members present were: Stephen Carter, John Davis, Rita Fontes, Ed Keenan, Irene McCarthy and Alan Wachman.

Barbara Nadler, Director of the Sharon Public Library, addressed the Committee. The Sharon Public Library is interested in the Sacred Heart property as the possible site for a new facility. The Sacred Heart property, she explained, is close to the center of town (unlike the Horizons for Youth property) and may be the "last piece of available land" in Sharon. The Library has far outgrown its current space needs. The present facility measures 10,600 square feet, and has no room for storage or expansion. Putting a new book on the shelf requires removal of an old book. Based on 1999 calculations, the Library requires approximately 22,700 square feet. According to Ms. Nadler, the proposed Wilber School space is inadequate to accommodate a library of that size; it's just too small.

Floor plans for a new facility were drawn up in March 1999; at that time, the estimated cost was \$4,000,000. This estimate, however, is no longer accurate. For ideas, Ms. Nadler suggested that a new library could be combined with a cultural center, perhaps with a small auditorium seating 200-300 people suitable for lectures and other performances. Or something in the nature of a "Library Square" could be built, combining a library with related businesses, such as a bookstore or photocopy facility. Ideally, any new structure should be a "green" building that can serve as a model for other facilities. Also, consistent with the site restriction on one of the parcels, Ms. Nadler explained that library use is regarded as "recreational" and, thus complies with the restriction.

At present, the Sharon Public Library staff consists of 21 employees, with a full-time equivalent ("FTE") of 13.5 employees. The Library also uses 30 hours/week in janitorial services. A new facility should not require an increase in staffing. In FY06, circulation of the Library was 185,000. In FY07, circulation was 222,000. Sharon Public Library is considered a "net borrower" within the Old Colony Library Network; it borrows more than it lends.

The Foundation for the Sharon Public Library is being formed to address the issue of financing. Abigail Marsters (former Friend of the Library and former Library Trustee) is the Chairperson of the Foundation. The Foundation estimates that a new facility will cost from \$12,000,000 to \$15,000,000. The dream of the Foundation will be raise funds from three sources -- one-third from the State; one-third from private donations; and one-third from the Town of Sharon.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 9:00 p.m.