Andover • Andove

## Community Center Site Plan Approved

by Sloan Brewster

The town has hired engineering and architectural firms to draft official plans for a proposed community center between Town Hall and Andover Elementary School.

At last Monday's Board of Selectmen meeting, the board agreed to hire BSC Group of Glastonbury to complete the engineering schematics and Moser Pilon Nelson Architects, of Wethersfield, to sketch architectural drawings.

In a phone call Tuesday, Town Administrator Eric Anderson said the civil engineering drawings would cost \$23,000 and the architectural drawings would come in for \$6,000.

In March, the board agreed to spend up to \$50,000 on the drawings from the \$450,000 the town has set aside for a community center.

He said there was not yet a timeframe for the completion of the schematics as he had not signed contracts for the work. He said he was preparing the documentation and would bring to the Board of Finance meeting that evening.

The firms were selected, based on qualifications, by the Community Senior Center Building Committee, committee chairman Ed Sarisley told selectmen.

The committee has approved a site plan and completed preliminary drawings on which the firms will base more detailed final plans, Sarisley said, adding that Town Engineer Brandon Handfield "really liked" the site plan.

The building will consist of a 2,400-square-

foot main floor and a more than 200-squarefoot basement, he said. The existing septic tank would need to be moved and replaced by a larger one. The existing leech field could be salvaged but would require new trenches.

Sitting between and thus constrained by the school and Town Hall parking lots, the community center would be a 40-foot by 56-foot building, according to Sarisley. The proposed floorplan includes small, medium and large meeting rooms, office space, a kitchen and bathrooms.

He said the original idea was to put the kitchen at the perimeter of the building but later the committee decided it would be better placed in the center to allow for separate windows to serve multiple functions taking place at the same time.

Due to the change in elevation on the site, there's a "great opportunity for a walkout basement," Sarisley said. The committee proposes building the basement but not finishing it initially, leaving the potential for growth at a later time. The town can determine then whether to use it for storage or additional office space.

Salisley said committee members were trying to get together to take a field trip to visit small community centers in nearby towns and take pictures to give to the architect for ideas.

"This is by no means a final floor plan, of course," he said. "It's just an idea to save us money to go to an architect to say improve on

this and make it better."

When the drawings are completed, the committee will also get "ballpark budget costs," Sarisley said.

Sarisley said the building may not end up looking exactly as presented but will have functional and flexible rooms for a variety of activities.

"Earlier in the meeting, Mike and Cathy (Palazzi) talked about flu shots," he said. "Well, this is obviously the place where we'd be giving out flu shots, our new community center, in the future."

During the public comment portion at the beginning of the meeting, Cathy Palazzi, volunteer senior coordinator, announced that the town-wide flu clinic will take place Thursday, Oct. 14, from 2-6 p.m., in the elementary school gym. This year, unlike past years, the clinic will be open to all residents, not just seniors. She said people should bring proof of insurance and non-seniors should go "after work," leaving earlier timeslots for seniors.

Sarisley also went through some of the history of the community center project, including the proposal that was knocked down three years ago to put it in a then empty wing of the elementary school. He also said the Plan of Conservation and Development [POCD] had been referencing the idea of building a community center for decades.

"We've been planning this for 40 years," he said. "The POCD talked about such a facility to replace the over 100-year-old firehouse, the mold-infested firehouse, for 40 years."

Sarisley said the Long Term Planning Committee had selected the proposed location because a survey it put out indicated that was where residents wanted the center.

"It's a great site with great opportunities with lots of room out back," he said. "We already have the garden started in the back; you know that's going well."

Sarisley also recommended the installation of a four-foot pathway along the edge of Route 316 from the municipal buildings to the rail trail and showed pictures of one on a road with equivalent geometry in Mansfield.

"We've got to eventually connect our current functional municipal center with our historic district," he said.

The pathway would also facilitate pedestrian travel between the municipal complex and the Museum of Andover History and Veterans Memorial Field, he said.

Sarisley said the path could be constructed without "infringing on private property" and that since it would be on a state road, the town may be able to get state funding to put it in, but would have to seek support from representatives.

"If you're Avon, if you're Wethersfield, you're going to have this built by the state," he said. "We need our representatives to back us up on this and importance, the safety, on this curve; and it's only .3 miles. We could easily do what Mansfield did."

In discussion, the board agreed it was a good idea but First Selectman Jeff Maguire said three years ago, the town had reached out to the state for funding for a walkway on 316 and did not get a favorable response. He said he would be willing to apply for a grant nonetheless.

Another concern, this one raised by Anderson, was that folks living on the road would "pushback" against the idea.

Vice First Selectman Adrian Mandeville said one house had been sold and the new residents were in favor of having a walkway installed.

Sarisley invited folks to attend the Community Senior Center Building Committee, meetings every second Thursday of the month, and said they are usually held in the Town Hall gazebo.