

Lymes' Senior Center Board of Directors

Preliminary Stakeholder Questions – July 8, 2020

- Questions distributed via email (May 21, 2020) and answers submitted via email or through telephone survey. **Answers copied exactly as stated/written. This is a draft document only.**
- Board is comprised of 12 members: Per by laws and constitution 9 from OL and 3 from Lyme. The director also participates, and minutes are recorded by a separate secretary. Currently we are at 11 members with one pending appointment for a vacancy of an Old Lyme member.
- Age ranges of board members: 60's (2), 70's (4), 80's (5) 90's (1)
- Members were asked to answer the questions for themselves, but were encouraged to "bounce" questions off other members, family or friends.

This document is in two parts. **Part 1** lists the personal responses of the board members. **Part 2** averages about another 12 people who contributed responses.

Part 1

1. How many times a month do you visit the center?

4,5,6,10,12,12,16,16, 20, 20, 20 (There are additional extended hours for volunteer work done by members.)

2. What is your vision for the Center in 5 years? 10?

- 5yr expansion to handle more visitors/10 yr expansion to handle more programs
- Vision in 5/10 years: with an ever growing aging population, the center is a place that will meet the needs to help keep people engaged in activities.
- The center and the towns will face a growing population of older residents 55 and older in the next 5-10 years whose needs must be met for many reasons. The center must adapt to this population with the space and programs that meet these needs. It is also the core mission of the center to serve this population.
- Watch closely the growing population of older residents to adapt programs.
- There will be a need for more room.
- Uncertain right now until we determine numbers and needs
- Must adapt to varied interests, experiences and needs
- We need more information about growing population
- A place where all our town's people who are reaching 55 will want to be members!
- A center that can share and develop a relationship with town libraries. Possibly have a library annex at the center, including books, programs, personal computers for online access.

- An active full time center, with extended hours to accommodate seniors (55+) that work during the day and/or those that like to attend functions, lectures, movies, workshops, etc., ... in the evening.
- A center with various spaces/room configurations and sizes to accommodate the needs of our growing membership.
- A vibrant center where town officials who qualify as seniors are active members.
- A center that will accommodate an aging senior population, with programs and spaces suited for members reaching greater longevity. This may include additional directors/staff to focus on wellness and nutrition.
- I see our Center growing by leaps and bounds every year.
- My vision for the Senior Center in 5 years is to see an expansion of space, as well as, an increase in programs offered.

3. What programs does the Center currently offer that would be enhanced by a change to the building's design?

- Dinners, luncheons, exercise
- More people could participate in exercise and dance programs.
- Dance, exercise and food
- Exercise, art, dance, meetings, lectures, movies, annual dinners and special events. Pretty much everything that is offered and more!
- Create better quiet spaces for some activities (ex.bridge)
- All educational programs
- More people could participate in exercise and dance programs.
- Exercise offerings — they are excellent and well attended. A larger area and more than one space needs to be provided to meet the demand.
- Lunch and coffee bar - Separation of the cafeteria and activities room/area would enhance the experience for both those participating in activities and enjoying quiet socialization during lunch and /or coffee breaks.
- Lectures, Hands on classes - Additional meeting/function rooms of various sizes and configurations, would allow for more programs to be offered simultaneously. Currently the craft room is not large enough for many of the lectures offered by the center.
- Library - Additional space for the library offerings, including books, shelving, space for book discussions, personal computers for online access, ...
- Movies are offered now but they are frequently interrupted by noise and traffic in cafeteria.
- Social gatherings - Members are able to converse in the cafeteria and lobby only. These are wide open spaces, which is okay for some, but additional spaces for small numbers of people to converse/work/play cards, etc., ... privately is needed.

- Programs that presently exist that need additional space are dance classes and art classes.
- More people could participate in exercise and dance programs.
- Uncertain at this time

4. What programs do you wish the Center could offer but cannot due to the current configuration?

- More people could participate in exercise and dance programs.
- Maybe a game room for the card games, puzzle tables. Maybe ping pong, pickle ball?
- I would like to see an Exercise Room with workout equipment be added to our current configuration
- Expanded art groups and lectures that are often too crowded in the art room.
- Bingo, possibly indoor version of bocce
- More online classes
- Larger areas to dance and exercise
- A game room and a pool table
- Making already useful space more useful by redesign.
- An exercise room, with fitness equipment, weights, etc. The center could provide a place where seniors could workout without going to a facility open to all ages.
- Better access to the outdoors to provide outdoor activities. The center is in a beautiful location that can offer bird watching, other nature related activities.
- Not sure right now
- Larger areas to dance and exercise

5. List 3 things you like best about the current building. What 3 things worry you the most?

Note: Not everyone had 3 answers for each of these questions.

LIKES:

- The location – centrally located between the towns, friendly, social entrance into the front room, library and coffee corners
- Meals On Wheels, lunches
- Front room, congregate lunches
- Openness, friendly front room
- Front room is comforting and like a living room from home, library corner
- Friendly spaces
- Book area, coffee area, lunch facility
- Being able to meet and greet folks who attend or visit the center; a space to have a coffee and to socialize
- Front room
- Unsure, seems OK
- The exercise room

- Library - Offering of all the books and puzzles
- Location
- Activities
- The ease of the building
- Attractive building
- Location, meaning easy to get to.
- Setting - it's park-like setting that provides space for outdoor activities and is pleasing to the eye, when viewed from both inside and outside the building.
- The Entrance/Lobby is welcoming and homey.
- What I find most appealing about our Senior Center is the friendliness of the people. There's always a welcoming feeling. 2. The wide variety of programs offered. 3. Lastly, the Senior Center's setting is beautiful.
- Comfortable sitting area where people can socialize/Wonderful lunches/lots of library books and so many wonderful programs.

WORRIES:

- Cramped office spaces, storage spaces, closet now used as an "office", bathrooms need work
- Cramped spaces for all activities that could lead to programs not being offered or members not being able to participate. Office spaces are too tight. Uneven heating and cooling.
- Does the town nurse need to be in the building?
- Office areas too small, safety issues on floors
- Bathrooms and office spaces need attention
- Lighting, blocked exits, need larger closet and storage space needed
- Attendance for congregate luncheons
- Possibility of someone being injured during exercise program.
- Numbers for congregate luncheons and Estuary/will need additional staff if expanded in community/does the town nurse need in the building?
- Condition and location of the porch. The idea of the porch is wonderful, but I am saddened every time I drive to the center and see the condition of it. It is an eyesore and looks unsafe. The center would be enhanced by adding a sunny 3/all season type room that was easy to get to without interrupting ongoing activities in the main room.
- Lack of storage for center equipment and lack of storage space for members coats, shoes, ... during exercise classes in particular. Right now members put coats on lunch tables, which during certain times interferes with lunch setup. The current coat rack is very small and is located in a staff members office.
- The activities in the main room and lunch program interfering with each other.

6. What additional amenities do you wish the Center could offer?

- Nutritious snacks offered throughout the day
- Larger closet space
- Expanded garden program/Raised beds/ better coordination with outside agencies to offer amenities(ex. Expand library services)
- Coordination/cooperation with Parks and Rec to offer **adult** programs
- Name tags so people can get to know each other and new members
- Coffee area should be enclosed to offer some availability and privacy during exercise programs
- Snacks more nutritious/food programs to offer
- Nutritious snacks offered/what to do with garden
- Language classes; Spanish, Italian...
- We enjoy the ability to travel through programs offered by the Center and would like to see cruising continued/expanded to be a regular option
- Volunteer program for seniors who cannot drive any more
- Knitting and crochet classes
- Book club
- Extended collaboration with our public libraries for books, programs, online access, etc.,
...
- Extended hours - evening programs
- Nature programs
- Outdoor programs
- More collaboration with the schools/school clubs to bring seniors and young people together
- The additional amenity that I would like to see offered at our Senior Center is a well equipped Workout Room. Keeping strong and flexible during our Senior years is extremely important for life quality. Members might like an additional approach to workout
- I think additional chairs and tables are always needed.
- Pool table
- Ping pong
- Expanded library area with additional seating
- A reception/welcome information desk or area that is staffed.

7. Should the Center have activities that might be open to the entire community?

- Not necessarily – already have enough for now until we figure out future needs.
- The status quo is good for now – trips, concerts, lectures
- No – center is for seniors first.

- Age of 55 is younger and needs to be as is
- Yes and No – space and programs need to be figured out
- No – 55 and older
- Yes and also evening activities.
- The center does have some concerts that are open to the entire community (mostly outdoors) I think some informative talks/lectures could be offered to the everyone but basically, the center should be for th senior population.
- More multi-generational activities would be an excellent way for our Senior Center to open up to the entire community.
- Yes
- Yes, open the facility to organizations that may need the type of space the center can provide. This may create goodwill amongst our organizations and an opportunity to make the center visible to our towns.

8. Do you think the Center needs to be renovated?

- ABSOLUTELY
- Yes, especially the bathrooms, office spaces
- Yes and No – space and programs need to be defined
- Yes
- Yes
- Yes, the center needs to be renovated and certain areas need updating, space and privacy
- Yes, the center should be updated.
- Absolutely - especially the porch area.
- Yes
- Yes
- Yes, without question, the center as a whole needs to be reevaluated and "fixed/enhanced" to accommodate the growing membership and staff.

9. If you could change only one thing at the Center what would it be?

Note: Some people have more than one “one thing”!

- Any space that is added should be convertible and flexible
- Storage space
- Office space expanded
- Add reception area
- Fix water smell.
- Expand offices, add three season porch/lots of windows.
- Run the water to the coffee corner/Bathrooms need updating for disabled access
- Increase the main area
- Increase dues to provide more activities.
- if i could change one thing, it would be the area for exercise and dance lessons.

- I'm sure the nurses area, kitchen and rest rooms could be updated.
- See any of the above and pick one!
- Add on new space for exercise/yoga/dance, etc... that is quiet and isolated from the cafeteria to meet increased demand and to eliminate interference with the lunch program.
- The heating and air conditioning systems - many times seniors feel the cold and heat much more.

PART 2

There was a suggestion to the board members to “bounce” these questions off family, friends or other members if they chose to do so. The responses below reflect that effort. Others who contributed responses ranged in age from 67-90 years old. There are about a dozen people represented. Once again all responses are unedited and not all questions have answers.

1. How many times a month do you visit the center?

- 12 times/month
- 15 to 20 - I visit the Senior Center daily for the classes I am currently taking
- 20 times a month
- 25 times
- on average 20 times a month
- 4-6 times a month
- 15-20 times a month. On any given day I may enter/login multiple times!
- 4-6
- 10-12
- 10
- 12

2. What is your vision for the Center in 5 years? 10?

- A place where people can gather together for activities, classes, entertainment and companionship.
- An active facility that provides diverse programs for the broad spectrum of senior citizens in our towns, with a wide range of ages and abilities.
- A center that will easily accommodate a growing senior population.
- A place where all our town's people who are reaching 55 will want to be members!
- I think the center does a great job now. I would like to see a bigger exercise room.
- A senior center with expanded facilities and additional directors to focus on wellness and nutrition.
- Additional meeting/function rooms would allow for more programs to be offered simultaneously.

- A center that maintains its commitment to the senior of Lyra and Old Lyme.
- Larger function/meeting rooms to accommodate the increased membership and demand.
- Adapts to the growing needs and demands of an aging population

3. What programs does the Center currently offer that would be enhanced by a change to the building's design?

- The exercise offerings are terrific and very popular.
- The center needs to be enlarged to accommodate the demand!
- Dance and exercise classes would benefit from replacing the current floor and carpet with user friendly flooring. (The current flooring is very slippery)
- Bigger room for yoga and dance classes.
- Provide privacy for the exercise programs.
- Additional rooms for multiple classes so more than one can go on at a time.
- Ideally separation of the cafeteria and activities room/area would enhance the Center.
- Additional meeting/function rooms would allow for more programs to be offered simultaneously.
- Larger function/meeting rooms to accommodate the increased membership and demand
- Flexible spaces for classes...art, lectures
- Easy access to the outdoors for an activity that could be offered outside

4. What programs do you wish the Center could offer but cannot due to the current configuration?

- At this time, for us, the programs work. Though at times they are cramped as attendance increases,
- there's not enough space to accommodate all those who would like to participate.
- More games, including bingo
- Lots of good programs are already offered, but space is limited.

5. List 3 things you like best about the current building.

LIKES:

- Front room is so friendly and welcoming
- Coffee corner
- Library space
- Friendly kitchen manager and congregate lunches

Worries:

- The smell of the water (filtration system would solve that?)
- Slippery flooring when we have dance classes
- Being closed
- Size and privacy of the activity/exercise/bowling area
- Condition of the porch and blinds
- The location of the porch. I would love to enjoy a porch that was a visible and easily accessible front porch, rather than a hard to get to back porch (need to go through an exercise, dance, bowling, lunch event to get to it from inside the building) Also it would be great if it was a sunny 3/all season type room.
- Lack of storage - for center equipment
- Lack of storage for members coats, shoes, ... during exercise classes. Right now members put coats on lunch tables, which during certain times interferes with lunch setup.
- Lack of private space for staff.

6. What additional amenities do you wish the Center could offer?

- Bingo
- Better closet space for coats, etc.
- More seating in library area

7. Should the Center have activities that might be open to the entire community?

- Yes
- This would depend on the activity. It works nicely with the July concerts and people having private functions. Getting the most use out of the building is a good thing. The main purpose of the Senior Center should be a safe place for Seniors to go to.
- The Center currently offers concerts for all, it would be good if the Center's concerts and those at Sound View are coordinated so they are not the same night.
- An evening series that attracted a wider audience would be nice to make those in our towns aware of the great things that the center offers and has the potential to offer.
- Open the facility to activities that our seniors may like, that other organizations may not have the room to accommodate - for example local libraries
- No – it should be for seniors only.
- We already have events and activities that are available...would not want to expand at this time into entire community.
- Hard to think it would work with limited staff.

8. Do you think the Center needs to be renovated?

Yes

- Yes! The Center is getting cramped as attendance at all of the activities increases.
- I really think our Senior Center needs a renovation. It is too small more and more baby boomers are retiring and we need more space.
- Right now our yoga and dance classes are so popular and we have no room.
- Yes, the lunch room needs to be reconfigured, possibly like a cafe, and separate from the other activity spaces
- Definitely. People are getting older, not younger!
- Yes. There is a need now.
- Yes

9. If you could change only one thing at the Center what would it be?

- Bigger exercise room!
- Renovations to the building - I think some of the space could be reconfigured to make better use. More storage, cubbies for people's belongings during classes (instead of all over the tables), user friendly flooring in the main room. Separate dining area for daily lunches - give it a cafe feeling.
- The activities room is too cramped, more space and privacy (not setting up for lunch or another activity while an activity is in session).
- If I could change one thing right now it would be the slippery floor.
- Do something with the porch. Right now it makes the center look sad and unkempt.