

**Discussion with Carlisle School Committee about possible use of part of Spalding Field for a Community Center**

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*Peter Best, Recreation Commission; David Klein, Council on Aging; David Freedman, citizen*

Carlisle is the recipient of a \$30,000 CHNA grant, \$12,000 of which has been designated towards a feasibility study for a Community Center.

We have selected an architectural firm to do the feasibility study through an RFP process that resulted in proposals from 3 qualified firms and interviews with two of them. We selected Abacus Architects of Boston and are in the process of negotiating a contract with them. They have worked with the Town previously on site planning exercises.

The CHNA funds were granted to Carlisle to respond to needs identified in a Community Health Needs Assessment survey undertaken last year. One of the key recommendations of the survey was the creation of a community center/intergenerational gathering space for Carlisle.

The Town purchased the 5-acre property at 338 Bedford Rd. in 2013. Formerly known as the Goff Property, now officially the Moseley Land, the front of the property along Bedford Rd is the site of a group home. The rear of the property, approximately 3 acres, is available for specific Municipal uses including recreation, open space, and a possible senior/community center.

The COA has been focused for some time on this one site. A request for \$20,000 for a feasibility study on this site was narrowly defeated at 2017 Annual Town Meeting.

Subsequently, the COA and RecCom have worked towards coordinating efforts in relation to planning for an intergenerational community center. Though the two entities have different programming needs, the sense is that there would be a natural synergy based on the different times of day that such a facility would be used by each constituency. This is one of the things the feasibility study will address.

More importantly, RecCom's input has opened up the discussion beyond the rear of the Moseley property, which has a key drawback in its relative distance from the school. RecCom needs a site for afterschool programs, especially for elementary school (and younger middle school) students, within easy walking distance from the school. Only the Spalding Field area would provide the necessary proximity. On reflection, the COA also sees many benefits of a site closer to the center, not the least of which is safety of Carlisle citizens of all ages getting to the facility.

We are here because Spalding Field is under your purview. We are about to begin the first phase of a planning process through the feasibility study and would like to include Spalding as a site to be considered by Abacus. But the funds we have are limited so we don't want to dedicate time and money to looking at the site if the School Committee is not interested in considering sharing some of Spalding Field for this other use.

At this time, we are not looking for definitive approval of the site for this use, just a sense that you would be open to considering it as we move ahead.

Obviously the key questions are 1. How much of Spalding would a Community Center require, and 2. How much of Spalding does the School need, primarily for Phys Ed classes, but perhaps also for school team sports? A third question is whether recreational facilities, either additional multi-use fields or perhaps tennis courts, on the rear portion of the Moseley Land, would be of value to students at the Carlisle Schools.

The feasibility study would address the first question: how much space do we need for a community center. We would look to you for answers to the other two questions.

Our understanding is that the fields at Spalding have been less than ideal for both PE classes and for school sports teams and for Concord-Carlisle youth sports teams. Due to the uneven quality of the fields and the difficulty in maintaining them, Spalding Field is underused. As an important, centrally located Town resource, it should be in all of our interests to improve the usability of Spalding.

Our hope is that we can work together with the Carlisle Schools to develop a multi-phase project that would not only include a possible community center on a portion of the approximately 5-acre Spalding site, but also a thorough renovation of the remaining field area, perhaps even expanding it somewhat into what is now wooded, understanding that there are limitations in the terrain, wetland constraints, etc.

In addition to the possible improvement of fields for school Phys Ed classes, we believe that the Carlisle Schools could benefit from an Intergenerational Community Center in close proximity to the schools. Conveniently located after school programs would be one benefit; there might also be indoor recreational facilities that could be of use for PE classes (such as an indoor track for example). One could also imagine enriching intergenerational interactions among Carlisle school students and seniors using the facility. The benefits would flow both ways, as the ability of seniors to observe children at play is considered a major contributor to a healthier outlook on life.

We expect the feasibility study to begin in the next weeks and must complete it no later than August 31 (due to constraints in the CHNA grant). We are therefore looking for you to let us know tonight if you are open to the possibility of shared use of Spalding (and possible use of the rear of the Moseley Land for recreational facilities that might be of interest to the schools—for example with 4 new tennis courts, Carlisle Middle School could have a tennis team.)

The feasibility study might show us that Spalding is not the ideal site we think it might be. Or it might be the first step towards a great new and improved shared use of this valuable town resource. We look forward to our discussion Wednesday evening.