

The Facilities Committee is pleased to provide this annual report to the Board of Selectmen and to update you on the essential work and services provided by the Community Center.

As we reflect back on this year, we are endlessly grateful for the leadership and dedication of Lee Culver who sadly passed on January 19, 2020. Lee served as the chairman of the Facilities Committee for 12 years and was the driving force behind the vision for the Harwich Community Center. We thank him and his family for all he did to insure the success of the building and to foster its growth throughout the years. He is greatly missed.

The Facilities Committee has not met since Lee's passing. The Committee has welcomed a new member, Vahan Kachadoorian, who is serving as the representative from the Recreation Commission. All Committee members are up to date with State Ethics training requirements.

Though the Committee has not met, Community Center Director Carolyn Carey has kept us up to date regarding the status and changes to departmental operations over the course of the last year. We wanted to take this opportunity to highlight the work of the Community Center in 2020.

In February, the Community Center celebrated its 20th birthday! For two decades, the Center has served as the host of large scale town-wide events, holiday programs, and activities that provide recreation, education, entertainment, and opportunities to cultivate special interests. The building is also home to dedicated programs and services geared towards youth, seniors, and veterans. Local clubs and organizations, fitness instructors, and community members utilize this space for their meetings and events, creating a space to learn new skills, improve health and wellness, and build relationships within our community.

To celebrate this momentous milestone, Carolyn and her team organized a number of events including a birthday party, dance, night with the Bean Town Medium, "Soup-er Bowl" ice cream and bowling day, time capsule, a fairy door hunt for kids, and more. These events recognized the passionate and visionary town leaders who fought to have this Community Center built, solicited feedback on opportunities for future growth, and provided fun activities for people of all ages.

In March, we experienced the onset of COVID-19. In these unprecedented times, the Town, Community Center, and our patrons stepped up to overcome obstacles and develop new ways of serving the community. The Center closed to the public from the end of March through June, but that did not stop the staff from finding ways to have a public impact. During this time, staff members stayed in constant contact with the community groups and patrons who use this space, updating them on the status of closures, reopening timelines, and planning for how to safely bring folks back onsite when cleared to do so. With guidance from Administration both state and local government and the Health Department, as well as assistance from DPW, they modified work and meeting spaces, implemented heightened sanitation protocols, and developed policies for hosting meetings and events under restricted capacity.

The Easter holiday fell during this period of closure. The annual egg hunt has become a staple event in our community. In recognition of how important this activity is for local families, Carolyn found a way to hold the event in a modified fashion. She partnered with the Monomoy Regional School District to hand out bags of Easter eggs and prizes to kids – all packed and

distributed using a protocol approved by the Health Director - in conjunction with the daily meal program. Over 350 bags were given out in all!

In July, the Community Center reopened to the public on a limited basis. Groups were welcomed back, within certain size and activity guidelines. Contact tracing procedures were implemented to ensure patrons could be reached in the event of a positive case onsite. Access to common equipment (coffee maker, hallway and reception seating areas, mats for fitness classes, etc.) was restricted. Group members were required to maintain social distancing and adhere to mask mandates. Since then, staff members have been available by appointment for meetings and passport services (53 new passports and over 50 renewal applications have been processed). The reopening policy also called for program and activity bookings to occur on a month-to-month basis. This is designed to ensure that building operations remain responsive to changes in local, state, and federal guidelines, to prevent groups from paying for a service they may be unable to utilize (in the event of further restrictions or closures), and to provide a framework for continuous check ins with the groups that use this space. Through the hard work of Community Center staff and the flexibility of groups and patrons, this process has continued successfully over the last six months.

In October, the Community Center reopened its Weight Room. Fitness equipment was spaced out between multiple rooms to provide additional distance between machines. Members now sign up for a designated time slot. Each slot may have a maximum of six participants and there is a scheduled window between each time slot to allow for sanitation. Locker rooms and showers remain closed. The Weight Room continues to be one of the most popular Community Center resources – members are thrilled to be back!

The Fall was a busy time overall. The building hosted both the State Primary Election in September and the Presidential Election in November. The Center has also been the host site for many blood drives since reopening, and has in fact been one of the only community blood drive sites in the area for months. It was also the host of the town employee and community drive-thru flu clinics. As with Easter, the Community Center team found a way to hold a modified Halloween celebration. With help from the Police Department, temporary lights were put up around the building. Kids and families participated in a drive thru Halloween stopping at different doors along the exterior of the Center to trick or treat. The stormy weather did not stop cars from lining up through the parking lot and all down Oak Street to take part in this event! Over 400 families participated!

In December, the Center partnered with the Department of Children and Families for the annual mitten tree program. The donation process was digital this year, but residents and donors helped get presents to 50 local children. We thank our community for their continued generosity! New this year, the Community Center hosted Santa's workshop at the Seaside Marketplace sheds. Kids could see the workshop in action and even send Santa their Christmas letters. Many enjoyed this beautiful display and opportunity.

The accomplishments and undertakings of the last year highlight the invaluable contributions of the Community Center team. We thank Samantha Estabrook, Executive Assistant, Kerry Lotti, Office Assistant, and Mary Beth Buhler, Customer Service Representative Weight Room and of course Carolyn Carey, Director for their commitment and service to our community. These programs and services would be impossible without their efforts. We also wish to thank the other departments that share the building including Channel 18, the Council on Aging, and Recreation – the teamwork and collaboration shared within this space is unparalleled. The Community Center and Town as a whole are well served by their joint passion, creativity, and dedication.

As always, we remain committed to the continued growth and success of the Community Center, both during the pandemic and as we work to return to ordinary circumstances. The Center continues to find innovative ways to meet needs, support local groups and residents, and spread joy during these tumultuous times, while also eagerly awaiting the opportunity to resume the full scope of onsite programming and events once it is safe. We look forward to working with you, with all other Town Departments, and with all members of our community to best serve the Town of Harwich.

Respectfully submitted,

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