

Ayer Senior Center Building Committee -- Reference Checks for Project Architect Candidates

Catlin Architecture, PC References:

Hampden Senior Center (2001) & Wilbraham Senior Center (Spring 2024)

Carolyn Brennan, Former Director Hampden Senior Center; Former Director E. Longmeadow Senior Center

Walpole South Street Center (2018)

Kerri McManama, Executive Director, Walpole South Street Center

Longmeadow Senior Center and Communiy Gymnasium (2021)

Marybeth Bergeron – Chairperson, Permanent Building Committee, Town of Longmeadow

Questions:

Capacity of Catlin to staff the project and keep on schedule

CB: Hamp - on target work with good contractor until punchlist; Wilb – issues with Operations Project Mgr (OPM)

KM: Yes. On time through opening. OPM important. Catlin team was at all meetings.

MB: Absolutely.

Public Interaction and Support – Was the consultant able to clearly convey the project to the public?

CB: Yes. Catlin very visible in public outreach, fundraising, etc. John Catlin did presentations & staff also good.

KM: I think so. Love the building. Great job. Vibrant. Wonderful.

MB: Yes. Catlin or his staff at all public meetings & did presentations. Catlin definitely knows his stuff.

Public Interaction and Support – How successful was public interaction? Did the consultant receive concerns and address them adequately?

CB: Mostly, at public meetings input, but Select Bd. and Bldg. Committee feedback was most important.

KM: I think so, but that work was done before I arrived.

MB: Yes. Responsive to Bldg. Comm. An affluent/entitled population. End result was spectacular. Huge success, including gym and walking track. It was worth the money.

How was the consultant's leadership in driving a successful project? Did the owner have support they felt they needed?

CB: Yes. That's what paid to do. Did initial presentation, then Bldg Comm. took lead. Provided what was asked.

KM: Yes. Definitely some differences of opinion, but they were willing to compromise. Expert in esthetics. Catlin is very passionate about his ideas. Often we deferred to his judgment and it worked out.

MB: Absolutely. Catline is opinionated. Had to stand up to him when needed. He had to deal with the Bldg. Comm. And 3 DPW directors and 3 Town Managers during the project.

Was the consultant receptive to the Town's requests/desires re the design?

CB: Yes., but if he feels strongly he'd push back but accepted Town's final decision.

KM: Yes. He likes to lead. Has a plan and knows what work. Catlin's eye for design may not match yours. He's very knowledgeable. Don't let him steamroll you over things like color.

MB: Yes, as long as it didn't conflict with his vision. We would hire again for anything to do with elderly.

Is there anything you wished would have been done differently?

CB: OPM was a big problem. In Hampden 20 years before made some mistakes but learned from then.

KM: Wish for a bigger building. 15,000sf is too small. No room for new programs.

MG: Made building bigger than 27,000sf. Multipurpose room seats 120 at tables. Better if seats 175-200.

Were there any concerns with the subconsultants or subcontractors utilized on the project?

CB: Both excellent.

KM: Only 1 issue – metal staircase fabrication with contractor's sub. Not Catlin's sub.

MG: Contractor was a problem. Catlin's subcontractors were all experts. There was flooding in new gym because DPW did not clean outside grease trap from summer and do normal maintenance.

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Bargmann Hendrie + Archetype, Inc. (bh+a) References:

Scituate Recreation and Senior Center (2021)

Linda Hayes – Director, Scituate Council on Aging

Newton Center for Active Living

Alex Valcarce, AIA – Deputy Commissioner, City of Newton, Public Buildings Department

Randolph Intergenerational Community Center

Marc Craig – Former Director of Randolph Elderly Affairs & Recreation

Questions:

Capacity of bh+a to staff the project and keep on schedule

LH: Principal Joel Bargmann was very involved in design. He & staff at all meetings. Rachel Young also involved & worked very well with OPM.

AV: Yes.

MC: Great. Full staff at all times. Tweaked design for construction as they didn't do feasibility study.

Public Interaction and Support – Was the consultant able to clearly convey the project to the public?

LH: Yes. Joel B. spoke often describing the building at various public meetings and Town Meeting.

AV: Yes. Excellent at monthly community update. Kept the working group updated.

MC: Offered design charrettes throughout. Got public input on color and preferred modern look of building.

Public Interaction and Support – How successful was public interaction? Did the consultant receive concerns and address them adequately?

LH: Yes. Dealt with those opposed to spending. Handled concerns of abutters. Very accommodating.

AV: Yes. Got many comments. Engaged & explained present space, parking & access.

MC: Impacted color and modern look of the building over the more traditional original design.

How was the consultant's leadership in driving a successful project? Did the owner have support they felt they needed?

LH: Yes. Did every meeting and did spreadsheet to support parking square footage. At last minute had to move building to another location on property. Bargmann worked quickly to accommodate this change.

AV: Yes. Good support. Knew process. Had a lot of experience with public process. Good fit with the community. Good to work with. Ammenable.

MC: Yes. Ok. Team already knew steps of process/confidence.

Was the consultant receptive to the Town's requests/desires re the design?

LH: Yes. Absolutely. Met often. Very protect of COA Director's wishes. Made some changes.

AV: Yes.

MC: Decided to purchase church and renovate.

Is there anything you wished would have been done differently?

LH: Need more space. Issues re commercial kitchen- appliances, ice machine. Separate card room & pool table. Need more parking.

AV: Wish we had a bigger site. But good program & met budget.

MC: Very pleased.

Were there any concerns with the subconsultants or subcontractors utilized on the project?

LH: Some issues with construction contractors – not bh+a. Doors leak. Rachel held contractor to task.

AV: No. Just starting construction.

MC: No issues

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Abacus Architects + Planners References:

Eileena Long – **Billerica Council on Aging & Recreation**

Fritz Lutz, **Orleans Intergenerational Community Center**

Bernie Kirstein, **Allencrest Community Center, Leominster**

Questions:

Capacity of Abacus to staff the project and keep on schedule

EL: Yes. Absolutely. Team= 3 or 4 people. Always appropriately staffed.

FL: Yes. Abacus was good, but there was confusion on the Town's part of what they wanted. David Eisen worked well with the community. Kept the project moving.

BK: Very good. Principals oversee all jobs. Project on time.

Public Interaction and Support – Was the consultant able to clearly convey the project to the public?

EL: Yes. David Eisen was fantastic. Biweekly work sessions with Bldg. Committee. Four public meetings.

FL: David ran good workshops for the community. Summarized feedback and created a full report on project.

BK: Very good working group at meeting.

Public Interaction and Support – How successful was public interaction? Did the consultant receive concerns and address them adequately?

EL: Yes. Four public meetings. Public comments. Expressed opinions

FL: Did public meetings together with Committee.

BK: Articulate and turned around people against the project.

How was the consultant's leadership in driving a successful project? Did the owner have support they felt they needed?

EL: Absolutely. Principals Eisen & Pollack were phenomenal.

FL: Customer doesn't know what they want. Abacus created an excellent report on options and scope of work needed. Great concepts. Great sense of ethics.

BK: Kept people updated. Went to bat to keep costs down on contractor change orders.

Was the consultant receptive to the Town's requests/desires re the design?

EL: Yes. Many meetings with Town Mgr., Dept. Heads. Took feedback. Modified design

FL: Absolutely. Conceptual design. High score.

BK: Got input from owner. Preliminary meeting with different groups like abutters. Blend interest, seek input.

Is there anything you wished would have been done differently?

EL: No. Happy we picked Abacus. Did a fantastic job on feasibility study and preliminary design.

FL: Covid issues made things harder. Wish for a stronger Project Manager.

BK: Early in the project the Engineering Co. overdesigned, such as commercial kitchen.

Were there any concerns with the subconsultants or subcontractors utilized on the project?

EL: No issues with subs.

FL: Don't believe so.

BK: No. Took 4 years to finish. Did get a national award. \$1 million building. Had to raise \$400,000 through fundraising. Abacus cut their fees and used Vocational High School students to do some of the later work. Eisen said he made about \$5 per hour on the project.