

UNDERSTANDING AND REFERENCES

February 2, 2024

Dear Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit our proposal to provide General Professional Architectural Services for a new Senior Center. This is exactly the kind of work we have been doing for three decades. It requires the broad range of expertise we have developed doing nearly 100 public projects. We have appreciated the opportunity to work with the Town of Ayer on the previous site selection and building design effort.

We understand that the Town has identified a number of properties for investigation. We will focus on those in the preliminary stages of the work. Municipal properties will reduce some of the uncertainty. We will work with the Town, as requested, to explore other options if the sites now being considered turn out to be problematic.

There are many reasons for the Town to continue to work with Abacus as you move forward:

Understanding of Ayer COA needs: Based on our previous work with the COA, and our meetings with facility staff, board and users, we have a clear understanding of programmatic needs and have developed a series of possible conceptual approaches to meet them. We would certainly want to revisit the assumptions on which the previous plans were based, look at alternative layouts and allocation of space, and develop revised plans to meet emerging needs and site constraints, but our previous work will help us hit the ground running.

Understanding of Ayer's Physical Attributes: We know the Town well having studied nearly 20 different COA site options in the past few years. We understand the challenges associated with building in different parts of town with a range of different opportunities and constraints. Most provide obstacles of one type or another: limited size; steep topography; wetlands; contamination; citizen opposition. We will use this understanding to find sites and evaluate whether they can serve the COA in effective ways.

Experienced Site Evaluation Team: Some sites appear to be viable and then turn out to have insurmountable problems. Others appear to have significant challenges that can be overcome with the appropriate measures. We have worked with **Pare Corporation** on a long series of similar municipal projects to deal with exactly these kinds of issues - so that early in the process we can evaluate the viability of possible sites. They can provide the broad range of site testing, design and engineering disciplines needed.

Efficient Site Evaluation Process: We have developed effective ways to identify possible sites, and then determine the information that is needed to evaluate viability. Once in place we can quickly and efficiently assess pros and cons, costs and benefits of different options.

Successful Approaches to Community Engagement Virtually all of our work involves significant public engagement. It may begin with listening sessions where we ask the public about their priorities, hopes and fears, so that the process that follows is aligned with broad-based goals. Later meetings may allow the public to assess options and provide design input - which then allows the COA, the Committee and the Architects to build support. We have found that if people are going to be asked to pay for something, they want a say in what they are paying for.

Cost Estimating: Different sites may have different costs associated with them. And even the simplest building on an easy site may be quite expensive when done through the public Chapter 149 process. We recommend getting cost estimates at the appropriate time to facilitate decision making, reasonable limits on building size, and engagement with the Select Board and others. We have done nearly 25 projects with **PM & C** and have included them on our team.

Experience in all Project Phases: Most of our projects begin with exactly the kind of services this RFP requests. Many then proceed into design, construction documents and construction. We are prepared to provide all of the services that this RFP notes, with the understanding that the current contract is for a limited body of work. We will enlarge our consultant team as needed to support progress.

Similar Senior/Community Center Experience: In the past 10 years we have completed similar studies and/or built projects in Cambridge, Boston, Lincoln, Mansfield, Concord, Southamptton, Orleans, Beverly, Billerica, Millis, North Attleboro, North Reading and Middleton. References to contact:

Bernie Kirstein; Allencrest Community Center; bkirstein3@gmail.com 978-430-2609
Fritz Luft; Orleans Intergen Community Center; fritz.luft14@gmail.com; 774-207-7845
Eileena Long; Billerica COA & REC; elong@leftfieldpm.com 781-584-2801

As the last round of planning made clear - the next steps have to be taken with a careful consideration of programmatic needs, site challenges and community concerns. This is exactly what Abacus has offered its clients throughout the region for nearly 30 years. We look forward to continuing our work with Ayer.

Sincerely,

David Eisen FAIA, Principal, Abacus Architects + Planners cell: 617-921-3903
deisen@abacusarchitects.com

In the work we do we bring creative thinking and rigorous analysis to project challenges and opportunities - to ensure that a variety of options are considered, and the very best ones are chosen. Here are some of the approaches we would suggest for this project to leverage available funds for maximum advantage.

Define Project Constraints and Opportunities: We would begin by meeting with the Committee and other stakeholders to define project goals, timelines, guidelines for site evaluation, public engagement process, the approvals process, and possible partnerships. Might an intergenerational center that combines COA and REC be considered? Could the COA share a site with another public facility? We will review all feasibility studies, reports, zoning, floodplain and wetlands information available.

Further Development of COA Program and Conceptual Plans: Although we are very familiar with COA needs we would review and revise the space program and rethink conceptual plans as needed. The COA design will certainly be impacted by the site, but we can lay out spaces, adjacencies, connections between inside and outside, etc. that can be a starting point for site analyses. We have a range of options we have developed for other COA clients that we can share as a reference. We also have very recent cost estimates that may help determine maximum size. 2 story buildings might be considered so that small sites are viable.

Preliminary Site Review: In parallel with our program and plan development we will review site options. We would recommend getting as many as possible "on the table" early on, so reviews are done in parallel rather than sequentially. With the creative planning Abacus can provide, it may be possible to make difficult sites viable. And with the careful scrutiny by Abacus and our team, promising sites may drop away. This work should be done as early as possible. We would use our consultants as needed for evaluation. They will advise if site surveys, wetland flagging, Environmental Site Assessments or geotechnical investigations appear warranted.

Site Test Fits: Once we have verified the building and site program and parking with the COA we will do test fits analyzing how effectively viable sites can accommodate the program. Given the limitations of so many sites, "outside the box" thinking will be helpful. Abacus has extensive experience creating community facilities on difficult sites. If there is more than one possible site we can work with Ayer to establish decision making criteria and then do a pros and cons analysis to zero in on the best option.

Public Engagement:

Based on our previous experience in Ayer, we see public engagement as critically important. We know there is a concern about using contaminated sites or heavily used parkland. Possible community objections to any site should be surfaced as early as possible - and due diligence should be done beforehand so that solutions

APPROACH, SCOPE OF SERVICES, FEE

can be presented along with problems. Public engagement events are also an opportunity to build the case for a new COA. Are there after-hour uses for the entire town? How can the whole community benefit from their investment? We can help Ayer weave thoughtful engagement - meetings, surveys, websites, presentations - into the planning process. Engagement will include the Select Board, Town Meeting and other boards and committees as appropriate.

Review and Revise: Site planning and building planning will continue to evolve as we get more information and clarify what sites might work. Once planning is resolved we can develop renderings that suggest the character of interior and exterior spaces - to solicit input and to build excitement about what is possible.

Cost Estimating Different sites may have different costs which will help in making decisions. We can develop plans - architectural and engineering - to the point that we can get realistic cost estimates. We have worked on nearly 30 projects with PM & C and would propose bringing them on board as our third party estimators. This will be critical for the allocation of funds.

Approvals and Construction Documents: From the start we think about buildability. We are creative thinkers but are very realistic about what it takes to get approvals and buildings built. Early in the process we suggest engaging with local officials and departments that will have an impact on planning and design

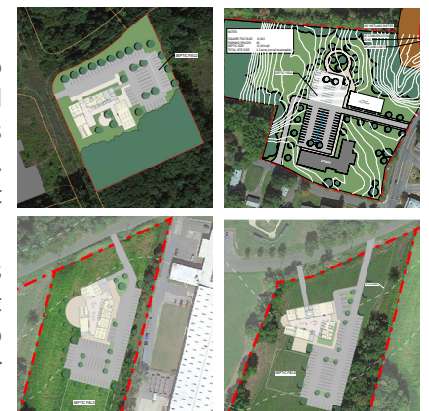
FEE PROPOSAL

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|------------------|-----------------------|
| Principals | \$210 per hour |
| Project Managers | \$160 per hour |
| Designers | \$90 - \$125 per hour |
| Mark up | 0% |

SENIOR CENTER, SOUTHAMPTON

We were commissioned by the Town to do COA programming, building design, and the evaluation of a series of possible sites where a new building could be located. Our team included site engineers and cost estimators.

We did test fits, projected costs and pros and cons analyses identifying the most advantageous site. The process is similar to what we might do for Ayer as we consider multiple options.



EXPERIENCE AND QUALIFICATIONS

SENIOR CENTER FEASIBILITY AND SITE SELECTION STUDY, TOWN OF AYER, MA

Abacus worked with the Town and COA on public outreach, programming, building design and site evaluations for a new Center for Active Living.

We evaluated nearly 20 sites, identifying pros and cons for each (most proved to not be viable) and worked with the COA on building program and plans. Our final set of plans were for an intergenerational center at Pirone Park.



SENIOR CENTER & HOUSING 2-LIFE COMMUNITIES, ALLSTON, MA

A 12,000 SF senior center occupies the first and second floors with 5 floors of housing above. The site is tight - just over an acre. and connects to the surround community and the adjacent affordable senior housing.

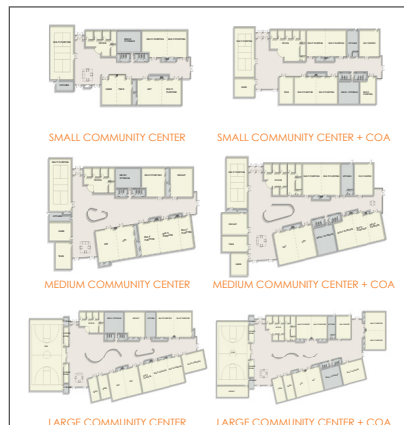
The plan is efficiently organized while providing a variety of spaces and activities that bring the generations together.



COMMUNITY CENTER FEASIBILITY STUDY, TOWN OF ORLEANS, MA

Abacus worked with Orleans on the programming and conceptual design of a new facility. Abacus interviewed a series of stakeholders, visited existing community facilities, prepared a SurveyMonkey survey and then developed a series of program options.

These were then developed as conceptual planning options which were refined further on a town owned property.



SENIOR CENTER, CARLISLE, MA

Working with the COA and a broad range of town residents and officials, Abacus developed plans for a Center for Active Living that serves the needs of many town constituencies in a cost effective manner, although the focus is on seniors.

A series of activity rooms, offices, a kitchen and large meeting space surround skylit social areas that opens out to terraces and gardens. The Town is now in the funding process.



COUNCIL ON AGING BUILDING TOWN OF BILLERICA, MA

The new COA will occupy a prominent site on the Common, replacing a poorly designed facility. Brick and wood siding connect it to the Town's traditional architecture while generous glazing and welcoming entries meet contemporary needs.

Offices, multi-purpose rooms, a game room, exercise room and arts room meet programmatic needs connected by light filled social spaces.



SENIOR CENTER/SENIOR HOUSING CONCORD, MA

Re-grading of the site around a 100 year old school creates a lower level accessible entry and a welcoming two story living room/ lobby for senior living. 28 one-bedroom apartments are organized around common areas and resident services.

Stairs, overlooks, bookcases, and a mail and message center are strategically located to encourage residents to socialize and participate in activities.

