



Consolidation of Senior Services and Closure of Bennett Valley Senior Center

City Council Meeting
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& Former Interim Director R & P

Brief History of the City's Senior Focused Community Centers

- Bennett Valley Senior Center (BVSC) was built in 1924 as a school, operated for a time by a non-profit, and was taken over by the City in 2002 – when it became the City's first senior center
- After several years of fundraising, the non-profit, Seniors, Inc., donated funds to the City to build the Person Senior Wing, which opened in 2012.
- Person Senior Wing added 25,000 square feet to the Finley Complex to create a senior center as well as community meeting space for events and room rentals

Utilization Patterns at the Senior Centers

Since the opening of the Person Senior Wing, Bennett Valley Senior Center has experienced a steady decline in participation

- Person senior participation level is 700
- Bennett Valley senior participation level is 99, down from several hundred at the time of the Person Senior Wing opening

Why is the Consolidation Recommended?

Several factors led staff to recommend the consolidation of senior services to the PSW and the Steele Lane Community Center (SLCC):

- Increased utilization of PSW and need to reassign staff to the higher utilized community centers
- Ongoing maintenance costs for the nearly hundred year old Bennett Valley Senior Center, which exceed available resources to sustain
- Significant capital improvements needed to the Bennett Valley Senior Center, significant enough to warrant divestment

Person Senior Wing Requires Additional Staff Support

- The two permanent employees currently assigned at Bennett Valley Senior Center
- Staff at Bennett Valley needed at other facilities where utilization is higher, to assist with senior programs, special events, and an increase in room rentals

Maintenance Concerns & the Facilities Assessment

Recent city-wide facility assessment report was presented to Council on May 22, 2018

- Bennett Valley Senior Center was among several buildings the report recommended that the City divest
- The report determined that the building's condition (i.e., maintenance needs, including a new roof and accessibility deficiencies) did not justify the additional investment based on useful life assumptions

Engagement Efforts around the Proposed Consolidation

May 21, 2018, staff met with 60 Bennett Valley Senior Center participants to discuss possible consolidation of programs and to get feedback and concerns.

- Feedback included/concerns expressed:
 - An affection for the charm of the building
 - Concerns about driving across town, west of Highway 101 (distance and traffic)
 - Concerns about the longer walk from the parking lot to PSW, as well as limited handicap parking spaces
 - A desire to continue billiards, a leisure area for socializing, and activities at the same days and times

Engagement Efforts around the Proposed Consolidation , *cont.*

Then Interim Director Nutt presented the consolidation proposal to the Board of Community Services (BOCS) and the Community Advisory Board (CAB)

- Both Boards suggested staff look into other options for possible program locations and reach out to other organizations for information on programs geared towards seniors
- Staff spent several weeks conducting research to address questions and concerns from Bennett Valley Senior Center participants, BOCS and CAB

Engagement Efforts around the Proposed Consolidation , *cont.*

On June 20, 2018, staff met with the Activity Instructors at BVSC to discuss research and options.

- Instructors were quite positive about the proposed consolidation of services
- Some visited the proposed new locations
- Instructors shared that their participants were happy their classes and activities can be offered at the same times and days of week
- Instructors were surprised at the number of senior programs offered on the east side of Santa Rosa, including programs by SRJC (no cost and open to the public)

Engagement Efforts around the Proposed Consolidation , *cont..*

July 13, 2018, staff met with BVSC participants (11 attended) as a follow up to the first meeting on May 21, 2018.

- Staff shared updated proposed schedules/consolidation of programs. Instructors and participants were pleased with the schedules
- Some seniors still expressed concern about traffic and distance to other centers, future use of the building, and their fear of changes to the programs
- Staff confirmed that a room at Steele Lane Community Center can be converted for billiards and a leisure room can be set up for socializing

Integration of Senior Services

- Steele Lane and Person Senior Wing have space to accommodate Bennett Valley Senior Center participants and programs, with nearly all classes scheduled the same times of the day and the same days of the week
- Rental groups that utilize Bennett Valley Senior Center can also be accommodated at other City facilities
- Staff involved the very active group of billiards players in assessing the new location at Steele Lane
- Staff will evaluate the equipment planned for Bingo with the players to ensure that it meets the needs of those with hearing and visual challenges

Recommendation

It is recommended by the Recreation and Parks Department that the Council, by resolution, consolidate senior services located at the Bennett Valley Senior Center to Person Senior Wing and Steele Lane Community Center and close the Bennett Valley Senior Center.