

## The Club House: What Next For Our Community Center?

Across America, and across the world, community centers are built to attend to people's needs, desires and aspirations. Our Sleepy Hollow community center – the clubhouse – is facing a historic moment and, as a community, so are we.

Built in 1949, the decades have worn down the structure. Thanks to a building inspection report requested by Homes Association President Holly Briese, we know with certainty what many had suspected: the clubhouse needs serious and imminent repair. While there is currently no public safety threat, we are facing a minimum of \$80,000 of repairs to get it water-tight. Getting the structure up to code, plus the other costs we would likely find once we open up the building, will no doubt push the costs significantly higher.

Facing these kinds of costs it seems an appropriate time to ask some fundamental questions. Does the 1940s design of the clubhouse still best meet the needs of our community? Should we invest a large amount of money to rehabilitate the facility or explore a new design?

We want to answer these questions with the community, with you.

We have done some initial research we would like to share. We looked at other community centers across the country and Marin County, in Lucas Valley, Strawberry, Muir Beach, Stinson Beach, Mill Valley and others. Most communities – even those smaller than our 725 households – get much greater use out of their community centers. Among the features others in Marin have were small fitness centers and aerobics classes, drop-in play centers for kids, activity rooms for retirees and seniors,



ceramics studios, stages for plays or dances, places to drop-in for a beer or glass of wine, day-care centers and/or nursery schools, teen rooms with pool tables, small community libraries, hot tubs, and classes or lectures on art, history or cooking.

Others have rebuilt their community centers through fundraising and donations of labor by local contractors. A Homes Association board member presented a potential \$500,000 budget as a thought experiment. It relied on \$120,000 in combined “heritage” donations, where a family would have a room or fireplace, for instance, named after them. It included \$100,000 of donated labor by Sleepy Hollow contractors, who would have their time valued like other “heritage” donations. It had a contribution by the County of Marin (which just invested more than \$700,000 into a trail in Sleepy Hollow). It also included \$100,000 by pushing our membership in the Homes Association back to 525 households. The balance of \$80,000

could be financed with a small mortgage on the property that could be paid off in a couple of years.

Over the next several months, we intend to reach out to residents to get your thinking. We will be sending out a survey and would like to have some house parties to get the discussion going on a larger scale. We intend to follow the model of San Anselmo's Millennium Playground, where the community designed, built and actively uses the facility. If you would like to participate, please send an email to John at [jgrubb@bayareacouncil.org](mailto:jgrubb@bayareacouncil.org).

It is important to note that we are not presupposing the answer. At the end of this process, we may decide as a community to keep and fix what we have. But, in the meantime, let's use this as a community exercise.

P.S. We already received our first donation! Frank Berto, with his wife Connie, volunteered that the Sleepy Hollow Fire Protection District would pay the costs for a new sprinkler system. Thank you Frank and the District!