

Opening SCC Comments to the Village Board by Neil Bicknell, December 9, 2008

My name is Neil Bicknell of 91 Garden Road and I am Chairman of Scarsdale Community Center, Inc. My wife and I have been residents for 30 years and have raised our two children here. I am a former member of the Village Board and served from 1991 to 1995.

Tonight the SCC has one basic message, namely – There are a large number of residents in Scarsdale who would like to have a community center and, in order for this to happen, the Village Board needs to become involved in helping to find answers to open issues.

Our site studies, undertaken with the support of the Village Board in a resolution passed in February 2008, indicate that there are at least three sites in Scarsdale that can accommodate the proposed facility. The SCC is site neutral; the professional firm we engaged to study site alternatives has ranked the three sites in order of preference based on their selection criteria, but the SCC is site neutral. We would like to see a community center built on any of the three sites.

The site decision is an important open issue to be resolved and draws passionate views from residents in each neighborhood where the community center may be located. We recognize the validity of these views, the importance of addressing them and that the Village government will make the final decision concerning site. But that is not the focus of our comments this evening. We are not here to confront our neighbors concerning selection of any particular site nor do we suggest that resolution of this issue be pursued during this holiday season. We are here to impress on the members of the Village Board that there exists strong support for a community center in Scarsdale and to urge the Board to help make it happen.

Following my comments, other members of the SCC team will cover in more detail, first, the evidence of community support, 2) decision making in the current economic environment and the role we would like to see the Village play, 3) details concerning our site review process, 4) background concerning our financial projections and financing proposal, and finally, 5) misperceptions we have heard expressed concerning the size and cost of the project.

Basically, our view is that no one has a corner on wisdom. Each resident should be able to express their viewpoint in public forums; those viewpoints should be respected and fed into the community decision making process and, through such a democratic process, we can make our terrific community even better. We have invested considerable time, energy and resources to engage professionals who have contributed data and expertise to inform our community discussion. But even they don't have a corner on wisdom. We need a Scarsdale solution and that can be achieved only through the goodwill of the participants in the dialogue under the guidance and leadership of our elected representatives.

Thank you.