

The time is now to create a true community center

Pittsford residents are about to make an important decision affecting the future of our Community Center and the recreational programming we offer. Your vote on October 18 will determine whether we move ahead with the complete upgrade, redesign and expansion of our Spiegel Community Center, providing a modern, efficient, and welcoming facility at a cost of \$9.3 million, or we attempt to “make do” with the current facility, spending \$6 million to complete the minimum required repairs needed to keep the facility open, with no improvements.

While other towns may focus on a “big box” or sports complex approach to obtain a recreation center that greatly expands their recreation programming – and their operating expenses – our Town Board seeks to create a top-notch facility that will serve our current recreation programming needs, with room for reasonable growth in the future. Yet our vision goes beyond creating a place for programs, meetings and classes. We envision a true community center, not merely a recreation center. A place where our residents can connect while enjoying our programs and meeting spaces. A place where it is possible to relax and catch up with friends, share like interests, and make new acquaintances.

As you may know, the Town Board took several years to carefully consider many different options; among them was to build a new facility on open space within the Town but remote to the Village. Several factors made it clear that upgrading and expanding Spiegel is the best choice for our recreation needs and for our community. We are not looking to vastly increase our program offerings, therefore a properly redesigned and expanded Spiegel Community Center will have the ability to provide all we need in a community center. We can begin the project immediately instead of taking a year or more to research available open lots of 4-5 acres and then purchase a suitable property. Such ability to move quickly is critical, because some of the repairs to Spiegel need immediate attention. We can create a new, one-of-a kind, first-class facility inside a restored historic landmark, centrally located in the heart of our community. This preservation/redesign plan is in stark contrast to a new build proposal that would necessarily diminish our natural open space which is so valued by the members of our community.

The most eye-opening argument for me is that we can create the top-quality community center we deserve and need while saving \$6-7 million compared to building a new facility.

Another benefit to upgrading and expanding Spiegel that I find especially inspiring: we will create a beautiful and convenient permanent home for our Senior Center in the facility and therefore will, for the first time, have the ability to offer multi-generational programs onsite that can build connections between our seniors and our child care and youth participants.

I’ve been an avid Spiegel Center user for the past 10 years, participating in everything from aerobics and dance to dog obedience and craft classes. I’ve seen firsthand our staff’s dedication to excellent customer service, their creativity in program scheduling to make the best use of limited resources, and their unwavering commitment to providing programs that are enriching and enjoyable for all members of our community. They have done all they can to make the best use of the Spiegel Center in its current state; I believe it is time to transform the Spiegel Community Center into a facility that matches the high quality of our recreation staff and programming.

If you have a hard time envisioning what we can do to make Spiegel a truly first-class community center, I invite you to enter into the discussion! Our Town Board members and staff will be glad to speak with you about our current concept plans, and, should the project be approved, we want to hear your ideas for finalizing these plans. You can also find complete project information at www.townofpittsford.org/community-center-project.