

Recreation and Athletic Improvement Project: Part II

In my last entry for the Brighton-Pittsford Post I discussed the Town’s proposal to improve the condition and availability of athletic fields for public use. Today’s column is devoted to the companion portion of our recreation and athletic facilities initiative: repair and improvement of our community center.

The condition of the Spiegel Community Center reflects many years of deferred and piecemeal maintenance. This is apparent in its appearance. It’s apparent in the building’s decaying infrastructure: plumbing, heating, wiring, the roof, the elevator, the bathrooms and more. It’s apparent in the ratings that residents give the building in the Town’s periodic customer satisfaction surveys.

The issue transcends merely wanting to bring the building to the standard of other public facilities maintained for the convenience or enjoyment of Pittsford’s residents. We are approaching the point where we will need to make a decision between undertaking necessary improvements or closing the building to public use. That decision could be forced on us suddenly, if a problem arose that compromised safety.

The Town Board and I share the view that our Spiegel Community Center occupies a niche, in which residents can find many recreational offerings and services not otherwise widely or readily available. Overlap with private-sector offerings is modest and, where it occurs, is driven by public demand. What we can offer in the building strikes a good balance in programming and in public expense. It’s located in the heart of the Village. It offers an architecturally distinguished and historic venue for Pittsford’s recreation programs.

Our process of evaluating what’s necessary to keep Spiegel open and restore it has led to our proposal for assuring the physical integrity of the building envelope, replacing the HVAC system and bringing up to date the other components of infrastructure discussed above. The proposal includes renovating the building inside and out, in a manner appropriate to its historic character. For the project the Town has engaged as advisor Bero Architecture, a leading firm, headquartered in Rochester, that specializes in historical architectural restoration.

The cost would be a fraction of the spending necessary to build a new community center. Nevertheless, as is the case with the athletic fields, improving Spiegel would involve significant expense. At our public information meetings this month, we’ll discuss details of financing the portion of the project specific to the Spiegel renovation. It needs to be a community discussion. Therefore, this, too, will be subject to approval by Pittsford residents in a referendum later this year, most likely in September.

With the approval of the community, we hope to have a facility in which we can all take pride and that will provide us with use and enjoyment for many years to come.

If voters approve the plan, we'll be putting together a citizens' committee as the project moves forward, to advise the Town administration on the Spiegel project and to work with our consultant, Bero Architecture. I've asked Village Mayor Bob Corby to be a member of the committee. If you have an interest in participating, especially if you have a background or experience in architectural engineering, architectural preservation or municipal recreation programming or facilities, please let me know. As always, you may stop in to Town Hall to see me, call me at 248-6220 or send a message to bsmith@townofpittsford.org. To stay up to date on this project and all of our Town news, visit our website www.townofpittsford.org and subscribe to our weekly eNews.