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Press Release

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Mayor Hedlund unveils major capital improvements to Town's senior center

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Weymouth, MA – Today, in a special ribbon cutting ceremony, Mayor Robert Hedlund and Town Elder Services Director Karen Johnston joined with local and state officials, community partners, and members of the public, to unveil the first phase of major capital improvements undertaken by Mayor Hedlund's Administration to the John F. McCulloch Building's Whipple Senior Center. The project will utilize \$560,000 in local surplus and reserve funds, and is leveraging more than \$85,000 in grant funds, donations, and in-kind services from state and local partners, to renovate the senior center's building and grounds, creating new amenities for Weymouth's 13,000 residents aged 60 and older. Next phase improvements are ongoing.

"The Whipple Senior Center is a lifeline and the heart of the community for thousands of older adults in Weymouth." **said Mayor Robert Hedlund.** "It provides opportunities for our retired residents to be active, to remain social, and to feel a sense of belonging and purpose, which are essential to healthy aging. These ongoing renovations are an investment in the health and happiness of our seniors, so they can enjoy their retirement years and know that they are valued."

Weymouth's Whipple Senior Center provides community services for residents aged 60 and older, which comprise 24 percent or nearly one of every four persons living in Weymouth. Services provided through the senior center include community outreach, educational programs, social programs, special events, and transportation. All services promote the independence, empowerment, and well-being of older adults.

Renovations to the Whipple Senior Center have been underway for more than 18 months, following Mayor Hedlund's \$560,000 investment of local surplus and reserve funds, appropriated in April of 2016. Locally funded improvements to the building and grounds include the following:

- New gymnasium floor and roof
- New paint in several interior rooms and on the exterior of the building
- New curtains in the gymnasium and movie room, and on the gymnasium stage
- New wheelchair ramps and patio at the west entrance
- New pavilion (20 ft. x 40 ft.)
- New looped walking trail
- New playing areas for bocce ball, horse shoes, and pickle ball
- New street sign on Green Street
- New rear parking lot, with repairs to the front and side parking lots
- New handicapped parking spaces

In addition to local funding, the Whipple Senior Center received a \$50,000 grant through state legislative appropriations in fiscal year 2016. This grant was utilized for renovations to the center's billiards and computer rooms, which included new carpeting, fixtures, entertainment systems, game tables, lighting, paint, printers, SMART boards, storage, and window treatments. A new stove was also purchased for the center's kitchen, and band members benefited from the purchase of a new sound system. New furniture for these rooms, as well as the music room, the reception area, and the front office, was generously donated to the senior center by the Massachusetts State Surplus Property Office and the Furniture Trust of Boston. This furniture was valued at more than \$24,000.

Approval of a one-time capital expenditure using a portion of the Town's annual Council on Aging (COA) Formula Grant was also received from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs to purchase a new energy efficient, handicapped-accessible door for the west entrance of the Whipple Senior Center. Funding for this grant is determined by a \$10.00 allocation per adult resident aged 65 and older in Weymouth. These annual funds are used in collaboration with Town appropriations, federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds, and other formula grants to both staff the senior center and purchase supplies for the center's numerous programs.

"Of the 351 Councils on Aging in Massachusetts, Weymouth ranks as the 18th largest community for seniors based on population," **said Weymouth's Elder Services Director Karen Johnston.** "I want to thank Mayor Hedlund for his unwavering support of our seniors and the ongoing transformation of the John F. McCulloch Building, which houses our senior center. We've made huge strides in just 18 months, and while there is still more to do, none of it would have been possible without the Mayor's support and his strong belief in the betterment of our seniors and their center. He was barely on the job when he authorized a complete upgrade to the senior center's rear parking lot, so our senior drivers could be safe. This was the first indicator to our seniors that they have a friend in the executive office who is sincere about providing the best possible facilities for their wellbeing. From the new gymnasium, pool room, and state-of-the-art computer

room to the new pavilion, walking path, pickle ball court, and handicapped-accessible west entrance, these improvements will have a major impact on the quality of service we can provide to our seniors.”

With a tight operating budget, the Whipple Senior Center relies heavily on generous donations from community partners. The front office was repainted with labor and materials donated by FoxRock Properties of Weymouth; a second stove, chairs for various rooms, and many other equipment and materials were purchased by the Friends of the Council on Aging and the North Weymouth Civic Association; and the bottom exterior of the building was repainted with volunteers from the Norfolk County Sheriff’s Office’s Community Service Program, who also painted the senior center’s conference room and library. In addition, the senior center has received numerous donations from local businesses and churches, and even seniors themselves.

Following today’s ribbon cutting ceremony, Mayor Hedlund invited attendees of the event and members of the public to view the center’s new amenities first hand. Guests enjoyed live music performed by a regional fan-favorite, Olde Kids on the Block, an 18-piece swing orchestra that revives the big band sounds of the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s, with vocals provided by Mara Castle.

In addition to physical improvements to the Whipple Senior Center, Mayor Hedlund’s Administration has also made investments in the Town’s transportation services for senior residents. Two passenger vans were purchased using \$35,000 in Special Purpose Stabilization Funds appropriated in June of 2016. Weymouth’s Elder Services Division was also recently notified that it will receive a competitive grant award through the MassDOT’s FY18 Community Transit Grant Program to replace its 2008 Type-D Capital bus, which holds up to 16 passengers.

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