



TOWN OF ASHFIELD

OFFICE OF THE SELECT BOARD FINANCE COMMITTEE

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January 4, 2020

Dear Senior Center Expansion Committee Members,

The Ashfield Select Board and Finance Committee have decided we cannot continue to support the Expansion project. While we support the Senior Center's continuing focus on planning for the future for our aging population, we cannot commit to funding a building in another town, nor are we prepared to commit to a new West County Senior Services District, especially as we think through the financial models being proposed. The widespread financial implications of the COVID-19 crisis impel us to make this decision and share it with you now. We know this will be disappointing but feel that, given our concerns, it is unwise for Ashfield to continue with the project at this time.

Our goal now will be to pause and reconsider how we can meet the needs of our residents in ways that strengthen our community and use our limited finances as effectively as possible. We believe the best way to do this is to continue to pay attention to what folks in Ashfield tell about their needs, which includes requests for more services and resources located in town. We want to provide services and resources in ways that strengthen our commitment to local services, encourage inclusivity of all residents in the life of our town, and protect our fiscal health now and for our future.

Please know that our decision should not be interpreted as lack of appreciation and support for all the Senior Center does for our seniors nor of your efforts to strengthen and expand on the services already provided. We are grateful for the time and effort that goes into this important work. We hope you, in turn, can appreciate our position and will be able to identify more affordable solutions to the space and service challenges we face. We also believe it is important to think creatively about where and how services are provided in order to better meet the needs of seniors who do not live in or close to the center of Shelburne Falls. For our part, as we develop our plan for expanding our senior services, we hope to continue to partner with the Senior Center and perhaps together we can develop a flexible and cost effective model for providing services that will benefit all member towns.

Sincerely,

Steven R. Gougeon
Select Board Chair

Todd M. Olanyk
Select Board Vice Chair

Thomas S. Carter
Select Board Member