Dear Members of the City Council,

The Stoughton Area Senior Center is outgrowing its current building. The Center's staff continuously strives to be responsive to community needs, serving adults ages 55-105. The programs and classes the Center offers are educational, social, entertaining, engaging, and support the health and wellness of individuals. As the population in this age group grows significantly, so does the need for more and bigger spaces. The 2020 annual survey indicated a variety of needs:

- There are not enough spaces for larger groups to meet within hours of operation, which drives many of them meet in other community locations (contingent on those other organizations/locations not needing the space).

- More groups would like to meet, often in the same time slot, but cannot due lack of rooms. This results in a kind of competition for spaces, especially larger spaces. In addition, classes that need some quiet cannot be next door to noisier groups: meditation or yoga next to woodworking, dance, or music.

- Many suggestions were made for new classes or events that cannot be accommodated in the current location such as country western singers, dance, art classes, specific hobby groups such as sewing or photography, and more wellness activities and informational presentations.

- Parking is an issue as those who rent the nearby business spaces use the parking lot, as well as those who live in nearby homes.

The Center is a multi-use community space providing a number of services to meet diverse needs and interests for the Stoughton area senior population. These including case management, support groups, equipment loans, meals, transportation assistance, as well as a variety of programs and classes to enhance one's quality of life, the ability to socialize and stay active, and live independently. However, the rooms currently available for activities are too few, and often too small, for the many who would like to meet. Support groups often have 10 or more participants and use movement as well as discussion. The balance class not only teaches those who have difficulty with mobility, but as participants gain control and strength, simple dance and movement can enhance their ability to prevent falls, be independent, and out of a wheelchair.

The City of Stoughton and the Center have three options that may be considered in addressing the needs of the center: (1) build a new center — this would be the most expensive option. (2) buy and renovate an existing building — this, too, would be costly as there are few places available. (3) renovate the nearby string of businesses, sometimes referred to as the “annex”. This proposal supports the third option. The City of Stoughton already owns this building, and while it brings in some income — approximately $28,000 per year — it would be a less expensive option than the other two. The Commission on Aging supports this option, and is willing to work with the Center staff to raise funds needed to renovate the buildings, creating two large 65' x 35'

rooms. No additional staff members would be needed at this time, although the City would see an increase in utility and maintenance costs.

The Center would use the annex for larger groups, events, and programs such as yoga, meditation & mindfulness, tai chi, qi gong, balance & mobility, strength & stretch, dance, music instruction and performance (ukulele/Yahara Strummers), Wii bowling, and large group discussions, classes and presentations.

Please see the attached sample schedule. During the hours that the Center is open, we request that only participants park in the parking lot.

Extending the Stoughton Area Senior Center into the annex would meet the current needs of Stoughton's senior population, as well as for some years to come. It is the least expensive option and the Commission on Aging will assist in raising funds to renovate it so that it is useful and welcoming for all.