

Pantry Transition 2012

Much of this account, written yet another dozen years later, is gleaned from Care & Share General Membership Meeting Minutes of 2012.

March 2012

Over an intense four years, Mae Hill spearheaded the volunteer committee's search for a more permanent Pantry location. Theirs was a labor of love. And grit and determination. In the final twelve months, the site in their sights was the former Town Garage on Roxbury Road. After the March meeting, Mae "expressed optimism and support for moving forward with the Town to accept the space [in the Garage] and adapt it" for C&S uses.

At that juncture, it appeared the negotiations were pointing toward a ten-year lease of the space by Care & Share, with renewable options after the first decade. Care & Share would take care of the necessary maintenance. Care & Share would be responsible for fitting out the subject interior space for a pantry and auxiliary seasonal services and on-going organizational needs. It would truly be a central working space and a landmark statement of the identity that Care & Share had become since its earliest days.

To make it so, Care & Share would replace the front garage door with a generous double wide entry door to service and promote entry directly into the main Pantry area. The spacious high garage ceiling would be transformed by a suspended dropped ceiling. Not only the ceiling would be lower, so would heating bills. The space would convey yet again another kind of architectural warmth to volunteers and clients. And it would be better lit. A budget of \$ 3,000 for utilities would be set aside.

Membership attending the March meeting reviewed the perspective floor plan, which showed the Town would still use the adjacent rear space in the building. A motion was entered and passed to accept the agreement terms as negotiated to that time.

April 2012

Simultaneously to preparing for the hoped-for Roxbury Road location, Care & Share was continually serving the community with an active Pantry. The April minutes bear witness to the thanks that Care & Share expressed to the Niantic Lions Club – for all their help with the holiday activities of 2011 and "most especially for their assistance in moving the Pantry from Hope Street to Midway Plaza."

During the meeting East Lyme's First Selectman, Paul Formica, encouraged C&S to engage the wider community in raising funds specifically to cover the expenses of refurbishing the

[Town Garage] building to accommodate the Pantry etc. and pledged to take an active role in those efforts.”

Vince Martin reported to the assembled general membership that calls were being made “upon individuals for donations for the new site, including in-kind donations of goods and services.” He indicated that “a number of businesses have been extremely supportive of C&S and are likely to be receptive to a one-time, major gift request.” He clarified these offers were completely separate from the annual fundraising appeal and emergency assistance services rendered by Care & Share to the community.

May 2012

By May, negotiations had continued and the membership was informed that the current status was for a 5 year lease, with a subsequent 5 year renewal. However, the legal issues were still being negotiated for the actual mechanics of C&S seeking and the Town granting that renewal, as well as the method whereby Town would issue to C&S a Notice to Quit the site, were that to become necessary.

The annual rent would be only one dollar. C&S would be given five reserved parking spots. Care & Share’s current insurances were deemed sufficient to cover occupancy and use of the new Pantry location. External signage would be permitted, at C&S cost; with approval required from the Town Zoning committee. Utilities were still being negotiated.

June 2012

By the following month’s meeting, the approved lease for Roxbury Road was signed. The lease for the Midway Plaza Pantry space was successfully extended through November, to cover the interim months before Roxbury Road was ready to open its doors.

Meanwhile, over at Roxbury Road, the clean-up and repairs required to start Care & Share’s presence were underway daily. A June 9 two-hour visiting periods was offered for members looking for a firsthand look at conditions and plans.

What would turn out to be overly optimistic, a July 1 operational opening date was tentatively announced to membership. Accordingly, an appeal to members and the general public was initiated to volunteer time to staff the Pantry.

Building-needs fundraising and materials donation were moving ahead full steam.

As another example of other community organizations pitching in to make a new Pantry at Roxbury Road a reality, those at the June meeting heard that the Commander of the local Veterans of Foreign Wars communicated VFW members desired to provide help with the building project “in any way they can.”

August 2012

In August, the news of progress was on the upswell. Work on the Pantry had progressed so far that the building committee was able to present a very detailed punch list. Committee member Mike Hills reported that the two separate rooms designated for an office and lunch room were completed, cleaned, and ready for use, including all structural repairs, painting and electrical work and new flooring. Next will be the bathroom's sink, flooring and baseboard and that side of the space will be finished.

In what was to become the food storage and shelving areas, there was great news. The wall separating the Town's portion of the building has been framed and sheet-rocked, with taping yet to be done. The former truck bays and overhead doors are reconstructed with new windows and doors, and floors power washed. Drywall is up and to be taped with divider wall. Volunteers will paint the walls and a contractor will hang the new ceiling. That done, the floor is to be painted, electrical modifications made, a heater installed and some minor plumbing of utilities.

The report was more than a factual statement. It provided unforgettable insights into the huge amount of volunteer hours and businesses' contributions of materials that had been exerted to make this reality arise out of the uncertain paralysis this same empty, unused expanse threatened but one half a year ago.

The vision of serving neighbors on an active daily basis from this cherished dream excited those present. The Benders and Halls continued working on the interior design of the pantry for its imagined functionality that they shared. Sally Bender assured everyone that "the Pantry space will work out so much better than expected at the beginning stages."

To top off the positivity, and to demonstrate the community involvement that Care & Share's enthusiasm instilled, Stop and Shop managerial staff promised a truck and employee volunteers to help with moving the contents of the active Pantry from Midway Plaza over to Roxbury Road when the time was right.

September 2012

Meeting attendees this ninth month of this transitional year learned that the Roxbury Road Pantry was almost complete due to "overwhelming support of a great many people who donated materials, labor, and time to the effort."

All were invited to "take a look around" during a designated one-hour time slot on the coming Saturday. Enticement to do so was underscored by the big photo poster of "before and after" photos circulated at the September meeting. Enthusiasm and gratitude for this

moment in the history of Care & Share and the communities of East Lyme / Salem were to be sparked by a Lyme Times full page ad to recognize donors and volunteers.

Plans were announced for the third week of the month when Rogovin Movers would relocate pantry freezers from Midway Plaza to Roxbury Road and regional Stop and Shop staff would pack and move and then unpack and re-shelve food from one pantry site to the other.

Lastly, an Open House was planned for October 25, 2012 to show off the new Pantry and to say “thanks.” The operational opening was slated for December 8, 2012.

October through December 2012

October’s minutes attest that Jim Hall reported the move went off smoothly, noting “the Pantry was back up and running in less than 24 hours.”

In November, the committee report informed members the final cleanup of the old Pantry (Midway Plaza) was finished.

And in December, Mike Hill stated in his final, and shortest, report. “It’s DONE.”