



Town of Amherst, Sweet Home Schools Take Next Step Toward Opening Northwest Amherst Community Center

Residents invited to attend Open Houses on May 14 & 16

The Town of Amherst and Sweet Home Central School District are proud to announce that Zaepfel Development has turned over the keys for the new Northwest Amherst Community Center (NWACC) to the Town of Amherst. The 29,000-square-foot space located at 220 Northpointe Parkway, near Sweet Home Road and North French Road, is the first community center in this section of town in two decades. Attending the announcement were Town of Amherst Supervisor Brian Kulpa; Sweet Home School District Superintendent Michael Ginestre; Greg Zaepfel, President of Zaepfel Development; Town of Amherst Deputy Supervisor Jacqueline Berger; Amherst Town Board Member Shawn Lavin; Sweet Home Family Support Center Coordinator Anne Nowak; Kristy D'Angelo, Chief Operating Officer for Gateway-Longview Behavioral Health; and Stacey Dzwulski, Director of Family Support Services for Mental Health Advocates of WNY.

"The Northwest Amherst Community Center fills a void that exists in this part of town. Once the center is fully up and running it will provide a variety of activity and resources. I want to thank the Sweet Home School District and Zaepfel Development for working with the Town to make this center possible, and recognize the stakeholders who are helping to shape the center's goals," said Town Supervisor Kulpa.

"Simply put, the Northwest Amherst Community Center is here to improve the lives of Sweet Home students and all families who live in this area," said School Superintendent Ginestre. "The services that will be provided from the Community Center will better connect our families with our school district and the Town of Amherst. We are here today because the school district and the town had a vision to provide critical community-based support and activities to our families and to improve the lives of all we are here to serve."

The NWACC will host community services, youth and adult recreational facilities, child care and after-school programming, support services and have a gym and fitness center. The center is tentatively slated to offer partial services in the fall of 2022 with full operations opening in September 2023.

“This facility will be a hub for residents of all ages and abilities. Our goal is to develop lifelong relationships in the community and a seamless system of service delivery,” said Mary-Diana Pouli, Executive Director of the Town’s newly formed Department of Community Services.

“The Sweet Home Family Support Center is excited to expand our outreach to students and families and increase access to mental health counseling and parent support through our community partners such as Gateway-Longview Behavioral Health Clinic and Mental Health Advocates of WNY,” said Anne Nowak, Sweet Home Family Support Center Coordinator.

The next step is to work with stakeholders to shape the mission of the NWACC. The Town and the school district are seeking community input. Two Open Houses will be held to offer tours of the facilities and provide information on how to get involved in planning the Center’s programming. All are welcome to attend the Open Houses:

- 10:00 a.m. – noon Saturday, May 14
- 6:00 – 8:00 p.m. Monday, May 16

Following the Open Houses, community surveys and task forces will provide input on the needs of the community and how the NWACC can help meet those needs.

The Sweet Home School District identified a need for a community center when trying to coordinate a summer reading program for young students and finding a lack of available facilities. Recognizing a lack of available land in this section of Town, which is densely populated and faces high poverty rates, organizers decided to repurpose office space.

The NWACC lease is paid for in part with Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds to provide services in low- and moderate-income communities. The COVID-19 pandemic emphasized the need for space that allowed for social distancing while still meeting and interacting safely as a community.

Anyone with questions or who is interested in working with NWACC organizers can email nwacc220@gmail.com.