A Community House for All Seasons
Frequently Asked Questions

Last Updated: September 7, 2025

1. **Why do we need an all-season Community House at all?**
   Because the Community House is our largest, most inclusive, and most central gathering space. Unlike Chestnut, it welcomes everyone — children, families, teens, and older residents alike. It is where we meet, celebrate, learn, and connect. It has space for many more people than Chestnut Cabin, and can better accommodate meals, arts and crafts, and a variety of other events better suited for a multipurpose room than living room. A year-round Community House ensures no one is left out due to weather, space, or age restrictions.

2. **Can Chestnut Cabin replace the Community House in serving community needs?**
   No. Chestnut is a wonderful historic space, but it comes with important limitations. Children are not allowed at events held at Chestnut, and its capacity is limited — no more than 50 people in the air-conditioned portion and up to 100 if combined with the older section without AC. That's often not enough for larger community gatherings. Chestnut simply cannot serve as a true replacement for the Community House.

3. **Why not just use Chestnut Cabin for events?**
   Chestnut works well for certain smaller gatherings, but we've already seen times when it was "standing room only." The Community House was designed as our central meeting space, and its size and location make it far better suited to serve all members of the community.

4. **Did we look into minisplits as an alternative to central HVAC?**
   Yes. Minisplits were considered, but they are not ideal for the Community House. They can be effective in smaller spaces, but the open design and larger rooms of the Community House require a more powerful and efficient system. HVAC is the most reliable long-term solution to ensure comfort year-round. The Community House HVAC Technical Concepts presentation details the concepts that were evaluated and recommended by the Community House HVAC Subcommittee.

5. **Why not start with a lower-cost option first and only add HVAC if it doesn't work?**

While that might sound cautious, in practice it would likely cost the community more. Between the 2024 and 2025, contractors' cost estimates increased $14,000, an increase of 12.5%. Installing a lower-capacity system that ultimately fails would mean paying twice: once for the temporary solution and again for the full HVAC system, likely at a much higher cost than today's estimate. Investing in a proven, long-term solution from the start that will address heating, cooling, and humidity control is more cost-effective and ensures we get it right the first time.

6. **I have heard that "not insulating the roof is like HVACing a tent." Is that something the Community House HVAC Subcommittee explored?**
   This statement is more of a concern in the winter months versus the summer due to the fact that cold air sinks and the system would be housed under the floor in the crawl space.

   In the winter, the HVAC companies have recommended the system be turned off and the pipes drained if the building is not being used for a significant period of time (2 weeks to a month) during very cold temperatures. If the building is used more frequently, then the temperature should be turned down to 50 degrees when no one is in the building. It's been discussed that if the building is rented for an event, and the system is turned on for just that day, the community could charge the renter for electricity to help recoup that cost.

   Right now, we are running an eight-week summer program, in which the building is in use approximately 5 days per week. The system will be running more often during that time, while in the winter, as of right now, it will likely be used less often.

   The HVAC Committee asked all six HVAC companies about the roof insulation. They agreed it would improve the /R value of the building "envelope" and require less operation of the system, but it is feasible to run the system without it. This conclusion was also reached in the Community House HVAC Feasibility Report of 2021. Nate Macek also did a cost comparison of running the system with and without an insulated roof, taking into account EPA estimated energy savings from adding roof insulation to a poorly insulated building. His findings show an annual decrease cost of $700 if the roof were to be insulated; a savings of less than $3.00 per homesite (based on 269 homesites). It will cost the community an additional $34,000 (approximately $126 per homesite) to insulate the roof; adding that to the updated cost estimate sums to a total capital cost of $208,140.

7. **If I vote "No" on the Community House HVAC proposal, will an alternative concept be adopted instead?**
   No. No other Community House HVAC concepts or alternatives are presently before SCA voters. Any alternate approach would require community study and a proposal to be considered by the board as a ballot question in future years.

8. **Where can I learn more about the cost of Community House HVAC?**
   The Community House HVAC Cost Summary breaks down the capital and annual cost of the proposal. The Updated Community House HVAC Proposal, HVAC Annual Cost Estimate Memo, and contractors' Community House HVAC 2025 Cost Estimates are all available online.

9. **How much money has been pledged in support of Community House HVAC?**
   As of September 1, 2025, $62,750 has been pledged in support of the project from 48 community members. These gifts will offset member assessments in 2027, reducing the amount each homesite will pay by $233.

10. **Is it too late to pledge support for Community House HVAC?**
    Not at all! The pledge form is available online, or you may contact communityhousehvac@gmail.com to request a form.

11. **Where can I learn more about the need for Community House HVAC and the specific proposal that's up for approval?**
    The web pages About | A Community House for All Seasons and Proposal | A Community House for All Seasons provide more information about the rationale for the project and the specific proposal. You can also review the Community House HVAC Technical Concepts that were evaluated and recommended by the Community House HVAC Subcommittee.