

COUNCIL ON AGING BOARD MEETING
Minutes of the Council on Aging Board Meeting held on
January 11, 2024

at the Community Center and via Zoom

Members Present: Jeanne Genereux, William Byron, Ruth Delmonico, Charlie Aaronson, George Nisotel, Kathy O'Brien

Associate Members Present: Brian Burke and June Thall

Absent: Al Arthur

The Director of the COA, Alyson Toole, was present.

Brian O'Sullivan and Kathleen Surdan will give their reports in person.

Chair, Jeanne Genereux, opened the meeting at 10:05. She stated that Kathleen would give her Outreach Report first due to a time constraint.

Outreach Report - Kathleen Surdan

- December was very busy especially due to Margaret Decker's resignation in mid-December.
- There were one hundred different people who contacted Outreach.
- Twenty-two friends or family made referrals. With the holidays, many family members were visiting and observed concerns with their older relatives.
- Kathleen received a number of unusual requests, and was able to accommodate them.
- Fuel Assistance - There were 18 applications. There were three from the Friends grant.
- There aren't many registered for the evening Open House on January 31. The staff will assess after it takes place.

The **Minutes** of December 14, 2023 were reviewed and accepted as written.

The Community Preservation Committee - Charlie Aaronson

- The Affordable Housing Committee requested more funds. Building materials have increased so much. They need about \$200,000 more for the Red Acre Road project.
- Usually there's about two million available.
- The only other request this year was for the restoration of the John Randall portrait in the library.

Minuteman Senior Services - Charlie Aaronson

- There is a need for Money Managers, but Minuteman was unaware of this. Brian will request several.

- Minuteman is trying to meet the needs of their clients, but we have to keep asking for services that are needed.
- The Shine counselor has resigned. There is a need and we may have to share one with another town until a new counselor is assigned.

Community Services Coordinator - Brian O'Sullivan

- Another busy month with 50 contacts, referrals were made and assistance provided.
- Minuteman is responding to requests.
- Community Chest - Will coordinate services of charitable organizations so there won't be duplications. They will be better able to help more people.
- There was a question about "The Neighborhood Brigade." This is made up of volunteers who help with tasks like rides, shopping, and other short term assistance. There is no financial help.
- There should be a coordinator for the charities, perhaps, having quarterly meetings with the charitable organizations.
- Housing continues to be a critical issue; Brian is dealing with homeless and evictions.
- State is going to make cuts in monies for Councils on Aging, but Formula Grants will not be touched.

Chair's Report - Jeanne Genereux

- There's a recommendation that all meetings should be recorded, but the COA is not required.
- Discussion about Jim Sauta and his contributions to the COA and the town. The Board was asked to think about an appropriate way to honor him. It will be on next month's agenda. A sympathy card was passed around, and those who wanted, put a donation in an envelope to give to one of his favorite charities.

Director's Report - Alyson Toole

- The Budget
 1. The Friends want to help people directly so some of the items they once paid for will now be in the COA budget. For example, the software, My Senior Center, requires a \$1500 maintenance fee which is no longer be paid by the Friends.
 2. Newsletter will be paid from the Formula Grant.
 3. Gigi's hours have been increased from 24 to 30 hours.

4. The number of transportation substitute drivers has been decreased. We're using more volunteers.
 5. Postage keeps going up.
 6. There is a membership fee for the Massachusetts COA.
 7. Need a license to show movies to groups.
 8. Next Wednesday, January 17, Alyson will meet with Denise to review the budget.
 9. A motion was made and seconded to approve the budget as presented. The vote was unanimous.
- Vans
 1. The van shelter is in the process of being assembled. Should be ready by tomorrow.
 2. Glass on the 20 passenger shattered. It is going to be repaired by a company in Leominster. It's a 2005 and it's driven about once a week to keep it going.
 - Erin Mulcahy was selected to be the new Assistant Town Administrator/Human Resources Director.
 - MART wants to expand its service in February. The plan is to develop scheduled routes.
 - The town has its own newsletter. The purpose is to inform the public about what each of the town departments are doing. It will be available monthly on the town website.
 - The Boy Scouts want to place a storage pod at the Community Center. The COA believes only town departments should place structures or units on municipal property.
 - "Stow Only" is still being addressed. There will be a response in the February Senior Scoop.
 - Plexiglas at the front desk- Kathy O'Brien would like it removed. Alyson will see how the receptionists feel.
 - Statistics -
 - Total People Served - 2085 duplicated 386 - unduplicated
 - % Female - 71.8 %Male - 28.2
 - Average # of People signing in daily - 52
 - # Telephone Calls - 623
 - Most Popular Activities - Food, Exercise
 - Interactions/Services provided by COA Staff - 277 duplicated
 - Most Provided Service - Transportation, general help, donations, and fitness
 - Transportation :
 - Rides - 240 Riders - 42
 - Volunteers and Tax Work-off Hours - 252

The meeting adjourned at 12 noon. The next meeting will be on
February 8, 2024 at 10:00 A.M.
Respectfully submitted.

Ruth A. Delmonico, secretary