

Needham Council on Aging Board Meeting

September 14, 2023

Present: Colleen Schaller, Chair, Penny Grossman, Vice Chair, Helen Gregory, Dan Goldberg, Ed Cosgrove, Carol de Lemos, Kathy Whitney, Kate Robey, Lianne Relich, Ted Prorok, VFW representative

Advisory Board: Anne Cosgrove

COA: Latanya Steele, Director Jessica Moss, Social Work

SHINE: Michelle Gucciardi, Director

Friends: Carol Ditmore

Needham Housing Authority Appointee: Ann DerMarderosian

- 1. Call to Order** The meeting was called to order by Ms. Schaller at 5:10 pm combination of in person and on Zoom.

- 2. Aging Services Division**

- a. Social Work, Ms. Jessica Moss**

Ms. Moss noted they were delighted to have Ms. Isabel Dick on board and she is doing a great job. The wait list for counseling is currently up to date with her help.

The first intern from Boston College has started. Her name is Stephanie. Her last internship was in Medfield. She will be helping with the short term counseling program.

Ms. Cusack and Ms. Moss appeared on Needham Cable to discuss SNAP intake.

Ms. Moss and Ms. Cusack area are chairing Needham Wellness Coalition among all town employees.

Ms. Cusack and Ms. Moss are working on homeless issues in town on a new committee. There are some migrant families that could arrive in Needham as well as older adults. Another meeting occurs next week with BEI Needham.

A new program is partnering with the Salvation Army voucher program. This program can help with utilities bills and other needs.

The coffee hours continue at the Needham Housing Authority

Volunteering remains steady. There have been three separate volunteer trainings in the past month for front desk, kitchen and gift shop.

Ms. Moss is working with the guidance department at the high school to provide support for students who want to do their service hours with the COA so it is not as chaotic and last minute as in past years.

b. SHINE Update, Ms. Michelle Gucciardi

Ms. Gucciardi noted SHINE is gearing up for open enrollment. This year the volunteers received branded jackets. Appointments began on September 5 and open enrollment continues from October 15 to December 7. The capacity is 650 person and all appointments were taken in 2022 by Thanksgiving. This was the largest number of appointments since COVID. She is recommending people call early to schedule. SHINE has been advertising at many fairs and at COA's from Brookline to Westboro.

C: Transportation Update—Ms. Steele presented

In the capital budget Mr. Grably made the request for a new van 14 passenger with a wheelchair lift. He has also been attending several Mass Dot trainings.

c. Programming Update, Ms. Steele

The numbers continue to grow and new participants are coming through all the time. The afternoon is still a work in progress without enough transportation later in the afternoon.

The Dinner bells program is bringing more people into the center.

The staff has been providing counseling and support as several regulars have passed recently.

d: Update Ms. Latanya Steele's Director's Report

Ms. Steele noted that MCOA has requested a review of our mission statement.

Mr. Cosgrove made a motion to support the original mission statement. Mr. Goldberg seconded the motion. The Board unanimously passed by voice vote to support the original mission statement as written below.

The mission statement is "The mission of the Center at the Heights, which stands as the focal point for issues of aging in our community, is to provide a welcoming, inclusive and secure environment where both individuals and families benefit from programs, services, and resources that enhance their quality of life and provide opportunities for growth."

3. Chairperson's Report, Ms. Schaller

Ms. Schaller noted she does not have a formal report but she is working with Mr. Timothy McDonald, Director of Health and Human Services, on a parking update for the spots alongside Hillside Avenue. Ms. Fitzpatrick, Town Manager, is in conversation with Mr. McDonald on the issue.

Ms. Schaller introduced the new Board member from the Housing Authority Ms. Ann DerMarderosian.

The issue of moving the fitness room with the game room is still in front of Fin Com so there has been no update. The Board noted that the game room has 10-12 participants on average per day while the fitness room has 20 every day and there is no space to move around. My senior center, while not a perfect count had 35 unduplicated users in August, while the fitness room had 118 unduplicated. The check ins for August for the game room was 200, while in the same month for the fitness room was 784.

She recommended subscribing to the Needham Observer via email as they have had strong writing and reporting on many town issues.

Finally, she noted Sandra Prinn has resigned so the Board needs a new member.

Minutes for June 2023 were tabled until the October meeting as some members had not had a chance to read them.

4. VFW Representative Report, Mr. Ted Prorok

Mr. Prorok noted the 4th of July parade was success; most veterans rode on the flatbed truck.

Purple Heart Day on September 11th also went well.

The flag recycling bin at the transfer station is getting use.

The VSO thought he had an agreement with Wellesley to take the flags for disposal but that fell through so he is working with other towns in the 5 town region for a disposal plan.

The Voice of Democracy Patriot's Pen contest has opened which provides scholarships for college. The top prize is \$35,000 but there are smaller prizes as well.

Mr. Prorok asked the Board to advertise among their family and friends.

4. Friends Board Report

Ms. Ditmore noted that both the August make your own sundaes and the September 8th strawberry shortcake events were successful.

The gift shop's redesign looks great and regularly increases sales. Ms. Moss's training has helped since not all the volunteers know each other as they work different shifts.

Ms. Schaller noted she attends the Friends meetings and the new donation policy posted in the window has helped cut down on items that are not suitable for donation/sale.

5. Old Business

The Board noted that the strawberry shortcake event was on the front page of the Hometown Weekly.

6. New Business

Ms. Schaller mentioned that the Needham History Center is planning a 10th anniversary gala. A discussion ensued on a massive fundraiser involving The Friends. The Friends will see if they are interested in a group fundraising effort at their October meeting. More information at the October or November Board meeting.

The Board had a general discussion on requiring the pro and cons of requiring event registration. The consensus was that it was worth trying as a test case for at least some events. For example, the Dinner Bells program ran out of food one night as so many people showed up without registering. Several Board members noted many groups do not allow walks in and after a while for both planning and financial reasons potential attendees get used to needing to sign up ahead of time.

Ms. Schaller asked for a motion to adjourn. Mr. Goldberg made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Cosgrove seconded. The Board adjourned by unanimous voice vote at 6:05 pm

Respectfully Submitted,

Faith Crisley

Recording Secretary