

Needham Council on Aging Board Meeting

February 8, 2024

Present: Colleen Schaller, Chair Penny Grossman Vice Chair, Kathy Whitney, Carol De Lemos, Sue Mullaney, Beverly P(Friends), Helen Gregory, Ed Gosgrove, Kate Robey, Liane Relich, Ann DerMarderosian, Needham Housing Authority Representative, Ted Prorok VFW Representative

Guests: Amy Gomes, SHINE

Friends: Beverly Pavasaris

COA: Latanya Steele, Director; Jessica Moss, Assistant Director of Counseling, Aicha Kelley, Assistant Director of Programming

Advisory Board: Ann Cosgrove

1. **Call to Order** The meeting was called to order by Ms. Schaller at 5:05 pm combination in person and on Zoom.

Aging Services Division

2. Social Work, Ms. Jessica Moss

Ms. Moss noted it has been a busy month. The numbers are steady and volunteers are steady except for new people. The trainings went well. The numbers are slightly higher than in January. The tablet grant will be submitted this month and spearheading the homelessness prevention coalition. We have had more incidents of homelessness in Town.

3. SHINE, Ms. Amy Gomes

We attended several trainings in January. What is new for Medicare in 2024 and also attended postal service retirement plan and we started trainings with each individual counselors.

The monthly counselor meetings on January 4 and 9 and provided training on Medicare.

We sent an article to the COA's and provide information on having an in network pharmacy selected.

WE hired two new administrative assistants to help in the office and outreach in the MetroWest area.

We also met with SHINE group at the State level to talk about earmarked state funding.

4. Programming, Ms. Aicha Kelley

Ms. Kelley noted that having the SHINE program in our building is such a blessing. The SHINE clients often become active within CATH.

Programming and transportation have been effected by COVID and other viruses this past month.

Compass went out to print it should be back about February 14th. Ms. Kelley reached out to the salesperson and we have one of the largest newsletters in the region competing with Barnstable which is a larger community. We only have two small ad spaces left and this is highly unusual and kudos to the Center team.

Ms. Schaller asked if the ads affect the content. Since joining LPI five years ago Ms. Kelley noted the more programming she adds to the newsletter automatically increases the number of advertisement pages. Ms. Kelley keeps the entire newsletter at a length that avoids increased postal costs.

We have new partnerships with BEI and are expanding on current partnerships.

There is an uptick for those wanting to advertise in home health care and assisted living facilities. We are letting them know we do not want hard sales groups.

We hired one new van driver and are interviewing two more. We do need a substitute driver, especially with illness.

We are designing a 2024 survey to see what clients need beyond the current programming and transportation. Several programs such as Steve Cadigan programs were standing room only which is new.

Ms. Kelley asked about the metal topper for the dumpster. Ms. Kelley noted that the rodents are an issue even with the peppermint oil and this needs to be moved up with Public Works since the plastic topper is not adequate.

5. Directors Report, Ms. Latanya Steele

Ms. Steele noted she is looking for more grants especially to continue the community dinners; she had to cancel the January and February community dinners both for weather and money. The cost for the dinners has risen from \$500 to \$800 per meal. People are happy because they like the chance to dine together rather than alone at home.

She noted that the \$5.00 donation helps continue the program. Ms. Schaller noted that we should consider making it a requirement.

A binder in the fitness rooms celebrates African American athletes the month of February. The binders will address other monthly themes.

She asked if anyone heard of new grant programs to bring this to the attention of the staff.

Ms. Schaller noted that the Town Manager's budget has taken out the part time front desk position. Ms. Steele noted that having someone that is not a volunteer helps with the registration data and safety. Ms. Schaller noted FinCom is unlikely to add it. One of the Board member who is a volunteer noted that if someone calls in sick it makes it harder to cover the desk and a staff person helps with messaging consistency.

Ms. Steele thanked the two Board members who spoke eloquently at the FinCom meeting in support of the COA budget.

Ms. Steele thanked the Board members who have been attending events.

Ms. Schaller noted that Ms. Kelley has asked Board members to be present in the morning or the evening to meet with clients on April 4.

6. FINCOM Update Ms. Schaller

She noted it is hard to read the situation there. She noted none of the important things are in the offing such as moving the fitness room.

Ms. Mullaney noted that the feasibility study supported this and she wondered what had happened with this.

Ms. Schaller will send a copy of the budget. Mr. Cosgrove noted there was more discussion of Public Health's budget.

7. January 11, 2024, Minutes

Ms. DerMarderosian made a motion to approve the January 11, 2024, minutes as written. Ms. Cosgrove seconded. **The January 11 Minutes were unanimously approved by voice vote.**

8. New Business

Housing Changes

The Selectboard is writing a second warrant to increase housing unit plans.

The zoning on Avery has been changed but there is no developer yet. The past developer may return. Ms. Schaller noted she wanted the Board to be aware of any proposals so the Board could weigh in with their opinion.

The Wingate renovation independent apartments are for sale. The actual nursing home has 72 apartments 65 and older. These do not help meet the MBTA half mile range regulations for more housing.

Ms. DerMarderosian noted the Needham Housing Authority properties all need renovation. They control 419 units across various agencies and an additional 8 units from the public housing controlled by SMART. This is not under the COA jurisdiction as state and federal agencies. The Board thinks families may also be allowed to enter if and when the renovation occurs. An overview of the Housing Authority plan was presented.

Citizens Petition to Town Meeting to Count Attics and Basements as part of the Overall Square Footage of your House so it must be 5 feet high. Ms. Schaller noted that all the new houses are 3 stories high as the basements are blasted and built deep to accommodate the zoning height restrictions. It is also designed to make sure square footage is being taxed under the real estate rules. It is floor area X lot area. The Board discussed if this was designed to encourage builders to build smaller homes.

9. Mr. Ted Prorok, VFW Representative

VFW and Exchange Club meeting went very well and it was a sold out event. The Patriots Pen and Voice of Democracy winners spoke and they were incredibly impressive students.

February 3 Celebration of Life for Bob Larson was well attended. It was a poignant as well as humorous event.

Mr. Prorok asked if the Minutes were available to the general public. Ms. Schaller noted that they are posted on the Town website.

Mr. Prorok will send a note to Representative Garlick to investigate leasing or purchasing the MBTA lot. Ms. Steele will ask Mr. McDonald if he has an update.

Homestead Protection

This is up to \$250,000 in protection from liability.

10. Friends

Ms. Pavasaris noted that February 11 is their next special event. March 8 is the staff appreciation day. The Friends meet the first Friday of every month at 10 am.

11. Motion to Adjourn

Mr. Cosgrove made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Mullaney seconded the motion. **The Board meeting was adjourned by unanimous voice vote at 6:18 pm.**

Respectfully Submitted,

Faith Crisley

Recording Secretary