

Needham Council on Aging Board Meeting

December 8, 2022

Present: Colleen Schaller, Chair, Penny Grossman, Vice Chair, Helen Gregory, Sandra Prinn, Ed Cosgrove, Carol de Lemos, Kathy Whitney, Sue Mullaney, Dan Goldberg, Ann Cosgrove, Ted Prorok, VFW representative

COA: LaTanya Steele, Director,

Health and Human Services Director: Timothy Muir McDonald

Guests: Anne Brain, Friends of the Cath

SHINE: Michelle Gucciardi, Director

1. Meeting called to order by Ms. Schaller at 5:10 pm combination of in person and on Zoom

2. Aging Services Division Report, Ms. LaTanya Steele

Ms. Steele mentioned the Giving Tree which assists isolated, lonely and disabled adults living in the Needham Housing Authority. Volunteers select an ornament, purchase the gift and return to the CATH where other volunteers wrap the gifts.

Ms. Steele mentioned that Lovin' Spoonful is expanding their services.

Ms. Steele also noted that Jess Moss in social work had a baby boy.

- a. In her absence Ms. Steele provided an overview of social services. Clients' numbers have increased, and the social work team is supporting each other.

Ms. Steele attends weekly meetings with other COA directors. The December meeting will address homeless shelter issues.

The January directors meeting will discuss transportation, also in the context of continuing need for Springwell meal delivery by individual COA's.

Ms. Steele mentioned the COA has stepped in to assist some 48–55-year residents in Needham who have no other services statewide available. The goal is to prevent homelessness for residents who are struggling with unemployment, substance abuse and mental health issues.

Ms. Steele noted she continues to collaborate with MCOA.

b. SHINE Update, Ms. Michelle Gucciardi

Ms. Gucciardi noted open enrollment ended December 7. Results are being compiled but she noted that numbers are up across the MetroWest region with appointments handled by Zoom, phone and in person.

By Thanksgiving all their appointments were filled.

In terms of capacity for next year there will be seventy counselors available. Ms. Gucciardi thanked Ms. Annie Toth, the COA administrative assistant, for her "incredible" job scheduling 600 appointments.

c. Programming Report, Ms. LaTanya Steele

Ms. Steele noted they are averaging 30 programs per week including programming in fitness, educational topics, financial needs and cultural events.

Feedback from instructors is strong.

Move it, Shake it is very popular as well as Chair 1 massage.

Debbie Maibor's Express Yourself over lunch is growing.
The stroke support group has also had an increase in membership.
The entertainment downstairs is also popular.
The Thanksgiving dinner with Avita had 118 attendees and was a huge success.

d. Transportation Report, Ms. LaTanya Steele

Mr. Grably is trying to add the Trader Joe's/CVS run as soon as a driver is available.
The Needham Community Council delivered 350 meals assisted by 39 volunteer drivers to 180 different locations on the Wednesday before Thanksgiving.
Mr. Grably will be attending a transportation round table to discuss mobility issues in January.
The vehicles had four repairs this month.
A better grade dash cam is being installed in all the vans.

3. Chairperson's Report –Ms. Colleen Schaller

Ms. Schaller noted she had no updates and is postponing a vote on the November minutes until the December meeting.

4. Update about the Housing Plan Working Group, Ms. Helen Gregory

Ms. Gregory provided an overview noting the community meeting went well. On December 8th the Housing working group will have their debrief meeting and review the final report which identified various groups and made action item recommendations. The report will then be sent to the Selectboard for constructive comment. Mr. Cosgrove, who is also a member of the working group, noted it will then go to the Planning Board which will need to make sure recommendations comply with MBTA regulations. The Needham Housing Authority is moving ahead separately with their renovation study and plans. Mr. Cosgrove noted the largest problem is the increasing number of teardowns and how that intersects with affordable housing goals. The Board agreed that the cost of alternative housing remains an issue.

5. VFW Representative Report, Mr. Ted Prorok

Mr. Prorok noted that the VFW service officer position is not yet filled.
Mr. Prorok has emailed the acting superintendent for the DPW for an update on the flag disposal bin at the transfer station and will report to the Board when he has more information.
Mr. Prorok noted the town parking survey. He recommended that it would be a good time for the Town/COA to reach out to the MBTA on getting back some of the unused commuter rail parking spots especially in the Heights next to the CATH.
Mr. Prorok noted the annual police holiday dinner is this coming Sunday at the VFW hall.

6. Friends of the Cath Board Report

Ms. Brain noted that they are purchasing a large computer monitor soon to help with Compass production.

7. Old Business

Mr. Goldberg asked for an update on the delays in the online programming payment system. Ms. Steele noted that it should be online before the end of the fiscal year.
Mr. Goldberg also noted there are no updates on the Avery building plan.

Mr. Cosgrove asked about drivers beyond the 2 pm hour and Ms. Steele noted that even with the \$1.00 an hour raise they have not been able to hire another driver. The COA has not been able to get volunteers to deliver meals to free the drivers for later in the day transportation.

Ms. Steele noted she is open to Board suggestions for other volunteer organizations and/or individuals to reach out to.

8. New Business

The Board discussed accreditation. The National Council on Aging (NCOA) is no longer offering accreditation beginning July 1, 2023. The board noted that the accreditation (which only 300 of the 10,000 senior centers in Massachusetts currently have) was a great help when the building was constructed but it is not really needed now especially as it is being eliminated. The Board noted they had not started the reaccreditation process and so will not proceed. The NCOA will replace accreditation with a no cost certification showing a center meets basic standards.

Ms. Steele noted that the basement is in the process of being cleaned and she is in touch with Ms. Eaton, the MMC Town Clerk, to determine records disposal methods and if certain records need to be kept the possibility of using Town scanning services. The Board recommended checking with the Needham History Center on any documents of a historical nature.

9. Ms. Schaller requested a Motion to Adjourn.

Mr. Cosgrove made a motion to adjourn; Ms. Whitney seconded the motion. The Board unanimously adjourned at 6:06 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Faith Crisley

Recording Secretary