

Needham Council on Aging Board Meeting

April 13, 2023

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

COA: Latanya Steele, Director Jessica Moss, Social Work

Director, Health and Human Services: Timothy Muir McDonald

SHINE: Amy Gomes

Friends: Beverly Pavasaris

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

2. Aging Services Division

Directors Report, Ms. Latanya Steele

Ms. Steele noted the CATH has been much busier, planning more outdoor events with the nice weather and complaints about parking are up, which is sure sign of success.

The Friends have provided funding for Lunch and Learn programs as the FY 24 budget is prepared.

Ms. Steele thanked Mr. Gene Arcand and his AARP volunteers for their hours serving the tax needs of Needham seniors. Ms. Steele noted they will be welcome back next season.

a. Social Work and Volunteer Report, Ms. Jessica Moss

Ms. Moss noted they have been very busy but the new clinician job has gone through two rounds of interviews so they are waiting for a final answer from the person who the position was offered to.

The wait list for individual counseling sessions continues to be very long and so the social work staff has stopped advertising as they catch up with the backlog. Interfaith, which is contracted with the Town, has been helpful in locating some referrals.

Ms. Moss noted that the social work staff continue to have clinical case consultation training with the BC clinical supervisor Ms. Rhonda Kerans and an intern will be joining the staff from BC in the fall.

Social Work has partnered with Public Health to train the van drivers who deliver meals on protective service protocols and to recognize the sign of elder abuse and report it. Ms. Moss noted they are happy to offer this training for the first time under the auspices of the Director of Elder Protective Services Department at Springwell Elder Services.

The coffee and donut hour at the Needham Housing Authority has been going well thanks to Friends funding support. More residents of the Housing Authority are attending CATH events and reaching out for services. Meetings with the new residence director continue regularly.

The caregiver support group remains strong.

The end of the COVID emergency on May 11 is prompting recertification requests in droves for Mass Health which has not been required during the COVID state of emergency. Ms. Moss noted the staff is partnering with SHINE in trainings that will allow us to advise those who are now ineligible for Mass Health who may be eligible for Medicare. Ms. Moss noted many queries still from the March change in SNAP (formerly food stamps) benefits due to the state of emergency ending.

Ms. Moss noted that the CATH continues to have an amazing volunteer crew with 616 hours completed in March. Successful training occurred in March for the front desk staff including review of the My Senior Center computer application.

b. SHINE Report, Ms. Amy Gomes

Ms. Gomes noted the CATH will host two Shine trainings Medicare 101 in April 2023 and an Action Plan training with impending SNAP and Mass Health training level 2 in May 2023. She noted as Ms. Moss did that some seniors will not get back on Mass Health so the Medicare counselor information training is part of the partnership training.

The 1 on 1 counselor March training provided information from the December client feedback survey, as well as training on common questions and answers.

She noted they trained 11 new counselors at the end of March 6 are volunteers and the rest are professionals. More training begins April 24th. This involves an online Universal benefits training also available on CD's. The same training was provided by SHINE to the Wellesley College faculty and staff union members.

Ms. Gomes has also met with the Housing Authority residence director Laurie Blake. SHINE is doing outreach presentations there on Mass Health/Medicare and SNAP.

She happily noted that 2 of the 5 approved billboards are now up and SHINE is hoping to attract more clients to their services, especially younger seniors.

Mr. Goldberg noted that the Mass Health reauthorization mailing came in a blue envelope which really made it stand out and hopes people will return the information on time to recertify. Ms. Steele noted that they have put in the Highlights to watch for the mailing and to remind seniors to return it. Ms. Gomes noted they have also sent reminders and are presenting at various senior centers.

c. Programming Report, Ms. Steele presented for Ms. Kelley

Ms. Steele noted the best sign is that the swipe cards had to be reordered. This shows there are more registrants both in and outside of Needham.

Ms. Kelley is now planning events through October.

The average is 30 programs per day. Ms. Gregory inquired if there was ever a point that a maximum capacity had been reached. Ms. Steele noted if they find any program on a pertinent topic the staff will try to fit it in. Ms. Steele noted that if the second part time afternoon driver position could be filled then more programming could be added in the afternoons.

Ms. Steele noted there have been more Newton visitors as their senior center is being rebuilt, She also noted that the Needham COA has never restricted events to seniors only.

Ms. Steele noted they have made an offer for the part time front desk receptionist position and hope she will accept.

Ms. Steele noted she is reaching out to North Hill and hopes to have a collaborative weekend program in the fall on housing options. DEI issues programming is being planned for a weekend in October.

d. Transportation Report, Ms. Steele on behalf of Mr. Grably

All the drivers underwent mandatory March Mass DOT training and the certificates are on file with Human Resources.

Mr. Grably is now a trainer's trainer meaning he is certified to train others. He is also serving on the town wide board to look at transportation needs. He will update the Board in June on the town wide board information. Ms. Moss noted in conjunction with Ms. Steele that the medical taxi grant of just under \$50,000 will begin in May and they anticipate the funds being exhausted quickly. The contract has been signed with JFK Taxi and each senior will be allowed one round trip ride per week. The 8 mile radius includes Boston which does not have many options for those needing medical appointments.

3. Chairperson's Report, No report as Ms. Schaller was absent.

a. Minutes

Mr. Cosgrove made a motion to approve the March 9, 2023, minutes. Ms. Gregory seconded. The Board approved the minutes by voice vote unanimously.

Article 9 Discussion—Expansion of ADU's

Ms. Grossman, Vice Chair opened the floor to discussion of Article 19

Ms. Grossman noted she thought the plan was well thought out, well written and incorporates safeguards including that the aim is not two family housing. Modifying the regulations allows for more ADU's as only twelve have been approved in three years. She also noted that many groups support the revisions as a way of addressing affordable housing needs in town.

Ms. Grossman noted that size of the ADU increases from 850 to 900 square feet. Stand alone Adu's are now allowed with certain setback restrictions on property lines. The definition of family who can live in them has been expanded to include grandparents, aunts and uncles. Leases are allowed of not less than 6 months. Ms. Gregory noted she supported the changes. Mr. Cosgrove noted that he believes it is a tremendous proposal as so many seniors are squeezed on real estate taxes on their properties that having an income producing unit on property will allow more seniors to stay in their homes longer. He noted that the definition of family may not be broad enough but that can be revisited. He also noted that having lived in small college towns in the Midwest and Ohio with similar ADU housing they can improve the character of the Town having many different people living in close proximity to each other.

Mr. Cosgrove made a motion to support the staff, the Director of the COA and the Director of the Department of Public Health in preparing a letter on behalf of the Board in support of the Article 19 by law ADU Proposal before the May Town meeting. Mr. Goldberg seconded the motion.

Mr. McDonald noted that he and Ms. Steele will prepare the letter with Ms. Schaller's signature and circulate it first to Ms. Schaller and then the Board before sending it to the Selectboard. The Board agreed the letter should be sent the week of April 18th.

Mr. Goldberg noted that Balfour withdrew the 100 West Street proposal before the Planning Board meeting. Welltower, the owner of the property requested an extension of their permit through June 2024 which was approved by the Planning Board. Mr. Goldberg noted that Welltower understood the opposition of the community to the Balfour proposal and understood inflationary pressures. Mr. Goldberg thought there might not be any other proposals on the table for 2023 due to inflation. Mr. Cosgrove noted its central location makes it ideal for independent senior housing and he worries about the building's continued deterioration in the absence of new proposals.

4. VFW Representative Report, Mr. Ted Prorok

Mr. Prorok noted that the National Vietnam Veteran's Day on March 29th went well and the event included a state representative, the Police, Fire, a member of the Selectboard as well as a rifle unit and a bag piper.

He also noted that due to the foreman at the transfer station's continued diligence the flag bin will soon be available at the transfer station. Mr. Prorok asked Ms. Steele if a drop box could be added to the CATH with an advertisement in the Compass. He or Mr. Tedeschi could then regularly collect for disposal at the VFW Hall.

Mr. Tedeschi, as the Veterans Service officer, is working with all his towns to help meet the various Mass General laws on the books that have not yet been met. He will be discussing the addition of a Veterans parking space near Needham Town Hall soon.

Mr. Prorok also noted that the State Commander of Veteran's Posts Mike Raymond is promoting a bill statewide to support forgiveness of property tax for all veterans 65 years of age or older. He noted that Governor Healey said she will sign if it passes the House and Senate.

5. Friends Report

Ms. Pavasaris noted they had a good meeting on Friday. Kelly the Cop assisted the Friends in making bird baths or feeders from unused lamp bases. She is looking for more bases and some were on display in the room.

6. Old Business

None

7. New Business

Ms. Prinn inquired if anything could be done about fixing the CATH's front door which does not open on one side and has been broken for over two years. It impedes seniors on walkers' entrance to the building without assistance. Mr. McDonald noted that the job was put to bid but a contractor was not found. Mr. McDonald requested individual Board members email him about their concerns as the absence of the repair is an obstacle for seniors with mobility issues. He will use the email to try to move the bidding process along.

Ms. Grossman asked for a motion to adjourn. Mr. Goldberg made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Cosgrove seconded. The Board adjourned by unanimous voice vote at 6:00 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Faith Crisley

Recording Secretary