

**Needham Council on Aging  
April 28, 2016  
Minutes**

**Present: Carol deLemos, Colleen Schaller, Susanne Hughes, Lianne Relich, Eilene Kleiman, Monica Graham, Ed Cosgrove, Tom Keating, Dan Goldberg, and Phyllis Fanger. Penny Grossman was not present.**

**Also Present: Kate Fitzpatrick, Town Manager, and Christopher Coleman  
ATM/Personnel**

**Staff: Jamie Brenner Gutner**

**Convene: 5:00 p.m. - The Center at the Heights, 300 Hillside Avenue, Needham**

**CALL TO ORDER: 5:00 p.m. Carol deLemos and Colleen Schaller, Co-Chairs, called the meeting to order.**

Carol deLemos referred to a profile of COA Board members provided to Ms. Fitzpatrick and Mr. Coleman earlier and Board members introduced themselves. The following general discussion questions were distributed prior to the meeting.

**A. What is your vision for the COA Board of Directors?**

Ms. Fitzpatrick said for 15 years the vision of the COA was to construct a new building. She said the #1 goal for the COA should be to advocate for Needham's elderly. She suggested goal setting.. She said she wants to know the needs of the COA, and what needs are not being met. Ms. Fitzpatrick said transportation and housing are a top priority in many towns, commenting zoning and permitting could be a way to bring housing to walkable areas. Ms. Fitzpatrick said if those are priorities of the COA and they can be set as goals of the COA Board, it will help in budgeting. Ms. Fitzpatrick said if issues arise effecting seniors, it is important to voice concerns to advocate to the State Representative and legislature. She asked for Board input. Discussion ensued about possible goal setting meetings, staffing, longer hours of operation, weekend hours and use of the building for community purposes.

Dan Goldberg commented on the need for elderly housing on one floor and transportation. Discussion ensued about over 55 housing, transportation, and the use of Uber and "The Ride." Jamie Brenner Gutner commented on an Uber the pilot program presented by the Metrowest Foundation that has been successful in Florida.Funding may be available to replicate this.

Eilene Kleiman asked what the best way to make our needs known was. Ms. Fitzpatrick said having a long range strategic plan makes the conversation focused and easier to achieve set goals.

**B. What is the Board’s advisory capacity relative to elder issues being considered by other town departments/boards (i.e. Housing Authority, Planning Board), and can we as a Board take a stand on such issues?**

Colleen Schaller commented on housing and asked if the COA has authority to approach various town boards about issues? Ms. Fitzpatrick commented on the Large House Study Committee hearing and said it is a COA responsibility to advocate for the needs of seniors. She suggested a possible joint meeting with the Housing Authority, who are at the beginning stages of planning the Linden-Chambers housing project. Susanne Hughes said the Housing Authority recommended her to the COA and that she was appointed by the Board of Selectmen, but there is no communication. Ed Cosgrove said there should be better communication and it is important for the COA to have input in rebuilding Linden-Chambers. He commented on a grant for a health department survey distributed to seniors concerning housing and transportation. He said most housing being built in Needham is inappropriate for seniors as it is too big, expensive, or multi-level. Ms. Fitzpatrick suggested the COA Board should advocate housing as a priority to the Board of Selectmen. She suggested contact be made with the Director of the Housing Authority and the Community Housing Specialist (Karen Sunnarborg) to arrange a meeting. The Board agreed it was a good idea. Carol deLemos suggested contacting Scott Brightman (former member of COA Board and current member of the Needham Housing Authority).

Carol deLemos asked whether the COA Board can take a stand on a highly controversial issue. Ms. Fitzpatrick said yes, however if it’s a highly controversial issue and counter to the Board of Selectmen, perhaps a phone call could be made first for a reasonable beginning conversation. She noted instances are rare. Ms. Fitzpatrick encouraged the COA Board to write a letter or call the Board of Selectmen when issues come up.

**C. What, if any, are the differences in responsibility of appointed boards vs. elected boards?**

Eilene Kleiman asked the difference between appointed and elected boards? Ms. Fitzpatrick explained it is not an easy answer because some elected boards have State charters, and other appointed boards have statutory responsibilities. Eilene Kleiman said she has never been fully certain as to her role and suggested it may have been helpful to have a town-wide information session with basic Board training. Ms. Fitzpatrick said there is very limited fiduciary responsibility and the COA Board is intended to primarily advocate for seniors and setting policy for use of the COA facility and programming. Carol deLemos suggested newly appointed members of all town boards should have an opportunity to meet. Ms. Fitzpatrick said newly appointed members have met on occasion, more specifically to discuss open meeting laws and ethics. She commented on the possibility of a citizen’s academy, where the public can learn about how government operates and what each department does.

**D. Can we, as individuals, recommend people we have dealt with through the Center, (i.e. Boston Art)?**

Carol deLemos asked if it was legal for her to recommend people she has worked with in her position at the COA? Ms. Fitzpatrick said yes, if talking factually about an experience she has had when asked. She said it would not be allowed to recommend a particular person for a particular job.

**E. Can we change our by-laws to reflect a better number to be able to have a quorum to vote on issues? We form an Executive Board to make decisions in summer months, can we also form one during our regular meeting schedule when members travel?**

Colleen Schaller said this question arises because the COA Board does not meet in the summer, and if a vote needs to be taken there is an Executive Committee of 4 people. She said during the winter, Board members might be away. Ms. Fitzpatrick commented it depends on the kinds of things being voted. She said the Board can vote to designate the Chair or possibly a group of people to take certain actions. Lianne Relich asked if Town by-laws permit off-site participation/virtual meetings. Ms. Fitzpatrick said Town by-laws do not yet permit off-site participation or virtual meetings. She suggested the COA Board may want to ask the Board of Selectmen to reconsider off-site participation. Mr. Coleman said under State law the Chair and record keeper must be present as the public has the right to participate/listen, as it is an open meeting and a quorum must be met. He commented that Executive Board votes are not binding without a quorum. Discussion ensued on the number of people who must be present for a quorum, the number of Board members, and recommending candidates for the COA Board. Ms. Fitzpatrick asked the COA Board to send her a letter if it wants the Board of Selectmen to reconsider remote participation.

**F. From the Town's perspective, when can an Executive Director make decisions independently from their advisor?**

Ms. Fitzpatrick said that the COA Director makes decisions daily. Mr. Coleman said policy decisions could be made based on the intent of the Board

**G. The COA Board requested clarification relative to the recent classification of the Council on Aging Executive Director:**

Carol deLemos said the general feeling was it should be at a higher level and asked what can be done to reach the higher classification level? Dan Goldberg asked about the methodology? Mr. Coleman said a consultant was hired, a peer review was completed, and a survey was conducted for all management positions. He said the survey (with responses from 9 of 11 communities) for the COA Director position was conducted leading to an average salary of those communities. He noted the resulting survey salary was actually lower than the current compensation. He said all management positions were considered and the recommendation from the Town Manager was to take the current salary of the COA Director, as compared to the average survey salary, and make it even higher. Colleen Schaller stated that salary was not the issue. Mr. Coleman gave further background of other

management positions in comparison to the survey and placement. He said the DPW Supervisors were paid differently and one classification away from each other. He commented the survey indicated DPW Supervisors should be a certain classification so a group of managers, mainly DPW employees, who were previously in the same classification as Youth Services and Council on Aging were moved up as a result of the survey.

Susanne Hughes said the COA Board must understand the classification. She said the Director may have has responsibility for less in-house employees than some other managers, but an enormous amount of responsibility for programming and volunteers that other managers may not have. She commented the position is on par with other departments who have a higher classification, and is not equitable. Ms. Fitzpatrick said there are a lot of different factors, and the major change was going from 5 grades to 9 grades, and not all of the titles ended up in the same place with the same people. She commented it may look as if people were downgraded at many levels, not just the COA Director position. She said many factors are considered, as well as outside comparable compensation. Dan Goldberg said an examination of what the other COA's are doing/programming/participation level should be done. He noted the SHINE program is run by Needham in 22 Towns to include the towns of Brookline, Newton, Watertown, Wellesley and Wayland. He commented the Needham COA cannot be compared with other COA's without considering the individual programming, the number of SHIN volunteers and the level of social services.

Discussion ensued about the classification effect on the quality of candidates when the time comes to hire a new COA Director. Ms. Fitzpatrick said that is a good point, and the reason compensation is considered is because that is where the Town will lose people to other jobs or recruit from other jobs, noting the pay is significantly higher. Ms. Fitzpatrick said the plan is to take time to review issues, but in the meantime make sure people are paid fairly. Susanne Hughes asked if changing the classification means there must be an increase in salary? Mr. Coleman said yes. Discussion ensued regarding salary ranges and classifications. Susanne Hughes said she does not understand the differences, and that responsibilities of the COA Director position did not equate with the classification. Ms. Fitzpatrick commented on factors relating to the position. Phyllis Fanger asked if one factor should be "the size of the population served", noting the aging population in Town is growing compared with a smaller school aged population. Ms. Fitzpatrick said many times it may feel like a lack of respect or how the position is valued, but that is not true and the Town has given pay increases during difficult times. Dan Goldberg said he feels the salaries were fit into certain classifications.

Ms. Fitzpatrick explained the methodology, saying internal classifications were considered and how jobs relate to each other, noting some positions were moved up, but not the COA Director position. She said pay in other communities is then considered. Ms. Fitzpatrick said this same conversation is happening with other departments as well. Mr. Coleman said the compensation driving the classification was actually recommended to be even higher than what the Town was paying and more than what the market place was paid on average, which he said he believes goes into SHINE and volunteers. He said the Director of Youth Services and Senior Project Manager are the 2 other positions in the same classification. Colleen Schaller pointed out the other positions do not run a building which is a huge responsibility.

She said it does not appear there is equity between the 3 positions. Ms. Fitzpatrick acknowledged the statement. Eilene Kleiman said it sounds as if there is room for movement and that the door is not closed. Ms. Fitzpatrick concurred.

Discussion ensued about the time it takes to fill an open position.

Lianne Relich asked how the Board can stay in touch on the classification issue? Ms. Fitzpatrick said she expects discussion to continue, and hopefully to meet annually.

**Adjourn:**

Dan Goldberg made a **MOTION** to adjourn the April 28, 2016 COA Board Meeting. Lianne Relich seconded the motion. The **MOTION** carried. Unanimous vote. The meeting adjourned at 6:20 p.m.

Jamie Brenner Gutner announced the next COA Board Meeting will be held May 12, 2016.

Respectfully submitted by:  
Mary Hunt, Recording Secretary