

## Needham Council on Aging Board Meeting

November 4, 2021

**Present:** Colleen Schaller, Chair; Dan Goldberg, Sue Mullaney, Helen Gregory, Ed Cosgrove, Lianne Relich, Penny Grossman, Sandra Prinn

**COA:** Jessica Moss, Social Work, Aicha Kelley, Programming (briefly at beginning)

**Meeting called to order by Ms. Schaller Board Chair at 5:05 pm combination of in person and on Zoom**

Ms. Schaller announced that Tim McDonald, Director of Health and Human Services and his wife had welcomed their first child Nathaniel “Nat” for short. Congratulations.

**Ms. Latanya Steele, Director’s Report, Ms. Steele could not be present, but the Board has received her report. Any questions?**

Jessica Moss noted that My Senior is being replaced by My Req but it is a very slow process. My Req is good at programming, but it is not HIPAA compliant, so all the data has to be transferred carefully to maintain privacy. The transportation portion also does not work well. The COA has been working behind the scenes with IT.

Dan asked about whether or not the Board should put pressure on IT to move it up the priority list.

Ms. Schaller noted that we are not a priority with Department of Public Works either as the deteriorating shutters were supposed to be off the Center at the Heights in early September and it has not happened yet.

Ed noted that in defense of IT they are inundated and there is a lot of work across town. Ms. Moss noted there is a new head of IT named Dennis who started week of 10/30 so she is hopeful this will move the project along.

Ms. Moss noted that My Req will be able to handle the programming registration well once it is up and running in answer to Dan’s question. Ms. Schaller noted that My Req is still appearing on the COA sign up page. Jess will follow up to see why it is still appearing on the Park & Rec when it is not functional.

Ms. Moss noted that the custodian who has been out after a major back operation is doing well.

Ms. Moss noted that they have started interviewing for Kristin Linley’s replacement and the second round of interviews is the week of November 9<sup>th</sup>.

Ms. Schaller noted the new administrative assistant has been hired and will likely start at the beginning of December.

Ms. Schaller asked about the Hearth to Home meals she had heard about through another source. Ms. Moss noted it a private company preparing meals that had donated some when pick up was in the parking lot. She noted it is not a service of the COA but there are brochures available for those who wish to sign up and privately pay.

Ms. Schaller raised the issue of programming in the Compass. It looks like that we are sponsoring them for example a program on **reverse** mortgages during November. As Mr. Grossman noted it is inappropriate to give the impression, we are endorsing the services. Ms. Schaller noted that Ms. Kelley has said in the past before programs start, we are not endorsing this company, it is for informational purposes only. Mr. Cosgrove noted that the disclaimer should be in the Compass. Compass advertisements are seen as separate from the programming and a disclaimer would help distinguish the two for readers.

A discussion ensued.

Helen Gregory noted that programming around legal and financial issues such as reverse mortgages can be problematic especially if senior see it as an endorsement and start paying people for these services. Ed recommended a disclaimer in each issue of the compass to distinguish between programming that is non sales oriented and the ads.

She noted that while some on Board are not always a fan of AARP their recent insert describing straight Medicare as separate from Medicare Advantage plans was clear, concise and informative. This could be useful to have available in the library.

As Ed noted some of the advertisements can be seen as a back door method for getting rid of Medicare. He does not pay attention to the ads as his pension includes health insurance.

#### **Piano Information**

Ms. Schaller discussed the tuning of the piano at the Center. It was discovered that it was a grand piano made in the 1800's with a serial plate noting its year of manufacture as 1850 in 3 places. It was made by Fisher Piano Company out of New York City who were famous for their pianos in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. They made 5000 annually. So, she was surprised to discover we owned a true antique that is also a player piano but we don't have the cords but we do have the rolls to use it this way. She also noted it made of pecan and has ivory keys. The tuner noted we should have anything put on the surface. Originally it was donated during a renovation by the Congregational Church. No value was provided and Ed recommended insuring it. One of the big piano stores might do an appraisal.

**Approval of September Minutes.** The change is that Penny Grossman was present. Dan made a motion to approve as amended; Lianne seconded. The Board unanimously approved the amended minutes.

#### **Approval of Health and Human Services Racial Equity Policy**

Ms. Schaller asked if there were questions, but Ed said he was not involved in the drafting. He feels it a straightforward document around the issue. Ed calls it a policy and mission statement for the Division as a whole. If all the Boards approve, then Tim signs off on it and becomes a part of the mission statement for the Division of Health and Human Services.

**Ed made a motion to approve as is Penny seconded the motion. The board unanimously approved the racial and equity statement for the Department of Health and Human Services.**

## **Board Members Update**

HR has not moved forward with the two applications for the Board from July. Ms. Schaller will follow up with them.

Ms. Schaller mentioned that two months ago she recommended Helen Gregory for the Housing Plan Working Group. Ed is the representative from the Board of Health. The mission is to present current and future housing needs for Needham that is in tune with senior needs. We just had our first meeting. She wants to make sure she is meeting the needs of seniors. Ms. Schaller asked Ms. Steele if there are earlier surveys kept on file by the COA about housing needs. Ms. Schaller **will ask** Jaime about the accreditation report covering this issue.

Dan noted that citizens need small houses would like to move places but the only choices are high end or low income which those of moderate means do not qualify for. Auxiliary units approved by Town Hall 2 years ago is only a small dent in the need. As Ed noted a senior can build an apartment for a family member or caregiver to move in to help with the senior. Helen noted they are getting applications of 2 a month at this point which Dan noted is a large increase compared to two years ago.

He notes it is becoming more exclusive all the time --a Cape next to him was not torn down but sold for 1.4 million. Ms. Schaller noted a house near her—a small ranch-- was torn down and replaced with a 2.4-million house. There is another historical home being sold to a developer. Ed also wonders with the Baptist church (corner of Warren and Great Plain Ave) closing if that land can become senior housing.

Helen appreciated the conversation. Dan noted that many of the people he works with in Watertown are just over the income and can sell the house but they have to move further away. As Ed noted Watertown has more old industrial sites.

Dan asked about former nursing home in the Carter building. If they gut the nursing home side, it could be redesigned for assisted living. The assisted living portion could be more easily converted but there is no underground parking and the parking garage is quite small. Ms. Schaller had hoped the town would buy it and turn it into senior housing but that seems unlikely given construction costs.

Dan also asked about the MBTA parking next to the Center. With commuting so far down into the city from COVID maybe this is the time to begin thinking about asking MBTA for more parking for the senior center. Dan thinks it is an idea that could be discussed in the future. Ms. Moss noted they only ticket 1 car per day earlier in the pandemic.

**Ed made a motion to adjourn; Sandra seconded this motion. The board unanimously adjourned at 5:50 pm**

## **Jessica Moss, Social Work Report**

There has been a delay in hiring so Kristen Linley has stayed on 19.5 hours per week working from Washington State where she moved to be closer to family. We have a continuing intern Jess Rice and a new intern Franny McBrien both from Boston University who have been great. Lunch room will be reopening October 4; up to now the seniors have been able to grab from the delivery truck. The van drivers have been stretched to do deliveries.

## **Programming Update-Ms. Steele**

Many programs will remain on Zoom due to transportation issues. Also, with the State reopening sooner than originally planned it will take all summer to ramp up programs to be fully operational including lunch on site in September. The survey showed many people wanted hybrid programming and they liked Zoom. We can host more participants for example in current events 65 on Zoom than capacity of the parking will allow. This group may transition to two sessions.

July 6 will be a soft opening with cookies and fruit platters. A grand reopening will be in September when everyone has returned from vacation. Ms. Schaller mentioned to avoid September 17 as that is the Friend's banquet date. Mr. Goldberg mentioned to avoid September 6 Labor Day, and September 7 and 15th which are Jewish holidays.

Meal program will remain off site using the vans to deliver until early or mid-August. Game and Fitness rooms will be open in the summer.

Ms. Steele mentioned that it is a Board decision to restrict or limit registration programming dates to non-residents based on her discussion with other directors at regional meetings.

The transition continues to My Rec for on-line registration.

Ms. Steele mentioned Board meetings will be decided over the summer in conjunction with Ms. Schaller and Ms. Arenda. They will be sent out with the minutes prior to the September meeting.

Ms. Steele mentioned that are not allowed to ask about vaccination history. Mr. McDonald noted that the vaccination history is part of protected health information. He noted that percentage of residents who has been vaccinated in Needham is very high. 69% of town is fully vaccinated; 82% of town have had at least 1 dose. Residents are who are 65 or older in Needham have a 95% vaccination rate of at least one dose.

**Needham Against Racism Initiative** Mr. McDonald presented. A man named Mr. Marvin Henry was detained by Needham Police in January 2020; he had not stolen property out of CVS and was held for an unreasonably long period of time. Select Board assembled a committee to look at the climate, diversity and equity in the Town government and policies. Two Select Board members, several invited participants but no other Boards were involved. The Board of Health addressed at their June 9 meeting, that they were frustrated not to be included previously and wants to be included going forward as health parity is an important part of the equation. One Initiative goal is to be as open and inclusive as possible. Mr. McDonald noted that the goals are ambitious but starting to work towards them is quite doable. He noted the request from the Town was for the COA Board to support or adopt the practices so that their input can be sought as goals more forward. Mr. Cosgrove thinks it is an important initiative and noted it is important to address everything we can in town government to support this

issue. There was some concern about the language in the proposal. Health Board had agreed in principle but wished to produce their own version of the statement. The concerns are that to achieve the goals it requires a certain amount of resource commitment that may or may not be available immediately; and Health certainly supports the overall objective. Mr. Cosgrove noted the COA should look at its budget and resources. The Board will examine the resources at hand both budget and operations at the fall meetings. **A motion to support in general the work of the Needham Against Racism Initiative was moved by Ms. Relich. Ms. Mullaney seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously to approve to support in general the Initiative.** Ms. Schaller said the proposal will be examined in more detail at its September meeting.

### **Chairperson's Report**

Ms. Schaller noted that two Board Member positions are open-- Gary Crossen who just noted he would not return for 2021-2022 and the Veteran's position which has been open since spring 2020. Ms. Schaller has passed on the needs to the Select Board. She asked the COA Board to recommend anyone they knew to her. Mr. McDonald noted that the Board job descriptions were still being worked on but should be ready over the summer. Mr. McDonald will pass on the final version to Ms. Steele who will pass onto Ms. Schaller with the goal of a full Board in September.

Ms. Schaller said she would call an emergency Board meeting with 3 members if there were issues around reopening/other summer emergencies. Mr. Goldberg and Ms. Relich volunteered. Ms. Schaller will speak with Ms. Grossman as the third potential member.

Ms. Mullaney mentioned asked if the Board should vote on limiting programming to Needham residents. A discussion ensued. Mr. McDonald noted that Park & Recreation has limited the number of non-residents but not eliminated their participation. The Board seemed to think we should keep it open to nonresidents in the summer and then reexamine. My rec when implemented will be able to sort Needham from non-Needham residents for data collection purposes. Two Board members noted that some visitors are former Needham residents who have sold their homes and now live-in apartments in adjoining towns. The goal is to be inclusive and not exclude for example this population. Also, it was noted that the new Dedham Senior Center is opening soon and that may be attractive to people who attend from Dedham. Ms. Mullaney noted that we need to examine our mission and match it against the value statement if we were going to consider changing our procedures. Ms. Steele will check with the regional directors to see how their Boards are handling priority registration for residents and update the Board over the summer as well on the fitness center usage numbers. This discussion can be continued in the early fall meetings.

**Ms. Relich made a motion to adjourn at 6:05 pm. Mr. Goldberg seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous. Board adjourned at 6:06 pm**

Minutes Respectfully Submitted, Faith Crisley, Recording Secretary