

Council on Aging Board of Directors Meeting
Tuesday, July 11, 2023 at 2:00 P.M.
Ayer Senior Center, 18 Pond Street Rear, Ayer, MA 01432

mgw

In Attendance

COA Director, Katie Petrossi
COA Chairperson Dennis Curran
COA Board Member Bob Gardner
COA Board Member Mary Markham
COA Board Member Janine Nichipor
COA Board Member Marge Withee, Secretary

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10 members of the public

Agenda:

1. Call to order
2. Approve/amend agenda
3. Public input
4. Approve minutes
5. Director's monthly Senior Center Report
(Please review prior to meeting)
6. COA Board's goals for the coming year
7. Policies and procedures
 - a) Reiterate policy re out-of-town participants
 - b) Case management sign up/release
8. Building committee update
9. COA Board's relationship with the Building Committee
10. ARPA funding for initial design
11. Board officers
12. Old business
13. Adjourn

1. Call to Order

Chairperson Dennis Curran called the meeting to order at 2:05 P.M.

2. Approve /Amend Agenda

M. Withee made a motion to approve the agenda for July 11, 2023, and M. Markham seconded the motion. All voted, M. Withee, J. Nichipor, B. Gardner, M. Markham, and D. Curran to accept the agenda.

3. Public Input

A member of the public asked why the senior center was opening late one week. What was the thing that came up that was an emergency that made the center open late? It was explained that the director was on vacation, and the other 2 employees do not come in until 10. This was their stated hours and contracted for. It does not happen often, and usually, the center is not busy until 10. She wanted to know how to find the agendas for meetings and was told we can post these on the sign in desk, for the COA and Building Committee meetings. The agendas are also posted on the Town of Ayer website 48 hours before any town meeting.

We informed the public if they had any concerns they wanted addressed at any meetings, they could contact any COA Board member, or Katie to add an item to the agenda for the next meeting.

4. Approve Minutes

- a) J. Nichipor made a motion to approve minutes for March 21, 2023. D. Curran seconded. All voted yes to approve the minutes (J. Nichipor, D. Curran, and M. Withee).
- b) J. Nichipor made a motion to approve minutes for April 10, 2023 and D. Curran seconded the motion. All voted yes to approve the minutes. (J. Nichipor, D. Curran, and M. Withee)
- c) May 2 minutes: J. Nichipor asked for the minutes to be revised, and approved as revised. Seconded by D. Curran. All voted yes. (D. Curran, J. Nichipor, M. Withee) . Minutes were revised that night, and sent to D. Curran.
- d) B. Gardner made a motion to accept the June minutes. M. Markham seconded the motion. Yes votes: D. Curran, B. Gardner, M. Markham, J. Nichipor, M. Withee.

5. Director's Monthly Senior Center report

Center is full most days for meals (Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday)
Meals on Wheels are covered by 2 volunteers
More transportation is desperately needed, as ridership is up. Center is full for the programs.

6. COA Goals for the Coming Year

- a) Could there be a Friends of the Seniors Board?
J. Nichipor and B. Gardner mentioned that it is more difficult to create a nonprofit that it used to be. They will probably need a lawyer and /or accountant. Maybe they could find someone to do this work pro bono?
- b) Should we get a mailing list/survey of the seniors in Ayer, and what/how can we serve them better to improve the quality of life? This is something the Board would take on, and not Katie. We would come back to her and the staff with the results.

7. Policies and Procedures

- a) Reiterate policy re out of town participants
- b) B. Gardner said he felt Ayer residents should have 1st priority for buses, trips, and events. D. Curran said we only have 7 people from out of town who use the center, and it would be a negative outcome. COA Board discussed other towns, and how Ayer residents go to other towns. A motion was made by M. Withee to keep the Center trips open for All seniors, first come, first serve, as it is, and D. Curran seconded it. All voted to keep it as Katie has been doing it. (Yes vote: D. Curran, B. Gardner, M. Markham, J. Nichipor, M. Withee)

8. Case Management sign-up/release

Review for MaryEllen and Katie working with the public?

9. Building Committee Update

- a) Next meeting is Wednesday, July 12, at 4:15 at Town Hall. The public is welcome, and Sam will run the bus.
- b) Pirone Park Funding will most likely be discussed, but still have not elected officers for the Board, so patience is needed by the public.
- c) No site drawings have been done yet, and soil has not been tested.

- d) J. Nichipor again mentioned Article 97, and the Public Lands Preservation Act, and how it will adversely affect the plans to build on Pirone Park. Several members of the public questioned if she was able to serve them on the COA Board, and she assured them that she was. She doesn't see the sense in wasting time with this proposal that is dividing the community and likely to fail. As a citizen of Ayer, she has a right to talk with people and express her opinions. As a COA Board member she has been the "eyes and ears" of the COA Board and has talked with many people who are opposed to building on the park, and are afraid to talk to others at the COA. J. Nichipor replied that they are afraid to come forward. She said, "she knows this is not what the Board wants to hear, but they should not shoot the messenger."
- e) Members of the COA Board and the public said she has her Facebook page that is against the new building, and is posting against the new community center/senior center on Facebook. They asked how she can be for them if she is against what is good for them? The Board also had questions, and it became a needed conversation. J. Nichipor said she can still serve on the COA Board, and oppose this project, and likely to fail building and run her Friends of Pirone Park Facebook Page, opposing the site chosen for the new building.

10. **COA Board relationship with the building committee**

- a) Board and public conversation of the Pirone Park proposal continue, with some questioning whether Janine could sit in on the COA Board and run her Facebook site that opposes the site. Janine responded this is something she does as a private citizen, and she didn't bring this up. Janine indicates she is very much for a new senior center. She is against building on the park, but not the project itself.
- b) All agree we will show up for the meetings because we care and will support the new center.

11. **ARPA Funding for initial design**

- a) The Senior Center could use funds for a passenger van, or an SUV for the use of medical appointments around the area. Sam is pushed to his maximum, and some seniors are not able to get to the grocery store, or appts. This would allow Katie to hire a non CDL driver to help drive. J. Nichipor made a motion to support the COA director's request to acquire ARPA funds in the amount of \$80,000 for a vehicle, ipads, and computers for the Senior Center. B.Gardner seconded the motion. Voted yes: B.Gardner, D.Curran, M.Markham, J.Nichipor, M.Withee
- b) D.Curran made a motion to request the Selectmen for the sum of \$150,000 of ARPA funds for the purpose of the new Community Center/Senior Center. B. Gardner seconded the motion. Yes votes: D. Curran, B.Gardner, M. Markham, M.Withee . No Vote: J. Nichipor. Katie clarified ARPA funds do not need Town Meeting approval. J.Nichipor was opposed to using these funds for plans that may never be used, and thought the decision to use funds for this purpose should go to Town Meeting.

12. **Board Officers**

Deferred

13. **Old Business**

None

14. **Adjourn**

M. Withee made a motion to adjourn. B. Gardner seconded. Yes votes: D. Curran, B. Gardner, M. Markham, J. Nichipor, M. Withee

Documents Referenced: Director Report. Janine referred to Article 97. which can be viewed at <https://www.mass.gov/orgs/executive-office-of-energy-and-environmental-affairs>