



**Town of Ayer  
Council on Aging  
18 Pond Street Rear  
Ayer, MA**

**COA Board Meeting 3/12/24**

*M. Withee  
approved  
on  
4-9-2024*

**Present:**

Dennis Curran- Chairman

Mary Markham - Member

Marge Withee- Clerk

Robert Gardner via phone -Member

Katie Petrossi- COA Director

**Absent**

Janine Nichipor - Member

**Call To Order -2:04**

**Agenda:**

D. Curran prepared an agenda addendum re COA Board rules/regs.

Motion to accept modified agenda M.Markham, seconded by M. Withee.

**Minutes:**

M. Marham made a motion to accept minutes from January 9, 2024, B. Gardner seconded motion.

Minutes approved.

The Board accepted cancelation notice for February 13, 2024 meeting due to inclement weather.

M. Withee, made motion, M. Markham seconded.

**Directors Report-** K. Petrossi reports her February Report will be delayed.

**Budget -** Director reported 1<sup>st</sup> budget meeting went well but Town Manager Office asked for efficiencies holding.

1. \$2,400 requested for FY 25 for expanded live exercise classes- asked to be removed – no additional live classes added. Discussion about potential numbers loss due to this. D Curran pointed out this is a loss to the community.

2. MART to reimburse for phone for van driver.

3. Remove redundant tech expenses now covered by Hybrid Grant.

Introduction of Grace Minere – Social Policy Intern from Fitchburg State University.

Grace be working with K. Petrossi on Policy and Procedure for center user.

**Per Diem Van Driver** posted for quite some time, No applications currently.

Van ridership exceeding capacity looking at potential changes for best practices.

**Follow Up re: Wheelchair Ramp at Pleasant Street Park**

Letter has been mailed by Ayer Disabilities Commission to Ayer Housing Authority

M. Withee to follow up discussion about this with Ayer Disabilities Commission

**Open office hours**

March- one person came to Pleasant Street on Monday March 11, Monday- A resident suggested Wednesday morning as they have coffee hours. COA Office hours for April- look at town hall? Discussion of best place and for community meetup, restaurant? Dennis will be reaching out to local places.

**Hybrid Program Grant** Volunteers needed, very scarce to find. Digital equality an issue especially with elders. Input offered includes programming on how to use computer. Petrossi to assist with partnership with Cyber Seniors which would allow seniors to gain benefits of use.

**Public input** Jean G asked for explanation of process for getting a new Senior Center

D. Curran offered; The committee has narrowed down the architectural firms to 3 will be interviewing and choosing one. All town owned land has been reviewed 3 selected to explore: Bishop Road, Groton Harvard Road, and Brook Street. Request put out to private owners for land they may want to sell to the town. Due April 12,2024.

Discussion of potential timeline ensured with all agreeing it takes many steps to build a municipal building.

**Board Rules and Regulations** D Curran drafted this and will share at a future date, topics to include.

A. How to be a board member.

B. What is expected, attendance, and assistance.

C. Mission statement review

**Motion to adjourn** D. Curran made motion, M Marham seconded.

All in favor, meeting adjourned. 3:15

**Director's Report – April 2024**  
**Ayer Senior Center / Council on Aging**

Many thanks to my talented and dedicated staff and volunteers who kept the Senior Center bustling like usual while I was away in March!

**Budget:**

Spending is on track for the fiscal year. The meals budget will run out of money before the end of the year, but there are funds available in the meals donation account available to get us through. The \$2500 removed from my budget for the additional fitness instructor was restored at the second public budget forum.

**Programs:**

My Senior Center reporting statistics for March 2024:

- Seniors In Attendance (unduplicated): 105 + 16 guests
- Total Event Sign-Ins (duplicated): 585
- Total Person-Programming Hours: 686

\*These statistics do not count the approx. 20 Meals on Wheels clients & the 71 van riders in March.

In March, special programs included: AARP Tax Aide, Irish Sing-Alongs, Spring Day of Beauty, a trip to the Fitchburg Art Museum to see Atomic Artistry and On Her Terms: Feminine Power Embodied, Decorative Paper & Collage Class, and Supper Club. Our first annual Walk In the Park Day was rained out, and look forward to rescheduling later in the spring.

**Hybrid Programming Grant**

The OWL Labs system has been tested and will be available for the COA Board meeting and Center programs in May. Efforts to engage student volunteers as part of the Cyber Seniors Program is ongoing.

**Outreach**

Staff provided outreach services to 28 seniors a total of 44 times in March. Housing concerns continue to be the most frequent topic of interaction, followed by wellness checks (as part of the Friendly Caller Program and also due to safety protocols). Staff also provided assistance with disability benefits, financial skills/money management, health benefits counseling, wellness checks, and transportation concerns. Scores of additional simple referrals are made each month without official documentation.

**Meals**

In March, 283 meals were served to 55 registered users and 16 guests (likely users who didn't check in with their key fob), across 22 meals (6 MOC, 15 catered and 1 supper club). The meals program remains very popular, although March illnesses typically lowers Senior Center participation overall. Four of the 15 catered meals were filled to capacity, with most others near capacity.

**Volunteers & Donations**

In March, 13 volunteers worked a total of 239 hours, valued at \$3,409. The Senior Center could not run efficiently without their assistance, and we are very appreciative of their time. Many thanks to Shop & Save for their Monday baked goods donations, Barbara Gibbons for her weekly desserts, and the anonymous donor who established a meal scholarship.

**Site Selection / Building Committee Update:**

The Committee continues to move the process forward, meeting on February 29<sup>th</sup> and March 25<sup>th</sup>. Their work focused on issuing an RFP for private landowners to contact the Town if they are interested in selling land suitable for the Senior Center project, as well as interviewing the three architect finalists.



**Transportation:**

The COA van provided 71 riders a total of 423 trips in March. The new Rides software continues to work through development challenges but is for the most part productive and a great asset for required reporting. Anecdotally, we have more riders and requests than we can accommodate, but most riders are able to get transportation services most of the time. The flexibility to provide access to health systems in Leominster, Fitchburg, Acton, Concord, and Westford more than one day a week is a priority, as are expanded social opportunities. Training is underway for a per diem driver we hope will be ready before Sam's much-deserved vacation in late April.

**COA Board Opportunities:**