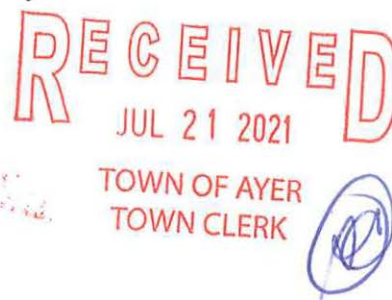


Ayer COA Board Monthly Meeting

Held June 30, 2021 at 11:00 a.m. at COA Center on Pond Street, Ayer

Minutes compiled by Janine Nichipor

Attachments: Agenda, Director's Report of May 2021



In Attendance:

Sister Paula, Chairperson

Janine Nichipor, Acting Secretary

Carole Tillis, Board Member

Carolyn McCreary, Board Member

Karin Swanfeldt, COA Director

Kevin Johnston, HR

Van Driver/Dispatcher Sam Parr stopped to say hello.

1. Meeting called to order by Chairperson Sister Paula.

- Introductions were made to acquaint ourselves with the new board members, Carole and Carolyn.
- This is the first meeting since March, 2020 due to Covid-19.

2. Agenda distributed and accepted.

- Numbered headings on the minutes are following the agenda.

3. Approval of Minutes

No Minutes to be approved as last meeting was March 2020.

4. Discussion of COA Senior Center Operations and Procedures.

- Monthly reports explained COA activities during Covid. Center was closed to the public. Meals, van service and phone work continued.
- Sister Paula acknowledged that Karin and small staff kept the meals and van going. She reviewed our mission which is to care for Ayer Seniors.
- Karin expressed concern about the direction of the Center. Her last day as Director is Friday, July 2 and there are many loose ends: need to maintain contact with the Director for MART, MOC, food supply train for meals, Center is not fully staffed, no interim director, van bookings are essential and require dispatching throughout the day. Covid restrictions on van riders easing up, but not up to the maximum yet due to the challenges of logistics. Before Covid the van traveled 8,000 to 9,000 miles a month, with 300-500 rides. Now up to 85% of that. Number tracking goes to Feds for funding. Sam offered to be trained to compile statistics on the van. He is doing both dispatch and driving, and is a union member which involves rules.
- Karin pointed out the urgency of writing up the Formula Grant for funding and other reports, the need for services to clients on everything from referrals to Wellness Checks, need to maintain relationships with Ayer Fire and Police to help seniors.

5. Old Business

- Before Covid, Janine went to other Senior Centers to gather information and network: Chelmsford, Concord, Groton, Harvard, Littleton, Shirley and Westford. Several

directors met with her to talk about their activities. The Groton Director gave information on the process they went through to get their new Center built.

6. New Business

- Hiring a new COA director is in process and other staff need to be hired as well. Kevin indicated that staffing is up to the Town Manager. When the Center closed to the public it may have reduced the urgency to fill positions.
- Kevin wants to address:
 - 1- Getting new staff on board, 2-How to change the structure of the jobs. Whole town is reviewing grades/steps and making more uniform.
- Regarding the Director position, July 9th application period closes. Job was posted/advertised locally, Town of Ayer website, Indeed.com, Mass. Council on Aging site, and some applicants were referred by present Director, Karin.
- Janine proposed we get an interim director, but Kevin says the permanent job has already been advertised.
- The Board brainstormed ideas to fill the gap after Karin leaves. Kevin is a full-time department of one and now has been given the task to help out at the Center with meals. How will he have time? Karin volunteered to continue doing the meals on Tuesdays and Thursdays and to help train a new person; she would like to overlap with the new person. Kevin says you rarely see overlap in town departments. The COA Board was asked to fill in. Carole Tillis volunteered to do this. Janine suggested a Temp. be brought in. The value would be that there are people vetted and ready to work via a temp. agency and it could work out. Kevin said this has not happened before.
- A motion was made to request a temporary worker to help with duties until a new director and staff could be hired. This motion was voted on and carried.
- The request for a temporary worker will be conveyed to the Town manager verbally by Kevin and/or Karin and then the COA Board will send a concise email or written letter requesting someone to help out at the Center, which will be down to one employee after Friday.
- Carolyn pointed out that it will be at least a month or more before someone new will be working in the Center. Meanwhile there are essential services that need to continue.
- The two priorities will be meals and van rides with Kevin and Sam doing extra work. Sam is an hourly employee and perhaps he should be put in for an award.
- Recruitment process for Director position: it has been advertised, applications close on July 9, then formalize screening, set up interview panel.
- Applications will go to Ayer COA Board members and we will write feedback and rank them. Most important are top three.
- Interview panel will be HR (Kevin), Ayer COA Board member (Janine), Director of another COA (TBD), Assistant Town Manager (Carly), and Town Nurse (Tamara).
- Develop interview questions, have initial interviews, three finalists to have a Second Interview and rank them. Refer one person to Town Manager for hiring.
- Director will be Grade 11, and Steps 1-3 based on experience. This is in range of \$64,000 to \$67,000. Carolyn worries that salary needs to be robust to attract the right

person. Janine wonders if this is on par with other department directors in the town. The COA needs to be funded equitably.

- Carolyn requested that Ayer needs to work in the direction of being inclusive to diversify staff. These hirings are an opportunity. May need to be more inclusive in advertising to reach different populations.
- Janine acknowledged that Carolyn is trying to address systemic racism, which is reflected even on who is seeing the advertisement for the position. Then we need to make sure all employees feel included at work.
- Janine asked where the "marijuana money" is going from two distribution centers in Ayer. This money could be used to help the COA have equitable salaries and help build the new Center. Kevin says this money is going into a General Fund that is utilized to keep the tax levy down. We might want to explore how to make the Ayer COA a priority for some of these funds.
- Kevin and the Assistant Town Manager will compile a calendar for the hiring process for the new director. They will send all applications to Ayer COA Board members. Kevin is most concerned with the top candidates, not who is on the bottom.
- We need a fifth Ayer COA Board member. Person needs to be an Ayer resident. Names were suggested and Carole and some others will ask around to people they think would serve us well.
- Sister Paula requested that she be able to step down from being Chairperson of the COA Board. She has served well us well for a long time! We will address this at the next meeting.
- Janine pointed out that the new COA Center needs to be kept on the table.
- It literally was tabled at the last Town Meeting.
- New Center locations need to be addressed. Perhaps explore sites at Devens and include Devens seniors in our Center, if they are not yet assigned an affiliation with a town (such as the children being assigned to Harvard Schools).
- Carole pointed out that sites for the new Center on Main Street will need remediation and lots of PR as it is well known that toxic substances were dumped there.
- She also shared the possibility that companies have vacated buildings post-Covid that might be suitable for a COA Center.
- The new board members will need the records from the earlier discussions on sites and plans for the new COA Center.

7. Adjournment at 1:10 pm.

 approved 7-13-21