

## **Ayer Council on Aging Board Monthly Meeting Minutes**

Wednesday, August 17, 2022 at 2:00 PM

Meeting in Person at Senior Center, 18R Pond Street, Ayer and via Zoom

Minutes compiled by Janine Nichipor, Secretary

### **In Attendance:**

COA Director Katie Petrossi

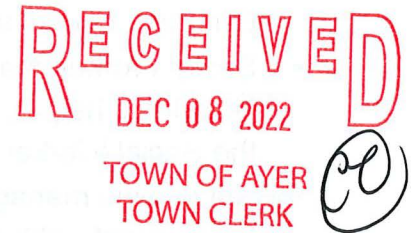
Dennis Curran, COA Board Chairperson

Janine Nichipor, COA Board Secretary (attended via Zoom)

Carole Tillis, COA Board Member

Sister Paula McCrea, COA Board Member

Marge Withee, Visitor



### **Agenda for August Meeting**

1. Call to Order
2. Public input
3. Staffing update
4. Approve Minutes
5. Director's report
6. Update from building committee
7. Door repair
8. COA Board vacancy update
9. Mass Council on Aging Fall Conference – Falmouth, MA
10. Old business
11. New Business
12. Adjourn

#### **1. Call to Order**

—Meeting called to order by Dennis Curran at 2:12 PM. He read Covid Zoom policy.

#### **2. Public input**

—Marge Withee is visiting today. We appreciate the interest.

#### **3. Staffing update**

- New Food Coordinator Denise Galvin started is working out very well. She works 20 hours per week, serves meals, and is reorganizing the kitchen.
- Outreach and Per Diem Driver positions not yet posted.

- There is a working group drafting a job description for the Social Worker which will hopefully be posted soon. The Social Worker will report directly to the Town Managers and will work with five different departments.
- There was a discussion on the importance to the COA of the Social Worker and Outreach Coordinator positions. Bottom line is that they are very important.
- Social Worker is a new position and Katie expects the person will help with various situations, helping to find services. For example, after an acute intervention for a crisis the Social Worker will help with ongoing problems.
- How do we manage our portion of the SW's time? This is our concern. A portion of the time we get will be as a liaison to school (such as for grandparents with school children). SW will also provide services, be involved in case management, and compile and update a comprehensive knowledge of places to provide help to clients.
- Dennis thought we could ask other towns regarding how much time is needed.
- Janine thought that the first 6 months to a year we need to keep close track of time spent and work done, and maybe will need to advocate for more help.

#### **4. Approve Minutes**

- Dennis is working on minutes from last meeting. He will send them for approval at next meeting.
- Not all minutes are updated on town website. Janine reported that we had been caught up and were approved, but perhaps they were not sent in. She will re-send to COA Board via email and Dennis will manage sending them to Town.
- Sister Paula can get print from Janine.

#### **5. Director's report—Highlights from the report:**

- Budget: On plus side, we have extra money from salary and mileage expenses that we didn't use. On minus side, we have deductible charges from a van accident that was not budgeted for. Katie may need to upgrade workstations to accommodate additional staff.
- Programs: statistics reviewed. Total Person-Programming Hours 236.5 plus 25 Meals on Wheels clients & 63 van riders. Farmer's Market Food Coupons is a program new to Ayer. Pickleball has arrived at Ayer COA in Pirone Park on Tuesday mornings and starting to get interest. Katie expects to bring on Sue who has worked with Littleton COA as an instructor for Sept./Oct. which will be free to participants.
- Volunteers: As a result of the June volunteer information session, more than a dozen volunteers have been CORI checked and most have been placed in various positions at the Senior Center. Some are enrolled in the Senior Tax Work Off Program and some are not. For July 2022, seven volunteers worked a total of 30 hours, valued at \$437.

Townsend had \$60,000 worth in value of their volunteers by the end of a year. Katie is looking to increase volunteerism and notes, we cannot do it all without their assistance.

- **New Building:** Committee continues to meet monthly. The committee presented a summary of the progress to date to the Select Board on July 13<sup>th</sup>, where they received the support of the Select Board for their efforts. Several sites have been and continue to be explored. [See more below, Item 6.]
- **Transportation:** Van is busy but not beyond capacity. We now serve two new towns Leominster and Acton. In September, we will expand to Fitchburg and Concord on certain days of the week. See the Newsletter for details. A Per Diem driver for 8 hours per month could help the van run into the evening, since Katie cannot pay overtime to Sam and he can just trade hours from one time to another within a week. MART did not yet go to regional dispatching. Note we are not limited to medical appointments, though they do get priority.
- **Massachusetts Council on Aging (MCOA) Conference Oct. 19-21 in Falmouth.** Katie will attend. COA Board may be able to volunteer to help and then catch some presentations. We are to let her know if we want to participate. Very interesting workshops are planned in areas such as social services, rebranding, building a senior center and new director training.
- **CDBG funds for food insecurity may be extended.** Katie reported they are brainstorming ways to best use them. May bring the Store back into the Senior Center again. Getting a "Together We Eat" hydroponic farm for inside the Senior Center. They will provide the water system, lights, and will maintain the system. Center gets to harvest the food and will have a talk on it. 4 ft. by 6 ft. unit to go against the wall.
- **Dennis asked about the Supper Club and Marge reported that everyone likes it.** People have gone to a number of different places both in and out of town. Some take the van and some drive over.
- **Upcoming events for COA Board to attend:** Aug. 26 1:00 p.m. Ice Cream Social.
- **Reminds COA Board and visitors to sign in on My Senior Center at entrance to track hours,** which helps compile statistics and support programs.

## **6. Update from building committee**

- **Sites are being explored.** Park Street has wetlands issue and may not be up for sale. Traffic studies have been done on the intersection by Tiny's, which is of concern. There is no way to use Bishop as an access as is tied up with railroad right-of-way which is typically very difficult to work around. Could move entrance to near hotel. There are traffic, environmental, and wetland concerns.
- **Dennis remarked there are no "perfect" sites,** may be a trade-off on each. Building Committee needs a site that the whole town can get behind and support on the floor of Town Meeting.

- Katie succeeded in getting an article in the Lowell Sun about the project. She was glad to see it, but pointed out that she was misquoted in a couple of places.
- Janine remarked that the Request for Proposal (RFP) was a disappointment. She thought it was going to go out to the whole town with a cover letter to promote the project and reach everyone. Janine thought Carly had said that the RFP only went to nine places, but Katie clarified that it might have been nine places that communicated in some way, but it went out to more. Dennis pointed out that it was Janine's contact with a real estate agent that yielded our only completed RFP. [This RFP was not accepted by the committee due to the location.]
- Dennis started a thread on how to communicate with the public since town newspapers are pretty much nonexistent now, with nowhere that is really dedicated locally and focused on town news. Some thoughts were to utilize the papers there are such as the Lowell Sun, Nashoba Valley Voice, Harvard Press, Groton Herald, Action Unlimited Fitchburg Sentinel, but if no one is really reading them, then that doesn't help. Social media is another idea. How to do it? The COA Newsletter is another place we could provide updates. We didn't come to any firm conclusion. Janine pointed out that it was good food for thought on how to get the word out there about our new building project.
- Dennis said that the Devens disposition people were hard to engage with. He did say that Dan Rivera, Executive Director of Mass Development did have contact through a Zoom or call at a Select Board Meeting.
- Janine has volunteered to try to organize the Devens information, but has not received the list from the town managers. Katie offered to send what she has, which was a list with road locations, not specific addresses.

## **7. Door repair**

- Front Door Entrance to current Senior Center is not functioning well. Katie thought it was broken, but it turns out that the design requires one to hit the handicapped door open button; it will not pull open from the outside. Chuck inspected it and says it is working as designed and can replace it but there is no repair to make.
- Katie would like to get the new door, as this is a barrier to the Center and may be discouraging newcomers who don't know how to get in. She is trying to increase attendance and doesn't want to discourage people from gaining access to the Center.
- Katie may need to make a capital request for this as it was not budgeted.
- Dennis said he can help facilitate this.

## **8. COA Board vacancy update**

- Dennis reviewed the process for getting a new COA Board member. It will need to be posed, after about 2 weeks they will notify us who responded, we will meet to approve, and it will go to Select Board to approve, and candidate will be notified.
- At this time, Marge Withee has expressed interest and will go through the process and we hope to welcome her on board soon.

#### **9. Mass Council on Aging Fall Conference – Oct. 19-21, 2022 Falmouth, MA**

—Please read details under Director's Report above.

#### **10. Old business**

- Asked if there was any progress on security for the Senior Center? Some items we had mentioned were: a mat to ring or chime when someone enters, an old-fashioned bell like in a shop, an intercom type button for a person to buzz someone in, a Panic Button for employees in the Center, a camera set up to show who is at the door. Ease of use, cost, difficulty to install and durability are considerations.
- Katie noted that even during business hours they are sometimes startled by people who come all the way back to the offices before they know they are there. They can feel unsafe in the building at all hours.
- We talked a bit about an online camera [such as Ring], which has a couple of drawbacks of being distracting on the computer and having a lag time.
- Katie said that having volunteers at the desk to greet people helps, but they are not there all the time.
- Katie asks that if we have a product we like to let her know.

#### **11. New Business**

- Sister Paula reminded us that we used to have a Liaison Officer in the Ayer Police Department. He would stop by the Center to visit and he helped out with situations that arose in senior's lives. She recalled his name was Officer Rogers.
- Janine asked if we have one now? They could work with the Social Worker.
- Carole mentioned a time that the officer helped with a situation.
- Katie said she is trying to reopen programs and will look into this program as well.

#### **12. Adjourned at 4:00 p.m.**

