

Ayer Council on Aging Board Monthly Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, December 13, 2022 at 2:00 PM

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

Minutes compiled by Janine Nichipor, Secretary

In Attendance:

COA Director Katie Petrossi

Dennis Curran, COA Board Chairperson

Janine Nichipor, COA Board Secretary

Carole Tillis, COA Board Member

Marge Withee, COA Board Member

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Agenda for December Meeting

1. Call to Order
2. Public input
3. Approve Minutes
4. Director's monthly Senior Center report
 - A) Upcoming annual budget process
5. Feedback on listening session
6. Vacant outreach coordinator and social workers positions
7. Update from Building Committee
8. Acquisition of temporary additional space
9. New Business
10. Old Business
11. Adjourn

1. Call to Order

Meeting called to order by Dennis Curran at 2:20 PM.

2. Public input

No public input at this meeting.

3. Approve minutes

November 8, 2022 minutes approved as amended, and redistributed as REVISED.

October 11, 2022 minutes deferred pending revision.

4. Director's monthly Senior Center report

Highlights from the report:

Update on Social Work Position

--We need the staffing. How can we successfully fill this position?

- Applicants need to interview with department heads, human resources.
- Dennis concerned we should have a setting that doesn't scare away applicants.
- Janine said it is typical to have who they report to and the departments they serve at an interview. That means quite a few people, so Katie may look for fewer participants in the initial interview.
- Katie said that the salary is fairly well set and comparable to other towns. She said that the SW will serve the COA more than half the time, and while acclimating the person will be working with Katie.

Budget/Programs and Outreach

- Katie explained the FY'23 Simplified Budget.
- Nutrition Coordinator is only 20 hours per week.
- We may add more catered meals, fully utilizing the food budget. Need to work within Nutrition Coordinator's time here. Will plan more events with food.
- Spending is on track.
- Dennis asked if we need more funding?
- Katie says she needs the staffing for events, before asking for increased funds for events.
- Dennis asked if the salary for Outreach Coordinator could be increased to attract candidates? Katie said she will explore offering the maximum.
- Katie has been doing extra evening hours. She is doing two full-time jobs, Director and Outreach Coordinator.
- Kevin Johnston will be doing temporary work for approximately 10-15 hours part-time for the COA. He can do some paperwork, phones, accounting work. We are glad for the help since we had been denied requests for temporary work in the past.
- Marge talked about giving information to Advocates Counseling in Harvard. It would be good to send them info. as they are a possible resource.

Meals

- Katie reported that attendance is growing for our T/W/Th catered meals. We had 46 Seniors for Thanksgiving.
- MOC Meals are inferior to our locally-provided catered meals.
- Janine noted that the MOC meals have gotten worse. They used to be a standard quality similar to cafeteria food. Katie said that some MOC meals not very tasty.
- Dennis asked why can't they improve? Cost?
- Katie said that MOC was designed to keep people alive. It's not on par with catered food. They did have a vendor change that could have affected quality. The funding is complex, but is low cost to the COA. Katie referred to Cherry Sheet for funding information. Some Senior Centers have replaced MOC meals. Meals-On-Wheels is more complex to replace, mentioned funding and referrals; who gets the meals free, or if insurance will pick up cost for something better than the Meals-On-Wheels.
- Dennis said that since MOC is not exemplary service, do other Senior Centers use other

vendors?

--Katie said that some MOC meals are good—the turkey dinner for example. They did change vendors.

--Dennis said that the Town needs to do better by our seniors, including meals and delivery of services.

--Katie asked for volunteers from the COA Board for Christmas Party. The full COA Board and staff is expected to be there for the party to help out.

--Christmas Party attendees will get a gift bag and there will be a free raffle by placemat number for additional gifts..

--Janine suggested that we distribute “tickets” for a free lunch. We did this a few years ago, and it was well received and it increases awareness for our lunch program. Janine will design the ticket for Katie’s approval.

--More discussion ensued on the budget, staff training, two open positions. Katie said without the two vacant positions in place, she cannot project funds for staff training. Marge asked about funding for the Social Worker position. Katie said the SW will be a Department of One with their own funding. Katie will advocate for that person to be able to attend the MCOA Conference. Janine thought the networking alone at MCOA is worth the cost.

--Marge suggested the birthday-month party. Janine supported it and mentioned that Westford has one that is well-attended.

5. Feedback on listening session

Listening Session at Ayer COA was well-attended and went well. Katie will review the posters with the notes before submitting the final budget. All agreed that Katie ran the meeting very well, with very good results. She was able to keep the focus on listening and brainstorming so that we did not get bogged down with too much debate.

6. Vacant outreach coordinator and social workers positions

Both are still vacant and will be reposted. Ideas were discussed in other areas of this meeting.

7. Update from Building Committee

--Dennis reported that the Building Committee is working with Ayer Parks and Recreation for a possible partnership with them. Any partnership with them would require a Community Center as part of the project in order to use their land. Jason Mayo provided Dennis with some input on field use and cost of buildings. The cost of the joint Senior Center/Community Center would be much higher than a stand-alone senior center.

--Katie said that Lexington and Andover have combined Senior Center/Community Centers. Perhaps the COA Director and Board can contact them and tour? Need to settle on square footage for joint use. We were looking at 12,000 sq. ft. for Senior Center to combined center at 27,000 sq. ft. Katie showed a rough sketch and summarized the

ideas. If this is the best option, then need to get behind it. We may get things that maybe we couldn't get at a stand-alone Senior Center, such as more exercise space/equipment. We are trying to flesh out a plan—it is not completely planned yet. What do we want?

- Janine would like to get a survey to find out which way people want to go—a stand alone Senior Center or a joint Senior Center/Community Center?
- Katie said there's the potential for smaller focus groups to get feedback.
- Marge noted that Carly has a lot on her plate.
- Parks and Recreation needs to explore their constituency as well.
- Katie noted that their budgets would be forever intertwined.
- Janine was concerned about the problems of losing a rec. field in our limited park space, and losing open space. She advocated for exploring all options, but the joint project may be an uphill battle. She knew of Seniors in the past who did not want to share space with other age groups. They wanted a place of their own. Janine stated we should also explore Devens. She didn't understand why our project keeps getting "piggybacked" with other projects—the environmental cleanup site, and now a Community Center. Why can't we just have a Senior Center?
- Katie observed that there will be pros and cons to each idea.
- Dennis agreed about pros and cons and said a single use facility is not ruled out.
- Katie outlined a possible timeline, which will become firmer as we go along.

8. Acquisition of temporary additional space

This was not discussed.

9. New Business


None.

10. Old Business

None.

11. Adjourned at 4:05 PM

Next meeting expected to be Tuesday, January 10, 2023 at 2:00 p.m. at Senior Center.



4-5-2023