

Ayer Council on Aging Board Monthly Meeting Minutes

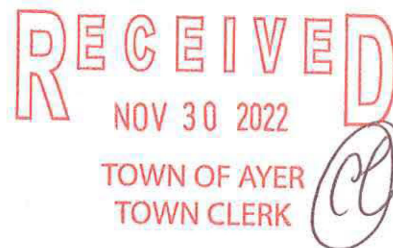
Tuesday, April 12, 2022 at 10:00 AM

Meeting in Person at Senior Center, Pond Street, Ayer

Minutes compiled by Janine Nichipor, Clerk

In Attendance:

COA Director Katie Petrossi
Carolyn McCreary, COA Board Chairperson
Janine Nichipor, COA Board Clerk
Dennis Curran, COA Board Member
Carole Tillis, COA Board Member
Marge Withee, Visitor



Agenda for ~~March~~ Meeting

1. Call to Order
2. Public Input
3. Approve Minutes – Feb. 8, March 8
4. Director's report
5. Update from building committee
6. New Center Strategy
7. Suggestions for spending COA donations
8. Forming Friends of the COA
9. Old Business
 - a. Mission Statement Sister Paula
10. New Business - Staffing
11. Adjourn

1. Meeting called to order at 10:10 AM by Carolyn McCreary, Chairperson

2. Public Input

Introduced Marge Withee, who is considering filling an upcoming vacancy on the Board.

3. Approve Minutes – Feb. 8, March 8, 2022

Minutes approved.

4. Director's Report—Major Updates

- Kitchen/Meals: Coleman Catering meatloaf lunch was very good. Cost of \$10/person is within budget and offset with the \$3.00 donation given by attendees at the Senior Center. Food arrives warm, within our kitchen permit. Working with places that will provide a discount. Using up the Covid food grant funds.
- Budget: In line to be passed. There are donation accounts, some with earmarks for particular uses.
--Janine asked if budget is lower? Katie said it is lower for one year, but will go back up for programming, food, and one staff position back. Katie said the percent of the

budget for food is up. Dennis pointed out that the food cost is higher since the Town didn't approve funds for kitchen improvements. Katie said that with a new Center with a complete kitchen, the cost of food has potential to go down since we can cook.

- Programs: With "My Senior Center" Computer System, which we now have, a client can use a Fob from another Center here. They just need to register it. Katie has statistics on attendance from My Senior Center:
Seniors in Attendance (unduplicated): 99
Total Event Sign-Ins (duplicated): 324
Total Person-Programming Hours: 379
**These statistics do not count the approximately 25 Meals on Wheels client & 48 van riders.
--Katie would like to increase the number of different people attending, reaching more people and we discussed how to reach them. Marge thought mailings might help for those who don't use computers/social media. Katie thinks that Baby Boomers are media savvy and adult children can help. Janine mentioned the Action Unlimited as a place to use. Dennis asked to create lists of those who call. Katie would like to create targeted lists of potential clients.
--Dennis asked regarding additional staffing? Katie said we need media/outreach. We are set to get nutrition and outreach positions filled, which should serve the need.
- Transportation: With Sam on vacation, our substitute driver Bob has been working out well. Katie hopes to bring him in on as a per diem (substitute) driver for next fiscal year.
- Volunteers: Vols are needed. Katie has created a grid of needs. Townsend has 60 volunteers. Managing volunteers is labor intensive, matching people to tasks and training them. We need more volunteers. Janine asked the status of the Senior Tax Work-Off. Eligibility, available funds, jobs, how to apply? How much does each department get? Who tallies the volunteers for the Town? We need to find out. Katie said they are re-doing next year's amounts. Will look into who tallies jobs/hours. Dennis noted we may need to be aggressive. Wealthier departments with higher budgets should not also get priority in volunteers in the Tax Work-Off Program. Less wealthy departments such as the COA should get more priority in volunteers in the program. Katie said that town-wide there are not enough roles for the number of potential volunteers. My Senior Center system can link to volunteers and tallies hours. Carolyn would like to ask Kevin to a meeting to talk about the Senior Work-Off Program.

5. Update from Building Committee

Dennis, Janine, and Katie gave updates on the Building Committee meeting. Katie included information in the Director's Report. Highlights are:

- The Building Committee continues to meet monthly.
- The DPW hired someone to look at the existing environmental report available on the West Main Site to help whether to decide if this site is still under consideration. Environmental tests that had already been done are being reviewed, as well as what mitigation would be needed. It is the less preferred site at this time. Dan Van will

submit a report and summary to the committee.

- What are other potential sites? This is being actively explored.
 - Carolyn asked if the committee will vote on sites. Katie said that we want to go to Town Meeting with a site or with top 2-3 to pursue.
 - Katie reviewed some of the details of the Request for Proposal (RFP) that will be sent out to all local landowners and real estate agents, and what we are looking for. It could be a designated Emergency Site with such things as a generator and a shower, which could bring in more funding. We are looking for due diligence on sites. Carolyn mentioned competition in the hot real estate market. Dennis noted the wording of the Warrant Articles will be important going into Town Meeting. Janine said the RFP is to cast a wider net—we don't need 100 offers, just one good one. Other possibilities such as combining two lots or a tear-down were brought up. Katie said requirements for grants include community outreach. Janine suggested we send RFP to the whole town. She drafted a cover letter to promote awareness on the project. Katie said the RFP has a deadline and rating system which will help provide deadlines and criteria.

6. New center advocacy

The COA is tasked with drafting promotional materials for the effort, and outreach to Townspeople.

a. Strategy

COA will advocate for new Senior Center with promotional materials and public outreach. We will hold a public meeting in May to review the feedback we have from the meeting at the high school and talk about where we are in the process. COA Board should attend, along with representatives from Abacus, the company that created the Feasibility Study, and the Building Committee. We will listen to public input.

b. Talking Points

We all need to be "on the same page" to avoid misunderstanding. We need to be prepared for Town Meeting. Dennis coined phrase, "Under promise and over deliver" rather than the other way around. Janine said the Building Committee had reviewed that there were some advantages to a Special Town Meeting to just focus on the new Senior Center.

Katie brainstormed a list of points for why we need a new Center:

- 1) More space for the number of seniors, which is growing: 2,000 in Ayer, one fourth of our population.
- 2) We don't own our present building, which is limiting.
- 3) Parking is currently inadequate.
- 4) Kitchen: we need a certified kitchen for nutritious and affordable meal preparation.

Some expected objections at Town Meeting:

1. Cost (Town manager expects cost to be covered by several different sources.)

2. Regionalization (Not a solid model.)
3. Due diligence on site (Building size and location, environmental, accessibility.)
4. Why just for seniors and not for all. (Not a solid model, conflicting needs, structure of town government—Parks and Recreation is a different department.)

--Carolyn suggested we type something up. Katie said like a flyer. Janine will take points, Abacus information from Feasibility study and write a draft which Katie will finalize. It may change as we go forward and we have more information.

--Dennis said the numbers of people are important—those needing assistance, and expand to more of the senior population.

--Katie wants to combine Senior Center services and the benefits of a low-cost country club. A club feeling with wider appeal. Active. Janine agreed that the best senior centers do both service and activities. Dennis mentioned helping to age in place successfully, and address a variety of interests. Marge talked about value in sharing informally, networking with each other at the Center, such as happened last week.

7. Suggestions for spending COA donations

We did not address.

8. Forming Friends of the COA

Katie shared in an email upcoming dates to see a presentation on the Mass COA site on "how to." She told us a person cannot be on the COA Board and run the Friends at the same time. In other towns she knew of people who switched duties every few years.

9. Old business

a. Mission Statement from annual report

We will table this until Sister Paula can have input.

10. New Business—Staffing

The COA Board and the Director had a lively discussion on current staffing at the Senior Center. Katie needs staff help. There is a staff person out. She reviewed volunteer work needed.

--Janine asked re temporary help from the town. Conservation Commission got approval for a Temp at the Select Board meeting we attended to confirm Katie as COA Director.

--Carolyn is for volunteers. Some on the Board volunteer.

--Janine is too and has volunteered, such as for the COA Board. Thinks it should not be for what has been paid work necessary to keep us open. Unpaid volunteers doing essential work are undervaluing the work. We should volunteer for what believe in helping, not do paid work for free. No other department in town needs volunteers just to stay open. We need more staff people here.

--Katie pointed out that she cannot be in two places at once and if she needs to leave the Center for any reason it has to be locked up. There is no other staff person right now.

--Dennis said the fundamental problem is the budget. What is important to the town is reflected in the budget. Janine agreed, and we are often on the bottom.

--Carolyn said this is a Board of Selectman issue.

- Katie thinks that 3 full-time staff members in the Center could be adequate: Outreach, Nutrition Coordinator, and the Director. There is also the van driver. He is out of the office much of the time. Right now, she has no staff other than herself in the office.
- Marge said that she has seen that Katie has been alone for weeks now.
- All of us agreed that was not a good thing for anyone.

11. Adjourned 12:17 PM

We thanked Marge for joining us.

Next meeting expected to be after the next Building Committee Meeting, which is May 4.

Two handwritten signatures in dark ink. The first signature is a stylized, cursive 'R' followed by a small flourish. The second signature is a cursive 'A' followed by a long, horizontal, wavy line.