

Director's Report – February 2024

Ayer Senior Center / Council on Aging

Budget:

The COA Director met with the Town Manager and Finance Director regarding the FY25 budget. Some cuts were requested for version 2 of the budget, as the total budget increases for the Town were higher than desired. Cuts included:

- A second exercise instructor for one class per week (\$2400)
- Faster internet speed (\$840) as this cost can be covered by the Hybrid Programming Grant
- COA Van Smartphone (\$240) as this cost can be reimbursed by MART

Depending on how version 2 of the budget looks, additional cuts may be needed. Specific items were discussed but not committed to.

An updated MUNIS report was not available at the time this report was created.

Programs:

My Senior Center reporting statistics for January 2024:

- Seniors In Attendance (unduplicated): 106
- Total Event Sign-Ins (duplicated): 561
- Total Person-Programming Hours: 636

*These statistics do not count the approx. 25 Meals on Wheels clients & the 57 van riders in January.

In January, special programs included: two OneDayU programs - Running From Office: Why Americans Dislike Politics & Politicians, and A History of Cookbooks; a showtunes sing-along, a bird themed stencil & gel printing workshop, a delivery lunch from the Cottage, a hot chocolate party, and Supper Clubs at Nashoba Ski Area and Tinys.

Hybrid Programming Grant

The Director is finalizing purchasing plans and hopes to be offering the first programs in late April or early May. The potential to collaborate with Cyber Seniors is being explored. This not-for-profit trains high school students on how to provide age-sensitive tech training to older adults, and offers access to a large database of course curriculum for them to use.

Outreach

Staff provided outreach services to 21 seniors a total of 48 times in January. The vast majority of assistance provided pertains to Housing issues, but 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 December, 326 meals were served to 69 registered users and 23 guests (likely users who didn't check in with their key fob), across 20 meals (3 MOC, 15 catered and 2 supper club). The meals program remains very popular, although January weather and illness typically lowers Senior Center participation overall. Two of the 15 catered meals were filled to capacity.

Volunteers & Donations

In December, 10 volunteers worked a total of 136 hours, valued at \$1,942. 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. The Senior Center also received a \$2,000 donation from an anonymous donor.

Site Selection / Building Committee Update:

The Committee met on January 11th and 31st, as well as February 8th. At their meeting on 1/11, they examined the 11 remaining Town-owned parcels in more detail and narrowed it to five possible sites. They also issued an RFP for architect services. Their 1/31 meeting consisted of site visits to the five parcels. At their February 8th meeting, the Committee further discussed the five sites, with a focus on the due diligence needed for the three most promising sites. A sample RFP for private land and the proposals from six architects were distributed, which members will score before the next Committee meeting on 2/29.

Transportation:

The COA van provided 57 riders a total of 370 trips in December. The new software makes it difficult to determine whether a day is “full,” so a new strategy for tracking this needs to be developed. Anecdotally, we have more riders and requests than we can accommodate, but most riders are able to get transportation services most of the time. Our conversion to online scheduling and reporting is complete. While the software provider is still working out some bugs and the scheduling process is slightly more involved than paper scheduling, the real benefit comes with instantaneous reporting.

The Town posted the Per Diem van driver position. There were several individuals who answered the call for volunteers or expressed interest in the position, so we’re hopeful we can hire a couple.

COA Board Opportunities: Volunteers are needed for the delivery meal on February 16th.