

SALEM COUNCIL ON AGING
Minutes of Regular Meeting

Date and Time: June 17, 2020 at 5:17 P.M.

Meeting Location: Via Zoom

Members Present: Lynda Coffill (LC, Chairperson), John Russell (JR), Julie Carver (JC), Donna Clifford (DC), Abigail Butt (AB), Alice Williams (AW), George Barbuzzi (GB), Kristin Macek (KM), and Patricia Small (PS)

Also Present: Teresa Arnold, (TA, Director of the COA)

Clerk: Kathleen Fitzgerald

Meeting Called to Order

LC called the meeting to order at 5:17 P.M. and called the roll.

LC stated that pursuant to Governor Baker's directive on 3/12/20 which supported certain provisions of Chapter 30A, Section 20, there are strict limitations regarding gatherings, so this meeting is being conducted via Zoom. The public and persons who would like to listen may do so by dialing in. All votes taken shall be by roll call.

Roll call was then done.

A motion was made by JR to approve the May Minutes, seconded by AB, roll call was done and passed unanimously.

Old Business:

LC advised that the Community Preservation Commission raised the amount requested to \$120,000.00 and now goes to the City Council.

New Business

Friends Update: JR advised he had the opportunity to meet Amanda Chiancola from the City's Planning Department who is a good authority on housing and is looking to partner with the Friends on a grant through the Tufts Health Plan Foundation regarding a senior housing forum. He said senior housing needs mean different things to different people. JR said it has not been approved, but he sees no objection with partnering with Amanda.

She will show housing stats and different issues regarding housing. JR said he wasn't sure where it was going but was always glad to talk about housing for seniors.

LC advised that the Board has been asked to support the grant and said she would like to entertain a motion to support the grant being written for the senior housing forum.

JR makes a motion, seconded by AB. Roll call is done and passes unanimously.

AB asked if the CPC funding comes through for residential assistance, who will be administering the program. LC advised it would be the Salem Housing Authority working with the COA social workers.

LC asked if there were any other questions and there were none.

Director's Report:

The staff is back to regular in-office hours except for the fiscal clerks who are working some hours remotely.

Transportation – We are seeing an increase in rides to medical appointments. Drivers are required to wear masks and gloves (optional) as well as seniors using the vans. Vans are cleaned professionally by the City and the drivers clean the vans before and after shifts as well as after each time a seat has been used by a senior.

Annie O'Shea is currently working on a survey regarding utilization of vans once restrictions ease up.

The Mayor has asked the Transportation Department to provide rides from Derby Square to the Bentley School so people can enjoy the Farmers' Market. KM said she has been on the Board of the Salem Farmers' Market for 8 years. She said the first week about 500 people attended but they were expecting that to increase.

Grocery shopping will be resumed after July 4th with guidance from the Health Department.

We are looking into replacing at least one van. There are opportunities for acquiring both new and used vans.

Social Services – From March 23rd to date, Social Services assisted 477 seniors 2,010 times. At the beginning of the pandemic, most efforts were about ensuring food and medication securities and a few other senior issues. By the end of April, Social Services managed senior issues regarding health insurance, housing, home care, SNAP and other public benefits while still referring seniors to various food resources and behavioral health counseling.

Social Services is now booking one-two appointments each day at a table outside while wearing masks, social distancing, and following proper hygiene measures. Seniors must also sign a waiver of liability that the City has provided.

Nutrition: The usual congregate meal participants deemed food insecure are still getting deliveries from Meals on Wheels.

Elder Affairs sent USDA surplus 10 lb. boxes of meat and chicken to 35 very food insecure seniors living in public housing identified by Kerry Murphy, Health & Wellness Coordinator from the Board of Health.

Activities/Programs: We continue to have grocery shoppers for seniors. There is a weekly Zoom class on Wednesdays with Beth Schultz and Rosanna Donahue will be starting a Zoom social hour this week.

There is a creative contest on Facebook with seniors sending in a picture of something they have made, baked, or created during the pandemic.

We are starting to plan programs to bring back when the Center reopens. The programs will probably be small, less active classes with the possibility of a morning outdoor class.

Budget: Next Monday, the COA budget will go before the Finance Committee. They have asked for a 10-15% cut from the original budget. Staff across the City who make \$60,000.00 or less were asked to agree to be furloughed. Currently, Joe Ericksberg is on furlough for a month starting on June 8th. Lynne Barrett will go on a three-week furlough starting on July 6th. All but three drivers have been furloughed.

Other: We received a \$10,000.00 donation from Eastern Bank.

As a result of Covid-19, Elder Affairs of the Merrimack Valley and North Shore are awarding area COA's grants to be used between July 1 and December 31. Our grant is in the amount of \$16,933.00. The goal is to provide more education around nutrition, healthy eating and self-care. When the Center's kitchen is back and running, some of the funds may be used to start a morning healthy snack café.

Covid funding was applied for from the City and we were awarded \$8,000.00 to make care packages for low-income seniors. Packages include gloves, sanitizer, masks and personal hygiene items.

We are following guidance from the State, EOE, Elder Affairs of the Merrimack Valley/North Shore and area COA's on reopening.

LC asked if there is any other business.

Patricia Small wanted to raise a question regarding the Senior Tax Work-off Volunteer Program. She said she thought part of the issue with seniors not being allowed to

volunteer during the pandemic was the concern about the fragile nature of the seniors. She said she thought seniors wanting to volunteer should be able to sign a waiver and that this issue should be revisited.

TA said Kathy McCarthy, who handles this program, spoke with David Greenbaum from the Health Department who advised that we must go slowly. PS said people need to be given the choice to volunteer or not.

AB asked if we were now a full Board and LC said yes.

TA then said she would like to congratulate AB who will be the new Director of the Lincoln COA effective July 1st.

AB asked if Salem was able to get iPads for seniors and TA said it was on her list. AB advised that Burlington was doing it through a formula grant.

Old Business:

JR informed the Board that he had spoken with Trish O'Brien who advised that they may be able to get more money for the fitness center. JR suggested a universal machine. Trish O'Brien wants to promote the fitness room more when the Center reopens.

LC advised that the Committee on Administration and Finance will hear the budget proposals. The COA is third to be heard.

Next Board Meeting: September 16, 2020 in person or via Zoom.

There being no further business:

A motion to adjourn was made by JR, seconded by AB, roll call was done and passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 5:52 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kathleen Fitzgerald, Clerk