

SALEM COUNCIL ON AGING
Minutes of Regular Meeting

Date and Time: September 16, 2020 at 5:15 P.M.

Meeting Location: Via Zoom

Members Present: Lynda Coffill (LC, Chairperson), John Russell (JR, Vice-Chair), Julie Carver (JC), Donna Clifford (DC), Abigail Butt, (AB), Kristin Macek (KM), and Patricia Small (PS)

Members Absent: George Barbuzzi, Alice Williams

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

Clerk: Kathleen Fitzgerald

Meeting Called to Order

LC called the meeting to order at 5:15 P.M.

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 June Minutes, seconded by PS, roll call was taken, and passed unanimously.

Old Business:

LC said that the Friends of the Council on Aging, who hoped to sponsor a senior housing forum, did not get funding from Tufts Health Plan Foundation. Housing issues have been in the forefront in the City and particularly Lee Fort Terrace which is run down, and which has not been updated since built in the 60's. Officials are planning to have it become a mixed-use housing development including senior housing. It would be a loss of sixty units for seniors and those with disabilities. LC said she was concerned about displacement of seniors.

AB asked if we have written a letter regarding this. LC advised she had already done this, and we are on record as being concerned.

LC advised that the Salem Redevelopment Authority hearing for proposals regarding renovation of the two court houses and outdoor parking lot for the train station has moved forward. She provided public testimony twice as a public citizen asking them to consider the sale of public land for affordable housing. LC said she asked them that in the future that they first consider affordable housing regarding public properties. She said it was disturbing that in the meeting with the Affordable Housing Task Force it was said by members of the administration that in 2014 when the process started with the court houses, that affordable housing wasn't an issue in the city.

New Business

LC said there is a new organization "Not for Sale Salem" which appears to be a broader based coalition. KM said she is a member of that organization and has posted yard signs as a private citizen. She said there is a parcel of land next to Lee Fort Terrace and she is concerned about that and what it would mean to her, and hopes that officials take into consideration how it will impact citizens.

LC asked KM if she thought it more broadly based. KM stated that one of their goals is housing for seniors and for people working in restaurants and retail who can't afford to live in Salem.

LC advised that one proposal for the Crescent lot is a 15-story luxury apartment building. She said she felt 15 stories was inappropriate. She further advised that the Wynn Company's proposal went beyond the 10% affordable housing. KM asked if they spoke about the property near the train station near Flint Street and LC said not yet. KM said there was a lottery and people were not aware of it, so it was unfairly biased. She said there was an unfair advantage given to out of area residents.

PS stated that the affordable rate is not affordable to most seniors. AB said we need to stop calling it affordable housing but based on area median. She further stated that information is not getting out by the City regarding tax abatements, etc. and we should work as a team to get the information out to seniors. LC stated people needed to see things more than once in the Newsletter. She also suggested contacting Patrick Kennedy to do a TV program regarding housing for seniors. PS asked if there was an alternative way for people to view SATV programs if they did not have cable. PS suggested Facebook Live. TA said that she would look into this as an option.

AB suggested that when there is really important information, it should go in with the property tax bill or the water bill and information should also be shared about auxiliary dwelling units. KM asked if those programs were specific to homeowners. AB stated yes, until the Salem Rental Assistance Program happens. LC said she was working with Amanda Chiancola in the Planning Department to sponsor these things.

There was a discussion regarding carving the North Shore out of the metropolitan median area prices and affordability by working with Senators and Representatives.

LC stated that at the Annual Meeting she will present a Work Plan.

AB made a motion to approach the City to see if information could be put in water and utility bills. KM seconded, roll call was taken and passed unanimously. JR advised that The Friends would be happy to pay for this.

LC stated that nominations of officers would take place at the Annual Meeting in October followed by the regular meeting.

AB made a motion to present the slate of officers at the October Annual Meeting, KM seconded, roll call was taken and unanimously passed.

JR asked if there was a possibility for an “in person” meeting in October for the Annual Meeting. TA said that this will depend on City guidelines for meetings at that time.

Friends Update: Between fundraising mailings and the first Facebook fundraiser, almost \$16,000.00 was raised. JR stated they hoped to double the Facebook fundraiser next year. He stated they were fairly solvent and that they had a \$30,000.00 CD and \$13,000.00 in their checking account. He advised they had approved \$1,050.00 for Thanksgiving dinners this year which will be delivered to homes of isolated and low-income seniors.

TA said that the Friends of the COA wrote a letter of inquiry to apply for a Cummings Foundation grant regarding Nutrition Outreach and Education authored by Fred Norton. We should know in mid-November if we are invited to apply. JR inquired whether we can put in a salad bar. TA said yes and that we can position ourselves for other types of funding.

JR inquired about using the COA parking lot for Halloween parking on Saturdays and Sundays in October and specifically wanted Halloween weekend. He stated that last year they made about \$4,000.00 in one weekend. He said he would speak with Trish O’Brien about this.

Director’s Report:

Transportation: We applied to MASS DOT for a new van and the application is under review. Rides are being provided to medical appointments, three grocery store trips weekly and to social work appointments with staff. Drivers are Anne Caron, Mary Caron and Jorge Lugo. John Tachuk and Jorge Guerrero are likely to return. Other drivers have medical concerns and likely will not come back. We have a few resumes in the queue if needed.

Our receptionist polled as many of our riders as she could contact. They were almost exclusively comfortable with riding the van and returning to the COA. In addition, we have not found a senior who is currently using transportation to express any concern about riding on the van or being on the van with others. Everyone must wear a mask.

Tax Work-off: Kathy McCarthy and TA met with Dominick Pangallo, the Mayor's Chief of Staff and Deb Jackson, City Assessor, to talk about this program. Due to the pandemic, many people have not been able to return to their assignments because of physical distancing requirements required in the City offices, or in the case of the CLC, we are closed to the public. TA is trying to get some information from other COAs and Deb Jackson is calling neighboring assessors' offices. Unlike most communities, we have a high number of people needing placement where some towns have only a half dozen or so. We want to make this equitable in terms of what people receive for their abatement, those fulfilling the 118-hour requirement, and those who cannot. TA will keep the Board apprised.

AB said in the City of Lexington they were sending letters to all department heads with suggestions for senior work-off; i.e. painting fences, landscaping, gardening, etc. and that it would be on a first come, first serve basis.

iPad or Chromebooks: Mayor Driscoll expressed interest to Trish O'Brien in getting these for seniors in need of connecting and who do not have the means to purchase them. TA will price these and put something together before the next Board Meeting. AB shared Lincoln's Tablet Loan Policy previously which we will likely imitate with AB's permission. Approaching the Rotary Club or other groups might be an option to help purchase these. We will need to determine which seniors need devices and are truly in need.

Social Services:

Grab and Go Farmers' Market is held each Tuesday morning. We engaged Kelley Annese to work 16 hours per week to spearhead this event. Food is being provided by Boston Gleaners and the Farm Direct Coop. This has been a big hit with staff and volunteers. Bagged food is brought to the cars. We will have a guitarist entertaining for a few of these events. Kelley is also working with Mary Ferreira to provide healthy snacks for seniors. A healthy recipe is included as part of the education component of this grant. Kelley is taping Kerry Murphy from the Health Department conducting a cooking demo. We will post on Facebook and SATV. This grant ends in December and TA hopes to identify ways to keep a Healthy Snack Shack going or more grab and go options when we reopen.

CDBG Funds for Covid Relief Care Packages -- The social work team is pricing essential items like thermometers, flashlights, and sanitizing wipes. They are seeking donations for things like pill boxes, sanitizer, etc. from some of our partner agencies like PACE, assisted living residences and organizations that have lots of giveaways. We will also include a refrigerator magnet with important telephone numbers, a water bottle with our

logo, the File of Life and more. Officer Jess Rondinelli is helping with this as well as Rosanna Donahue from our Activities Department. The \$8,000.00 we received must be spent by the end of the year. We are aiming to distribute the packages to low income seniors in housing around Thanksgiving.

Per Lynne Barrett behavior health concerns are overwhelming. The team presents the option of being referred to counseling services for seniors presenting with anxiety or other serious concerns.

Activities/Programs: There are zoom classes 4x a week on SATV. A few classes are being held outside at Mack Park and Winter Island including chair yoga, meditation, book club and balance class. The tap-dancing group will soon begin practicing in the CLC parking lot. We are advertising art classes to be held on SATV, a paint and sip at Winter Island and we will conduct classes outside for as long as the weather is good. We are starting to plan how to bring a few classes indoors in October and November. Classes will have to be staggered due to protocols on numbers of people allowed and the flow of traffic at the CLC. Classes will most likely be in the Great Room to avoid too many people in other parts of the building.

Other:

COA TV Show: SATV will be at the CLC on 9/29 to film our first show which will consist of some lighter topics as well as some educational material from Social Services. TA will advise the Board when this will air and would like to involve the Board and the Friends in future months.

LC asked if there were any other questions or comments.

AB asked for an updated contact information list of Board members. TA advised that she would send it after the October Annual Meeting.

Next Board Meeting: October 21, 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 taken and passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 6:08 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kathleen Fitzgerald, Clerk