

Council on Aging Board Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date: Thursday, March 23, 2023

The regular meeting of the Council on Aging Board was held on Thursday, March 23, 2023, at 10:00am at the Walpole Council of Aging with the following members present; Josette Burke, Mary Jones, Sandhya Malur, Joanne DiPietro, Linda Winslow, Jim Pellegrine, Marcia St Louis, Meagan Priest, and JoAnne Mulligan. Also in attendance was COA Director Kerri McManama, COA Outreach Worker Jillian Newman, and Nancy Aicardi. Four (4) guests were in attendance.

Absent: Janet Fasanello

10:00 AM: The Monthly Meeting was called to order by Josette Burke

1. Attendance was taken, and then the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.
2. Mark Gallivan, Select Board Member
 - Route 1A
 - a. We are currently in the third year of a five-year project
 - b. It is state run, so we are on their schedule
 - c. At Town's request, the State did an emergency, temporary paving on the parts not repaved yet prior to the winter season
 - Middle School
 - a. Still on schedule
 - b. Still under budget
 - c. There are weekly updates on the Town of Walpole Schools website, as well as a rendering of what it will look like once finished
 - d. Due to open September of 2024
 - Playgrounds
 - a. Carolyn Woodward Playground – located at corner of Stone and School Streets – was completed at the end of last summer
 - b. Route 1A Fields – there is now a handicapped-accessible playground here
 - June Elections
 - a. To be held June 3rd
 - b. Town Hall has a list of available openings
 - Town Meeting
 - a. Scheduled for May 1st
 - b. The Town saved one-half million dollars on snow removal this winter – this will flow into “free cash” to be available for next year
 - c. Article 18: deals with unused properties here in Town and how to repurpose or sell
 1. Old Town Hall
 - There is no interest in purchasing this building as one potential buyer put it, “It will take \$8 million of work to be worth \$4 million at the end”
 - It is on the Historic Register, so there are restrictions to what upgrades, etc. can be made
 - The Select Board is still weighing options of what to do with the building
 2. East Walpole Library building
 - Another empty building that can potentially be sold
 3. An unused lot at the corner of Kingsbury and Plain streets
 - d. Articles 20 and 21: deal with the Senior Tax Exemptions
 - e. Eastland Circle – the residents have come before the Town to request that the road be paved

- f. Josette asked Mark whether the Select Board could have a member come to the COA once a month for a “more formal” meeting
 1. There is no Town paper and many seniors do not have internet access
 2. This type of meeting would allow seniors to ask questions and stay abreast of what is going on in the Town
3. Review of February Meeting Minutes
 - There were no additions or corrections noted
 - Sandhya motioned and Linda seconded the motion to accept the February Minutes as is
 - The vote was unanimous to accept the February minutes
4. Outreach Update – Jillian Newman (slides were provided)
 - The total Outreach number for February was 426 to 226 unique individuals
 - a. The most common method remains by phone, but there were 161 in-person office visits, an increase of in-person requests over February
 - b. The most common referral method remains as “self”, although the drivers have become a very important resource as they see things that staff may not see
 - c. Jillian provided slides including a Pie Chart with the breakdown of categories of Outreach
 1. AARP Taxes were the largest demand for Outreach
 - Appointments will continue through April 10th
 - Currently there is no wait list, but there are no appointments available either
 2. Medical Rides continues to be a big demand
 - The Center strives to find a balance between medical rides, shopping, and rides for activities especially with only two drivers
 - Jillian wanted to make note that rides are not one-way, each ride also involves the return trip
 3. Fuel Assistance
 - Very time consuming both in the initial paperwork filing as well as in the follow-up that Laurel and Jillian must do
 - It is run through Self Help in Brockton and they are very behind this year - many people are still waiting to hear whether or not they qualify, and if so, what assistance they will receive
 - It can be frustrating as many people applied in October, but have no resolution and the Program stops in April
 - It involves a lot of follow-up calls, only to be told “it’s in process”
 4. Free Legal Assistance
 - JoAnne DiPrieto brought up that people are calling directly rather than going through the COA
 - The “system” needs to be addressed as in calling directly, people are “jumping the line” ahead of the people who have made appointments through the COA
 - Another “feel good” story
 - a. A woman was referred from Town Hall as they could not help her
 - b. She had originally hired a private individual to do her taxes. Was not happy as she did not get the circuit breaker, and there were other issues with forms and paperwork
 - c. She had gone to the Town Hall for assistance, and they referred her to the COA
 - d. Was further upset that there were no AARP Tax appointments that day
 - e. Kerri and Jillian took the time to speak with her and discovered that a lot had been going on in her life which was causing her stress and feelings of anger
 - f. She had come in as an angry person, but left in tears (happy) and hugging Kerri and Jillian
 - g. Jillian will be following up with her to check in and see how she is doing

5. Center Update – Kerri McManama (slides were provided)
 - Check-ins
 - a. Check in count continues to increase – there were 2,850 total check-ins in February, two more than January even though February is a shorter month
 - b. The Average Daily Attendance for February was 150
 - c. A few days had a check-in count of over 200!
 - d. February saw over 700 unique individuals check in at the Center, and over 1,000 since January 1st
 - e. The Center is seeing younger and younger individuals, and more men coming for programs
 - f. Fitness and recreation remain the highest numbers seen
 - g. The Center is continuing to look at in-town versus out-of-town registrations as many programs have wait lists
 - Other Updates
 - a. The new breakfast items are popular and will continue through the summer
 - b. Walpole Day is May 13th – Kerri thanked all the people that have signed up to help out
 - c. Volunteer luncheon planning is underway for April 13th
 - d. Newsletter redesign – new larger format to debut with May issue
 - e. Newsletter mailing list – reduction of mailed newsletters from 2,306 to 1,944 as a result of returned letters from the Assessor Meeting in December
 1. Savings of \$112.33 in March for the April edition
 2. Savings will go toward inserts in future Newsletters
 - February Events
 - a. Coffee and Conversation – average attendance was 37 (Chocolate Tasting, Financial Scams with Dedham Savings, Photo Tour of England, Social Security)
 - b. Big Y Lunch and Learn – 57 participants
 - c. Tai Chi – full, with waitlist
 - d. Cupcake Decorating – full, with waitlist
 - Upcoming events
 - a. Coffee and Conversation (National Elder Care Month Luncheon and Presentation with Joanne DiPietro, Matt York returns for a history of Country Music, The History of the Baker Chocolate Company)
 - b. BreathWork with Hannah - new
 - c. Summer Kick Off
 - d. Nutritional Counseling - new
 - e. Mother's Day Tea
 - f. Ice Cream Social to celebrate the new newsletter launch
 - g. Willow Tree Winds performance
 - h. Summer Schedule returns for July and August – late Tuesdays and noon closures on Fridays
6. Finance Update – (Sandhya provided slides)
 - The COA was chosen as a recipient of Rich McCarthy for the Friends of St. Patrick Annual Event
 - a. The Center received a check for \$5,000 as part of the Event
 - b. The check was made out to the Town of Walpole Friends of Elders and deposited into the Town Friends of Walpole account for use
 - c. The Center is already working to finalize plans for new members events
 - Total spent in February was \$3,129.78 (Operating Budget)
 - a. Still on track for FY spending – running about 60/40
 - b. Electricity and water expenses were up for February, especially electricity. Kerri will monitor to see whether the electricity was a one-time or ongoing issue
 - A total of \$1,057.30 of the Formula Grant was spent in February (does not include funds spent on salaries). Kerri is looking at the fees for exercise programs to help offset the cost

- Gifts
 - a. The Center received a total of \$470.00 in gifts in February
 - b. A total of \$747.01 was spent in February leaving a balance of \$17,107.07
 - c. Nothing out of Gifts was spent in February for Events as none were scheduled since February normally has bad weather
 - Will be moving to a Town-wide Accountant through Amazon
 - Joanne DiPietro asked if the COA is part of “Amazon Smile” which is the charitable donation arm of Amazon
 - a. A percentage of what individuals purchase on Amazon goes to designated non-profit charities (people choose)
 - b. This program possibly has ended, but may re-emerge as new format
 - c. Kerri checked with Mark Gallivan to see if the Center can do this – he said “yes” as the Center is not soliciting these funds
7. Old Business
- New Board Associate Member – The Executive Committee met with the prospective candidates and gave their recommendation to the Select Board.
 - a. The Select Board is due to meet next Tuesday and will make their decision at that time
8. New Business
- Walpole Housing Update – Josette attended the meeting
 - a. She was able to meet Brian Label
 - b. ARPA funds will go toward replacing the parking lot at Neponset View
 - c. They are talking replacement windows for the units
 - Master Plan Update – still on hold as the Committee is still waiting for the red-lined copy from the consultant
 - Select Board Update
 - a. Spring Town Meeting
 - 1. The Board voted to sign the warrant
 - 2. There are 32 Articles (more than usual) due to the 9 proposed revisions to the zoning by-laws
 - b. Ambulance rate changes
 - 1. WFD Chief Tim Bailey proposed revised rates, which the Board approved
 - 2. Rates are reviewed and revised periodically
 - c. State Aid – Gov. Healey’s proposed budget has a large increase in local aid. Town is not revising the budget currently as the State still must go through the process of approving Gov. Healey’s budget
 - d. JDP Clinician – WPD Chief Kelleher introduced Dylan Jones as the newest member of the team. Mr. Jones spoke of his background and what he hopes to bring to the position.
 - e. TA Update – Town Administrator Jim Johnson reviewed with the Board the measures he and the finance team have taken to monitor any impact on the Town due to the recent banking crisis. No issues or impacts currently, and they will continue to monitor.
 - Friends of Walpole Update
 - a. They are thinking of a possible pool tournament after Labor Day as a fundraiser to honor Cliff Snuffer
 - b. They want to have a plaque commemorating Cliff in the pool area as well as moving the telephone booth next to the stairs
 - c. More to come
 - Topics for Future Meetings:
 - a. April: Business Meeting due to potential absentees
 - b. May: Brendan Croak, Recreation Department and Formation of Nominating Committee for June Elections
 - c. June: Elections; also “Anatomy” of this past year, and any topics, etc. for next year

9. Open Forum
 - a. No questions from the guests

Next Meeting scheduled for April 27th, 10:00 AM at the Center

Josette asked for a Motion to Adjourn – Sandhya motioned, and Mary seconded

After a unanimous vote, the Meeting was adjourned at 11:05 AM