

Needham Council on Aging Board Meeting

March 9, 2023

Present: Colleen Schaller, Chair, Penny Grossman, Vice Chair, Helen Gregory, Dan Goldberg, Sandra Prinn, Ed Cosgrove, Carol de Lemos, Kate Robey, Lianne Relich, Ted Prorok, VFW representative

COA: Aicha Kelley, Programming; Jessica Moss, Social Work

Advisory Board: Ann Cosgrove

SHINE: Amy Gomes

1. Meeting called to order by Ms. Schaller, Chair at 5:13 pm combination of in person and on Zoom.

2. Aging Services Division

a. Social Work and Volunteer Report, Ms. Jessica Moss

Ms. Moss noted they have been very busy but the new clinician job posting closed today so they are hoping to hire soon. The wait list for individual therapy continues to be very long due to the continuing shortage of clinicians. That is the reason for maintaining the 8 week sessions and working on referrals as they become available.

The grant from the Mass Development to restart the taxi program is now in the stage of soliciting vendors. The plan is to have limits for rides per person with a 12 mile maximum radius. The demand will come from the need for Boston medical appointments which is not covered by other services in town. The \$49,999.00 grant requires a livery or taxi company hire.

With the public health emergency ending May 1 and SNAP benefits cut from their pandemic level as of March 2 the staff have been fielding many calls on how to handle the loss of benefit including impending changes to Mass Health eligibility.

The MetroWest Health Foundation also funded a \$4000.00 grant last month to resume private clinical supervision for the entire social work staff which is being put to good use again in March.

Ms. Moss noted she was interviewed by Needham Cable about loneliness issues among older adults and the program will air later this month.

Ms. Moss noted there are 30 active volunteers and the training of new front desk staff will occur in the week of March 13th. Some volunteers continue to deliver meals so that drivers can be available to meet other service needs.

The issue remains with drivers for the van as meal delivery is taking much of their time.

b. SHINE Report, Ms. Amy Gomes

Ms. Gomes noted the CATH will host two Shine trainings Medicare 101 in April 2023 and an Action Plan training with impending SNAP and Mass Health changes in May 2023 and the level of information and involvement required by the volunteers.

The new counselors will be selected by March 31; training for both returning and new volunteers will begin in April.

Ms. Gomes also noted that the new State-funded billboards going up across the region to highlight SHINE's services have been delayed in the contracting process. She will update the Board later in the spring on progress.

c. Programming Report, Ms. Aicha Kelley

Ms. Kelley noted that programming continues to be very busy. July and August programming is now set and she is beginning to plan the September and October schedule.

Ms. Kelley noted she has renewed the partnership with Rotary and they will be sponsoring a barbecue on August 16th. There were many new faces—over seventy five new registrants in the last two months so that ID tags had to be reordered. The statistics show 12 towns are coming to the Center out of Needham due to the programming. This also is clear from those out of towners who are paying the fee to have the Compass mailed to them. There are also out of towners as far away the Cape paying for Zoom classes.

The Harvey Leonard program was standing room only and Ms. Kelley received calls from four other Centers asking how she was able to obtain him as a speaker. She and Ms. Schaller noted he was very humble and approachable and the event was enjoyed by all. There are also new partnerships with assisted livings—The Key sponsored a Trivia and Tunes night that will be once a month that had a great vibe.

In answer to a Board query Ms. Kelley noted that all teachers receive a copy of the accolades that come to the office.

Ms. Kelley noted they have finished interviewing for the front desk position and the position should be filled soon.

d. Transportation Report

Ms. Kelley noted the paperwork has been sent out to a new driver who will hopefully be on Board soon. He currently drives for First Call, which works with many handicapped clients so this will be a huge boon to the transportation program.

She also noted the bulk of the driver's time is spent delivering meals but slowly there are fewer requests for meals and more requests for activity transportation.

All the drivers are attending required Mass DOT training. Stefan's skills and knowledge have been in high demand. He has also been selected to serve on a consultant committee in town studying transportation issues. He is also involved with a group studying medical transportation needs to Boston across the region and for many Council's on Aging. Finally, he is serving on a study group to improve My Senior Center especially in how it supports transportation reservations and services.

3. Chairperson's Report, Ms. Colleen Schaller

a. Minutes

Ms. Schaller asked for a vote to approve the February minutes.

Ms. DeLemos made a motion to approve the February 9, 2023, minutes. Ms. Prinn seconded. The Board approved the minutes by voice vote with two abstentions.

Ms. Schaller noted that she and Mr. Goldberg attended the March 7th Planning Board meeting. The Wingate Independent Living Project was presented. A third floor will be added. There will be 72 independent units of which 9 will be affordable thus meeting the state mandated 12.5% in any development.

Most at the meeting liked the plan and the only questions were about traffic, parking and the dumpster location. There was a discussion about adding parking if possible.

Ms. Schaller was asked if the board would support the project but she noted that the COA had not received formal notification of the project earlier.

Mr. Goldberg noted there will be four configurations—studio, 1 bedroom, 1 bedroom with den and a 2 bedroom unit and the affordable units will be offered in all 4 categories.

Ms. Schaller asked for a motion to support the Wingate independent living project.

Mr. Goldberg made a motion that "The Board strongly supports the Wingate independent living project". Ms. Mullaney seconded the motion. The Board voted by voice vote. The motion passed with one member opposed.

The Planning Board also discussed ADU's. In three years, there have only been ten approved. Some changes have been suggested including a rental possibility with a 1 year lease requirement, and allowing units to be larger than 900 square feet. There was also a discussion on attached versus unattached, and how the size of the lot will determine the required setbacks including an ADU built over an existing garage rather than free standing.

Ms. Schaller agreed with the Board that a vote will wait until a final ADU proposal emerges from the Planning Board and is voted on.

4. VFW Representative Report, Mr. Ted Prorok

Mr. Prorok noted that he has met with the new Veterans Representative Service representative T.J. Tedeschi again. He plans to spend his Thursdays fully at the CATH rather than in Town Hall.

Mr. Tedeschi attended the general membership meeting at the VFW on March 2 and is now a member of the Needham VFW Post.

Mr. Prorok is very impressed by his diligence and his compilation of a binder that contains all the Mass General Laws requirements. He will be updating the administrators in all five towns where he serves as the Veterans representative including the Mass General Law requirement of one parking spot reserved for Veterans at each town hall.

Ms. Kelley noted he has met with her and the previous VFW representative, Mr. Tom Keating, to get more information on overall Veteran's needs. There is a private space for him at the CATH in addition to meeting veterans in the café and this is so younger veterans can reach out to him for their needs.

Mr. Prorok raised some issues around SNAP benefits. In answer to those Ms. Moss noted that the CATH is a SNAP intake site and anyone can apply regardless of age as it is an income based program. She also noted the Tax Work Off (SeniorCorps) program is a separate program and allows seniors to volunteer for a set number of hours and get money taken off of their property tax bill.

Mr. Prorok noted that March 29th is Vietnam Veterans Day with a presentation at the Sunset Road site.

5. Friends Report

No report this month.

6. Old Business

None

7. New Business

None

Ms. Schaller asked for a motion to adjourn. Mr. Goldberg made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Gregory seconded. The Board adjourned by unanimous voice vote at 5:55 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Faith Crisley

Recording Secretary