

Minutes of COA Board Meeting- December 9, 2020_ Held Via Zoom

Board Member Present: Carol Airasian, Mary Keenan, Tom Lewis, Araxie Poladian and Arlene Smith

Staff Members Present: Anne-Marie Gagnon, Director; Marina Kirsanova, Program Coordinator; Rae Grassia, Principal Account Clerk; Margie Wayne, Program Services Assistant; Kathy Cunningham, Food Pantry Coordinator

Absent: Pat Gold, Dorothy-Jean Brown, Esther Keaney, Janet McCullough

In Pat Gold's absence, Anne-Marie called the meeting to order at 4:00 PM

Approval of Minutes of Last Meeting, November 18, 2020

The Board reviewed the Minutes. Tom Lewis made a motion to approve. Carol Airasian seconded. Approved.

Program Update: Marina Kirsanova, Program Coordinator

Marina updated the board on programs noting that there has been an increase to activities with 11 guest speakers this month and 13 next month. We have continued with our regular exercise classes. We are adding a Pet Lovers Group and Knitting as new activities as well. The Knitting Group is preexisting and we would like to bring them back via ZOOM. We have an upcoming virtual tour of the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in January or February. We have approximately 160 regular participants which is about 25% of our pre-Covid population. We have a Grab & Go Holiday event scheduled for December 23rd instead of our in-person holiday party, with a drive through dinner. We look forward to seeing all who haven't been using ZOOM. We may be airing the Concert of Armenian Music with WCA-TV. Dan Hogan should have a date for us soon. Anne-Marie would like to see more programs aired on the channel into the New Year. Anne-Marie gave an update on the Grab & Go Dinner being catered by Maria's Catering, with a few other goodies and masks. Santa will make an appearance. Anne-Marie thanked Arlene for her donation of favors.

Arlene had a question regarding virtual tours at other museums, including the MFA. Marina did reach out to a few other museums and was told that at this time they are not providing virtual tours.

Shuttle Bus Update: Margie Wayne, Program Services Assistant

Margie updated the board on the shuttle bus. In November we had 24 riders, and 22 in October, which is lower than expected but still providing rides. For December the numbers have been down as Covid numbers have risen which may be preventing some from taking the shuttle. We scheduled special shopping trips going to Target which had 6 riders, Market Basket had 4, and we have some signups for Russo's and Traders Joe's. We are offering rides to any that feel comfortable going shopping. We can serve up to 4 riders on each trip for social distancing.

Food Pantry Update

Kathy Cunningham, Food Pantry Coordinator gave an update. She has had great contributions and food drives. Fresh produce is purchased from Russo's with pick up of other items from Greater Boston Food Bank. Each family leaves with about 100 lbs. of food. Tom Lewis asked if Kathy is serving more families. Kathy reported she is serving approximately 120 families each week which is 4 times the amount of families served pre-Covid. To cut down on wait times and lines Kathy has started to deliver to the Watertown Housing Authority locations on Monday and

Wednesday. Tom also asked if Kathy needed more help. With Covid guidelines she can only have a certain number of volunteers in the building; Kathy feels she needs to keep all safe. Carol Airasian asked if she could volunteer to make home deliveries but Kathy explained she needs to follow guidelines with the number of people helping, the less contact the better. There is ample food distribution with the Watertown Food Pantry, Catholic Collaborative Pantry, The Centre Street Pantry as well as the Post 440. Margie asked if there was anything else people may need. Kathy said people need everything and donations are welcome. Toothpaste, tooth brushes, bathroom tissue and personal items are always welcome. The average visit to Food Pantry is 2 minutes and 42 seconds. The clients use shopping carts to bring items to the cars.

Arlene asked about donations of "little extras" and if that were something that she could use. Kathy said when those items come they are placed on a free table and clients can take whatever they like.

Anne-Marie thanked Kathy and her volunteers for all their efforts. The Board thanked Kathy as well.

The volunteers, residents and businesses of Watertown have made all this possible, she couldn't do it without them.

Director's Report

Anne-Marie gave a report on our Friendly Caller Program. We do have a few volunteers that check in with residents. We would like people to opt into this program whether it be to volunteer to make calls or receive one. We would like to make it a broader more formalized program.

Marina and Anne-Marie had the opportunity to present at the Marshall Home Fund most recent community forum regarding social isolation. Marina presented on how we reach out to our seniors via ZOOM. Marina presented along with Perkins School for the Blind Library and Springwell.

We also hosted an LGBTQ round table ZOOM with speakers discussing experiences. Marina asked if you know anyone who needs to reach out within the community we are a safe place.

Anne-Marie reported that the staff had a meeting with the architect and representative from AI-3 and Steve Magoon, Assistant Town Manager and Director of Community Development and Planning, regarding the new High School Building Project. The Senior Center is impacted, as the plans call for moving the Senior Center within the new high school campus. We provided them with statistics, types of programs we offer, planning for the future, and parking requirements that we would need in a new space to maintain and potentially increase services in a new building. We discussed our concerns for adequate parking for seniors, staff and emergency vehicles and a welcoming space. We felt it was a good meeting and we will have another meeting in the future.

Member Items

No Member Items. No Audience Questions. Anne-Marie wished all a Happy Holiday season.

Adjourn

Carol Airasian made a motion to adjourn and Tom Lewis seconded.

The meeting adjourned at 4:43 PM

Respectfully submitted: Rae Grassia, Principal Account Clerk