

Minutes of COA Board Meeting- February 12, 2020

Board Member Present: Carol Airasian, Dorothy-Jean Brown, Esther Keaney, Mary Keenan, Tom Lewis, Janet McCullough, Araxie Poladian and Arlene Smith

Staff Members Present: Anne-Marie Gagnon, Director; Jenya Kruglyansky, Case Worker; and Rae Grassia, Principal Account Clerk

Absent: Pat Gold

Also Present: Patrick George, Veterans' Services Officer

Anne-Marie called the meeting to order at 4:05 PM

Approval of Minutes of Last Meeting, January 8, 2020

The Board reviewed the Minutes. Dorothy-Jean Brown made a motion to approve. Esther Keaney and Mary Keenan seconded. Approved.

Review of Financial Statements

Anne-Marie reviewed the financial statements. The Food Pantry deposits reflect the Annual Winter campaign with donors giving generously. The Project Bread grant will be different this year than in years past. Proceeds from the Walk for Hunger support Project Bread which in turn support organizations. Instead of the Food Pantry writing a proposal for funds, teams for the Walk for Hunger will be sponsored by groups with percentages of their monies dedicated to sponsoring groups.

Some victims of the recent fire on Robert Ford Road received items including mattresses from the Marshall Home Fund Aid account. Jenya, Case Worker, is working with residents to see what other items may be needed. The Marshall Home Fund Taxi Grant will be spent down as well, and future payments will be made from the Medical Transportation line item in the budget.

Introduction of Patrick George, Watertown Veterans' Services Officer (VSO)

Anne-Marie introduced Patrick George, VSO. Mr. George gave an overview of his

role as VSO and his work on outreach with seniors. Many Veterans do not know they are even eligible for benefits. Patrick attended Suffolk University, served with the United States Marines Corps and worked for the Massachusetts State House before coming to Watertown. Patrick is working to expand office hours by holding office hours and appointments at the Pvt Shutt Detachment. A new brochure for Veterans will be ready soon and will be distributed around town. Anne-Marie invited Mr. George to present at a future event and/or Lunch & Learn lecture.

Updates

a. Programs & Services Review

Anne-Marie reviewed the monthly services report that Margie Wayne, Program Services Assistant, prepared for the meeting. The report highlighted Center usage for the past month. We are averaging close to 60 visitors each day, but that does not include volunteers, SHINE, taxes, or other walk-in services like senior parking permits, as those visitors do not usually check-in to the My Senior Center System. The numbers only reflect calendar activities. We are working to put methods in place to have every visitor accounted for by name.

Jenya, Case Worker, has moved into her new office space this month in the old conference room. We shifted AARP tax preparation, SHINE, blood pressure screenings, legal services and podiatry to the left side of the back activity space on their respective days. The new space has made a significant difference in how Jenya has been able to counsel walk-ins appointments and serve the public.

The front cover of Watertown Senior News newsletter has a new look. Starting in January, Marina Kirsanova, Program Coordinator, is seeking groups to be highlighted; February will feature the Knitting Group.

b. FY 2020 Council on Aging Budget Process

Anne-Marie had her Budget meeting with the Town Manager today. The COA should expect budget margin increases of 2%. The biggest budget request is to add

more transportation hours to increase bus trips to 5 days a week, whether it will be shopping or medical trips. The COA budget hearing before the Town Council will be scheduled for mid-May. Anne-Marie invited the Board to attend.

c. Senior Center Room Adjustments & Parking Lot Issues

We ask that people be patient as the activity room has shifted to accommodate the Case Worker's move to the conference room. Bingo has been reduced to one side, and Chess has been asked to consolidate with Bridge on Mondays. We will continue to monitor participant numbers so as to not make people uncomfortable, but we are using the space more efficiently now. Parking lot: Anne-Marie met with the Superintendent about the parking issues we will be facing come the Fall, as the remaining 4 preschool classes and 4 pre-K programs will be moving to the Phillips so that the elementary school constructions can begin. They discussed plans for a traffic flow plan for the morning/afternoon drop off hours and parking issues for teachers and seniors. The Dept. of Public Bldgs. also is vacating for this project so their cars and trucks will be gone. The Board discussed the possibility of having seniors volunteer as parking lot monitors.

Grants & Awards

a. Spring Cultural Events – MCOA Grant

MCOA awarded us \$300 to use towards cultural outreach activities in April, May and June. We are planning 2 Armenian cultural days in April on April 15th and 22nd and then events in May and June celebrating the Russian and Greek cultures.

b. Marshall Home Fund

Grants for their next cycle are due March 12. We are currently funded for transportation of last resort services (taxis) and for emergency assistance. We are exploring renewing those grants and may be seeking funds for LGBTQ initiatives and snow removal program with the Recreation Dept.

c. Watertown Savings Bank Customer Choice Awards

The WSB award night is April 8, 5-7 pm at Sons of Italy. The Senior Center and the Food Pantry will be receiving funds. This event is after the COA Board meeting. All members are welcome to attend. Please let Rae know if you are going.

New Business

a. LGBTQ Workgroup

Marina, Program Coordinator, and Anne-Marie met with two senior women who were interested in outreach activities for LGBTQ and resources for allies at the Senior Center. If anyone would like to join us in planning these activities, please see Anne-Marie.

b. SHINE Training

Marina and Jenya will be attending the regional SHINE training program starting in April at the Needham COA. The training is significant; 6 weeks, twice a week. This will allow them to support seniors seeking Medicare information during the course of their work in conjunction with the services of our weekly SHINE volunteer Dan Goldberg. This will strongly enhance what we offer to seniors.

d. Member Items

Thank you to Arlene Smith for sharing her talents with her Tea Wreath project.

Adjourn

Tom Lewis made a motion to adjourn and Esther Keaney and Mary Keenan seconded.

The meeting adjourned at 5:26 PM

Respectfully submitted

Rae Grassia, Principal Account Clerk