

## **Minutes of COA Board Meeting- September 9, 2020**

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

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

Absent: Pat Gold, and Dorothy-Jean Brown

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

### **Approval of Minutes of Last Meeting, March 11, 2020**

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

### **Discussion of Status of Council on Aging Operations during COVID-19**

Anne-Marie thanked the Board and the staff for being with us today. The staff has been working in the building for the past 6 months with working with distancing and practicing safety precautions. We have increased calendar offerings, Jenya has continued with outreach, we have continued with our taxi services and have been making calls to people who have been isolated.

Marina thanked the group and is happy to see everyone. She has worked to be sure there is a virtual exercise class every day. Pilates has started on Thursday and line dancing was added in late August. The Book Club has continued and the Reader's Advisory with Emily from the Watertown Public Library. We continue to have virtual coffees with Chief Lawn, Chief Quinn and Captain Dupuis. The Mellowtones have been singing on Friday afternoon and we have had a few guest speakers including a Death Café and a Cinematography discussion. We had 35 people watch a virtual performance of Armenian music with Levon Hovsepian which we hope to do again. Marina is working on a virtual cooking class as well as overseas virtual tours.

Anne-Marie thanked Marina for all her work with getting the virtual classes started and teaching new people how to use it. Many feel it has changed their lives. We have had over 240 people participate. Carol Airasian feels Marina is a good explainer and Esther Keaney commented that Marina doesn't give up. Carol loved the concert. Marina is enjoying her position, working to balance options. We have not been able to have bridge, whist, bingo or movies which are impossible to have at this time. Zoom has been a great opportunity to learn in this atmosphere.

Anne-Marie noted that approximately 2200 newsletters have been distributed via mailing as well as at the Library. Open Enrollment for Medicare will begin on October 14<sup>th</sup> and we are

taking appointments for over the phone consultations with the SHINE counselor.

Tom Lewis commented on the benefit of virtual programming and is concerned with the lack of technical skill some may have and how we can reach those people in the future. He is willing to work with Anne-Marie on outreach especially with the colder months coming which would increase isolation.

Carol Airasian asked about the snow shoveling group with High School students. Anne-Marie will reach out and forward that question to Peter Centola with the Recreation Department.

Margie Wayne discussed the upcoming ZOOM raffle. During the months of September and October any ZOOM program participant will be entered into a drawing to win a gift certificate. Three winners will be announced in early November. Anyone who would like to participate can call and register and we will provide them ZOOM access for a program.

We have been keeping busy with over 120 parking permit renewals over the phone with a few in-person new permits being issued. We have continued with our medical transportation with over 120 rides.

Jenya, our Case Worker is still working with clients providing referrals for housing assistance, SNAP and food assistance, fuel assistance, emergency assistance and MassHealth applications.

### **Discussion on Food Pantry Operations during COVID-19**

Kathy Cunningham is doing a phenomenal job. She has seen an increase in families visiting the food pantry. Donations from the community have been extraordinary with financial donations as well as food. There have been many local drives and the effort has been great.

Carol Airasian asked if Kathy has any specific needs. Anne-Marie said the list of staple items is on our website. Kathy provided food boxes to public housing and also had a box program at the Food Pantry. The pantry is open 10:00-2:00 on Tuesdays. Carol offered to volunteer. and also asked if the Town Clerk needed any help with ballots. Anne-Marie will reach out to the Town Clerk.

Tom Lewis asked if Anne-Marie had any budget concerns given the changes. Anne-Marie was pleased to report that the Town has been very supportive and that our budget was funded with what we asked for during the budget season for this fiscal year.

### **Member Items**

Arlene called in with 2 questions. 1. When if any will we be able to have in-person activities? and 2. will there be a winter food drive for pantry? Anne-Marie explained that now is not the time for in-person activities. We have made a few exceptions for case worker appointments safely behind Plexiglas. The shuttle is running in a very limited capacity. We are not sure when we would resume in-person programs and continue to discuss this topic weekly with the

other area COA directors, as all are operating similarly. Anne-Marie likes the idea of a historical walk and had thought of outdoor exercise here but the back lawn and parking lot are not safe options. She would also encourage anyone who would like to organize a food drive for the pantry. Hardy Spa has been a drop off location and Francis Food Market has also started a drive.

Carol Airasian asked about the new High School plan. Anne-Marie encouraged all to watch the meeting next week and also commented that the site has not been chosen yet. One option would be to include the Phillips School area and it hasn't been decided yet. Anne-Marie will send out the information for the future meetings.

If anyone has any ideas or suggestions please reach out to us. We have been working with other departments with outreach. Our next meeting will be October 14<sup>th</sup> at 4:00 PM

### **Adjourn**

Carol Airasian made a motion to adjourn and Tom Lewis seconded.  
The meeting adjourned at 4:37 PM

Respectfully submitted

Rae Grassia, Principal Account Clerk