



CITY OF SALEM, MASSACHUSETTS

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Dominick Pangallo
MAYOR

Tricia O'Brien
SUPERINTENDENT

SALEM COUNCIL ON AGING REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING MINUTES

Date and Time: December 20, 2023 at 5:15 p.m.

Meeting Location: VIA ZOOM

Members Present: Lynda Coffill (LC, Chair), John Russell (JR, Vice-Chair), Abigail Butt (AB, Treasurer), Kristin Macek (KM, Secretary), Eliud Alcalá (EA), Michelle Bettencourt (MB), George Barbuzzo (GB), Michele McHugh (MM), Patricia Small (PS)

Also Present: Teresa Arnold, (TA, Director of the COA) and Councilor Alice Merkl

Clerk: Joanne M. Roomey

I. MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

LC called the meeting to order at 5:15 p.m.

II. APPROVAL OF THE NOVEMBER 15, 2023 REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

A motion was made by JR to approve the November 15, 2023 Regular Meeting Minutes. Seconded by AB. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion was carried unanimously.

III. OLD BUSINESS:

a. Senior Day Update

GB updated the Board and said the committee had a meeting on December 7, 2023 and confirmed they will be holding the Senior Day Celebration on Saturday, June 1, 2024 at Forest River Park. He said attendees must register in advance and pay \$5.00. They will be giving seven awards out and will ask ward councilors for their help.

The committee is open to suggestions and will discuss them further at the next Senior Day 2024 meeting on January 4th.

b. Kitchen Update from JR

JR said Joe Candelaria, TA, Erica, and Anthony Delaney all had their first meeting with DMS. The biggest challenge is to make sure they know where the stove and hood vent are going to go. Once that is determined, everything else should fall into place. JR projects everything should be moving forward by next month. AB asked if Meals on Wheels has increased or decreased. TA will check on the numbers and follow-up with the Board.

c. Letter to Mayor Pangallo

LC said the letter was hand delivered to the mayor's office and they have a meeting set up for January 8th at 4:00 p.m. to discuss separating the COA from Park, Recreation and Community Services. The Board thanked LC for all her hard work on the letter and are very grateful.

d. Further Response from Salem Housing Authority

Cathy Hoog, Executive Director of the Salem Housing Authority, emailed LC with more information regarding the units being used for other than senior housing. The Board would like to invite Cathy to come to the next meeting for further discussion.

IV. NEW BUSINESS:

a. Friends of the COA Report

The Friends did not meet this month. JR said over 300 meals went out for Thanksgiving. They did not anticipate all these meals, so they had to take an additional \$500 out of the kitty. JR said the holiday party was also a success and they had 15 extra participants, so they ordered some pizzas. Councilor Merkl said the party was great.

b. Director's Report Including Technology Grant and Metrobridge

Social Services:

- Open enrollment has ended, and we are thankful for three SHINE volunteers who assisted us with appointments. The Social Service team saw 248 Medicare individuals and the SHINE counselors saw 100 Medicare individuals.
- Unfortunately, Fuel Assistance was behind in mailing their recertification applications to those who have had the benefit in the past. They have been short staffed creating a backup in their office. Social Services has assisted 31 homes so far this year with their applications.
- We continue to see many faced with evictions or housing issues. The wait list for Salem seniors to be offered a unit in Salem is approximately 3 years. Social Services has assisted 56 seniors with housing issues this fiscal year to date.
- 124 seniors received Farmers Market coupons in August. All of them were delighted and thankful for the new benefit amount of \$50.

- Tuesday, January 16th will be the first day for people to call and book tax-aide appointments. Calls should be directed to extension #43016. Tax volunteers will be at the CLC Tuesdays and Thursdays from February to the end of April.

Dining Services:

- We've taken three months off from cooking complete luncheons. It has been an opportunity to absorb comments from our guests, review successes, determine what we can accomplish in this current kitchen and prepare an action plan for 2024.
- We will introduce in January "From Our Kitchen" meals @ \$5 each prepaid when making a reservation. A \$5 price point will be a cost recovery only. To meet all our guests' needs, on those days, we will have available the Title III-C federally funded suggested donation meals for those opting not to purchase lunch and for walk-ins.
- TA, Erica Blumberg and Joe Candelaria met today with DMS, the chosen contractor to continue work on the kitchen enhancement.

Programs/Activities:

- On December 5th, we hosted a Holiday Light Ride with our Transportation Department. Prior to leaving on the ride, the seniors were treated to cookies, cider and music provided by Park and Recreation's Ukulele Club.
- We had 135 people attend our Holiday Party on December 14th. Special thanks to the Friends of the Salem Council on Aging for sponsoring this event.
- We had our annual Remembrance Ceremony this morning, Wednesday, December 20th. This ceremony is to remember all our friends and loved ones who have passed away in late 2022 and 2023 since our last ceremony.
- Our new Low Impact Cardio Class on Friday is a big hit. Participants are already asking for a second class. We will discuss this with the instructor after the first of the year.
- Senator Joan Lovely has volunteered to sponsor the monthly birthday cake beginning in January. The senator will be here the first Monday of each month to help celebrate birthdays.

Transportation:

- Our newest employee, Michael Cormier, is doing well as a van driver, but also as backup dispatcher and scheduler when Annie O'Shea is out.
- TA submitted an application on December 18th to Mass DOT for three new vans; two 6-seater electric vehicles and one regular 12-passenger van. We will know if we receive these vehicles in the spring, and they would be delivered later in 2024 and into 2025.

MetroBridge:

- The COA will be working with MetroBridge, a program at Boston University. Students in Professor Maria Datel's class will help us to understand barriers to participation at the COA for Spanish-speaking older adults.

Enhancing Tech Literacy Grant:

- TA has been working with Purchasing Agent Anthony Delaney and there is an RFP posted for a package of chrome books, computer training and free internet access for a year. We already have 60 seniors interested in taking computer classes. In hopes that we receive proposals soon to choose from, we aim to begin classes in February of the new year.

V. OTHER BUSINESS:

The Board discussed that the COA is down a social worker. TA and HR Director Lisa Cammarata interviewed a couple of candidates, but we have not found the right match. TA also said that Mayor Pangallo wants the candidate to speak Spanish and would give them a \$5,000 sign on bonus. The Board was disappointed with the salary range. The City's starting salary is \$45,000. AB said if you make \$45,000 you are eligible for fuel assistance, which is poverty level. There must be some type of incentive program for folks who are qualified to apply for this position, maybe some sort of stipend.

VI. NEXT BOARD MEETING: Wednesday, January 17, 2024

VII. VOTE TO ADJOURN

There being no further business to come before the Council on Aging Board this evening, JR moved to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by AB. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion was carried unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at **6:15 p.m.**

Respectfully Submitted,

Joanne M. Roomey
Board Clerk

Know Your Rights under the Open Meeting Law M.G.L. Chapter 30A ss. 18-25 and City Ordinance Sections 2-2028 through 2-2033.