

**SALEM COUNCIL ON AGING
Minutes of Regular Meeting**

Date and Time: April 18, 2018 at 5:18 P.M.

Meeting Location: 2nd Floor, 5 Broad St.

Members Present: Lynda Coffill (LC, Chairperson), Julie Carver (JC, Secretary), Abigail Butt (AB), Elaine Heredeen (EH, Vice Chair), and, John Russell (JR), Alice Williams (AW)

Members Absent: Alison Thibodeau (AT), George BarbuZZi (GB), Donna Clifford (DC)

Also Present: Teresa Arnold, (TA, Director of the COA) and Elaine Milo (EM, City Councilor Liaison to the COA) and Laura MacNeil, North Shore Community Action

Clerk: Kathleen Fitzgerald

Meeting Called to Order

LC calls the meeting to order at 5:18 P.M.

Motion made by JR to approve the February Minutes, seconded by EH and passes unanimously.

New Business:

Laura MacNeil, North Shore Community Action Programs, presented a general overview of NSCAP and housing programs. She passed out brochures and presented information on what NSCAP did in fiscal year 2017. She said NSCAP was the best kept secret on the North Shore and that they service just under 10,000 people every year. She advised that they get calls when everyone else does not know what to do and fills gaps in services. NSCAP does not have a head start program nor nutrition and mental health services but does have fuel assistance and weatherization programs. If they can't meet the need, they try to work in the community to pool resources.

AB asked about income levels to qualify. Laura stated it probably goes to \$60,000.00 for a family of four. She said they replaced refrigerators if they were not energy efficient. This is a benefit that all people pay for.

JR asked if it depended on assets as a lot of seniors do not have a lot of income but may have a lot of assets.

AB stated she thought there was something about having a second home and having income property. Laura again stated that assets don't count against you and that they look at monthly income and do not look at expenses. AB also stated that seniors can get a discount on their energy bills as well as fuel assistance.

Laura advised that fuel assistance closes on April 30th but that does not stop the weatherization program. She advised that they assist about 100 non-English speakers every year and help them transition into another field (i.e. medical field in their birth country to something similar here).

LC asked where they got their staff from and Laura stated they have teachers, career counselors and a citizenship expert who are either part-time or full-time.

JR asked if the citizenship program helps people go through the process and Laura advised that they did not pay the citizenship fees, but there are waivers which can be supplied.

Laura then spoke about elder home care services and the fact that they do private pay which is on a sliding scale. She advised that there were many caregivers who would love to do overnight stays and to help people with dementia to stay in their homes. She also stated that they have a contract with the State to provide shelter for homeless families and have been doing this for about 17-18 years. She said they rent apartments in the community and provide start up essentials. The advantage to this is that there is no stigma attached because people do not know the housing is provided because they were homeless. The disadvantage is that the families get too comfortable and not interested in finding their own apartment. She noted that the State tries to place younger adults in congregate housing and NSCAP focuses on older families. She stated that there are more and more challenges today because families have so many problems and it is harder and harder to find housing and wages have not kept up with the cost of living, i.e. rent.

Laura next discussed the eviction process. She said they were in Housing Court on Wednesday and that they have a panel of attorneys to help mediate with landlords to help families from being evicted. They also work with people who have housing subsidies and may get behind.

She let the Board know that the Advocacy Department is where they get charitable funds and they also get community grant money and that they administer those funds. This department is headed up by Derek Leopard. She spoke then about emergency housing for the homeless and advised that they have money from the City of Peabody for short term rentals.

AB asked how many homeless people have left housing and Laura said they had their first failure this year. She advised that landlords work with them because they know NSCAP is paying the rent every month and that if there are damages, NSCAP pays for

them. She said one of the problems with housing the homeless is putting them in an apartment that is too big. This is very unsettling for them. She also advised that many homeless people do not want to go to shelters because they can be dangerous. One of the things they were now seeing is homeless people who are getting older and who now need to be in nursing homes because of medical issues, etc.

AB stated that one of the problems that exists is housing for seniors who are homeless and asked if the Board could get some information on that.

New Business:

LC and AB had a telephone conference with the Mayor to talk about case management needs and the need for an additional social worker or two to work at the COA. The Mayor stated that she was aware of the need for an additional social worker but did not support the need for two.

Things that came out of the telephone meeting:

- The need for more senior housing;
- The Mayor would like for the Board to start a dialogue with the Salem Housing Authority because there is grant money out there to facilitate expansion of programs with seniors as well as grants which could be used for construction of new housing, etc.

AB advised the Board that there were all types of grants out there and that you just needed to know where to go for them. She also advised that an idea talked about was getting a residential services coordinator who could help with faxing papers, etc. so seniors do not lose benefits. LC stated she would like to brainstorm how to do this. It was noted that a full-time person was not needed.

- The Mayor invited TA to meet on May 17th to start a dialogue with the Salem Housing Authority.

TA stated that she had a budget meeting with the Mayor and the social worker(s) needed. AB asked if there was talk about bringing someone on who was already here and TA explained that while Joe Ericksberg, the SSU intern would be ideal, that we would have to go through the process to make it fair.

JR spoke about the Friends of the COA and advised that next month SATV was giving us the opportunity to ask questions. There was also going to be a fundraising event at Barnes & Noble on Saturday, May 12th. He also advised that he was going to send appeal letters to businesses and that approximately 525 business should be receiving it. He spoke about the pasta dinner scheduled for June 22nd at the Moose Lodge and advised that tickets are \$7.00 and is limited to 160 people. There would be raffles, auctions and dancing.

Director's Report:

Social Services – In the last month, 216 60+ received services.

Tax Aides: 368 people were assisted with their tax returns and 12 individuals were assisted who received audit notices.

Transportation – No vans in the shop. \$62,800 is now ear-marked for another van, so now we will have two new vans.

Community Services -- TA stated that she had a meeting with Maggie Brennan, ED from NS Community Health and Patricia Zaido and discussed behavioral health challenges. Maggie Brennan offered to have one of her social workers come in to the COA, possibly after the move, to run a support group for people in recovery.

LC asked why we had to wait and TA explained it was a space issue.

JR stated that the Friends still never qualified what fundraising to do for the new CLC. LC stated we still don't know what the budget it. TA shared some information and advised that furniture and furnishing expenses had been approved.

JR asked if it was too late to do fundraising and LC wants to take a look at what we would be given first.

JC suggested getting a message out for philanthropic donations and suggested recruiting some volunteers to help with this.

JR was concerned about the new Center opening with about a 200% increase and people showing up to empty fitness room. If that happened, he was concerned they would not come back. TA advised that the rooms would not be empty. She let the Board know that she and Trish O'Brien would be meeting next week with fitness people about prices and equipment. TA suggested another meeting with Angela Ericson who has proven success with Peabody and other places where they can do online research for fundraising.

Next Board Meeting: May 16, 2018

A motion to adjourn is made by EH, seconded by JR, and passes unanimously,

The meeting adjourns at 7:15 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kathleen Fitzgerald, Clerk