

SALEM COUNCIL ON AGING
Minutes of Regular Meeting

Date and Time: December 15, 2021 at 5:15 P.M.

Meeting Location: Via Zoom

Members Present: Lynda Coffill (LC, Chair), John Russell (JR, Vice-Chair), George Barbuzzi (GB), Kristin Macek (KM), Patricia Small (PS), Abigail Butt, (AB)

Absent: Donna Clifford (DC)

Also Present: Teresa Arnold, (TA, Director of the COA), Councilman Domingo Dominguez

Clerk: Kathleen Fitzgerald

Meeting Called to Order

LC called the meeting to order at 5:15 P.M.

LC stated that pursuant to Governor Baker's directive on 3/12/20 which supported certain provisions of Chapter 30A, Section 20, there are strict limitations regarding gatherings, so this meeting is being conducted via Zoom. The public and persons who would like to listen may do so by dialing in. All votes taken shall be by roll call.

Roll call was then taken.

A motion was made by JR to approve the November 2021 Minutes, seconded by PS, roll call was taken, and passed unanimously.

Old Business:

Senior Housing Advocacy: KM reads a Newsletter regarding Lee Fort Terrace and advised that there would be a workshop tomorrow from 5:30 P.M. to 7:30 P.M. KM advised that there was nothing updated on the website and that this was the first bit of information since March. KM advised she would attend the virtual workshop. She further advised that the Salem Housing Authority and Beacon Communities were still partners.

LC advised that pursuant to the email she received, there was a lot of chatter with community members questioning the wisdom of placing it on a flood plain and questioning the developer. She predicted it would be a very lively meeting.

KM stated she was not clear who the Regenesi Group was, but that the meeting seemed a bit more formalized and involved people who live in the neighborhood.

LC asked Councilman Dominguez if he had any knowledge of Regenesi Group. Councilman Dominguez stated that the more we get involved the better it will be.

Salem Roadmap Update: PS advised the meeting was well attended. She stated that the consultants were doing a wonderful job, i.e., doing data work and putting hard numbers together. She advised that the average rent in Salem was over \$2,000.00, and that the average rent Salem residents could pay was just over \$1,000.00. There is another meeting happening at the end of January. PS advised that she would like to find four people who would be willing to meet and talk about this. TA advised that the conference room at the COA could be utilized for this. LC said she would participate in the meeting. GB and JR stated they would also participate. TA suggested inviting one of the social workers living in Salem to participate and said she would speak with Sharon Felton.

LC suggested that another idea is to have seniors coming to the CLC to participate. PS advised she was holding off on that. KM said not all participants coming to the CLC live in housing. PS said when they talk about senior housing authority, they are talking about housing forum for seniors. She further advised that we need to hear strong voices. KM asked if there was a power point available and PS stated when she received it, she would forward to TA to distribute.

LC stated that the information received would be useful for our campaign as we try to get divorced from the Metro median income data.

Generator and Kitchen Update: JR advised that he did not have a lot of information. He said he touched base with AB's husband, Aaron and found out that with an electric stove you did not need a hood or exhaust fan, JR advised that he wanted to get in touch with Mike Lutzykowski to see if he would meet at the CLC to see what the issues were. Regarding the generator, JR said he got in touch with the person recommended by GB and that he was trying to arrange a meeting with the blueprints to see about the approximate cost.

Are U OK Update - TA advised that only a half dozen people signed up for this program. PS stated there was a lot of confusion about the Knox box. TA stated she, together with Sharon Felton, would like to meet with the Police Chief and Fire Chief to iron out any and all issues.

AB stated there was an option to rent a box from the Fire Department or rent it from the Friends and if rented from the Friends it would go into a Friends donation to cover boxes in the future. JR stated it would be the renter's box until no longer needed and then returned.

Mission Statement: KM stated she took a pass at it. LC advised they would discuss it at the January Meeting.

Friends Update: JR advised that the December meeting was cancelled and that they were still doing pretty well – up around \$60,000.00. He advised that they paid for 285 Thanksgiving meals.

LC asked board members if they would prefer to meet remotely through April or move to hybrid.

- PS remotely
- AB remotely
- KM remotely
- LC remotely
- GB remotely
- JR remotely

Director’s Report:

Activities/Programs:

Salem Wellness Walks – This month we had newly- elected Caroline Watson Felt as a guest speaker who led the walk around the Salem Common. A dozen people participated. The Holiday Party is limited to 65 people as we are still socially distancing. This will be on Wednesday, December 22nd. There will be a catered lunch and entertainment. The Salem High School Band is stopping by this Friday to play holiday music at 11:00 am.

Twenty-eight seniors went on our annual Light Ride last week with Annie O’Shea, Mary Caron, and Kris Wilson driving. The New Year’s Eve social is on Wednesday, December 29th, snacks, and music in the afternoon. Again, we are distancing and limiting to 65 people.

Transportation:

Transportation continues to see an increase in demand for all services. Last month there were 1,100 one-way rides.

Our newest hire, Diane Brown, has settled in nicely to a daily routine. We are now at a comfortable number of drivers (8). We look forward to continuing to meet the current and anticipated demand as we prepare for the new year and increase in classes and events.

The highlight of the month has been the holiday light ride. Seniors were served cider and treats before being driven through brightly lit neighborhoods.

We are anticipating the arrival of our new van sometime in January. Decisions around which van to retire continue.

Nutrition:

Yesterday, we partnered with many of our regular guests to host a phenomenal multi-birthday luncheon that was enjoyed by all featuring Filipino food.

We consistently host 20 to 35 people each day for luncheon and are pleased to see new or returning "faces" each week.

In January, we will be introducing these one per month highlights: on Fridays, an in-house prepared chilled luncheon, a catered Monday brunch before the noon movie and on a separate Monday a (modified) make your own sundae bar for dessert after luncheon.

Social Services:

Are U OK? Wellness Check Program

Currently we have 6 people signed up for these calls but there is some kind of system error in which email reports are not automatically going out. IT is looking into this. We currently have one person awaiting to have their unit key placed in the condo knox box. Sharon Felton has spoken with police, fire, and housing to come up with the information on the fact sheet, application, and lockbox description online. The reason for this in-depth look at the various housing situations is due to one client.

- A client in a condo signed up for Are U OK.
- Sharon notified Salem PD to have lockbox installed to find out they cannot put on condo units due to liability issues.
- Sharon learned there was a knox box on the building, so she asked Salem PD if her unit key could be placed there and was told no.
- That outcome was “condo unit owners would need to get condo association to purchase and install lockbox and provide code to Salem PD”.
- Sharon sent the current fact sheet showing the various situations and was approved by Salem PD.
- A few weeks later, Sharon called the police officer to inform that the senior has purchased a lock box and is awaiting someone to install. There were some communication challenges as Sharon was then told that the condo association does not have to approve, purchase and install, and that the fire department can simply put a unit key in the knox box.
- Sharon decided to call the fire department directly and checked with housing which led to the final fact sheet which will now be posted.
- We are working on refunding the senior who purchased the lock box as well as having the fire department meet with her to place her unit key in the knox box.
- Once that is done, she will notify Social Services and wellness check calls will begin.

Open Enrollment: 311 Medicare beneficiaries were seen 460 times to assist them with insurance needs.

Housing: Concerns of emergency housing wait list is growing due to the “no fault evictions” going on in our community.

Covid: We are getting a few calls to assist folks with booster shots as well as support services needed for a 50-year-old with need for meals but not eligible through Elder Services. The client was then connected with Community Serving in Boston that delivers in these cases.

American Rescue Plan Funds (ARPA): TA spoke with Nick Downing in the Finance Department. The City is receiving 3.5 million in ARPA funds. The funds must be obligated by 2024 and spent by 2026. Several city meetings with councilors and others have taken place to identify needs and there are plans to dedicate a significant portion to public health and monitor how more funds allocated will be pandemic related. The City recognizes the mental health crisis. Nick Downing said that ARPA funds can be used for staffing if justified. A question is how to back-fill funding for new positions when ARPA funds have been spent. TA will continue to assess staffing needs and keep a conversation going with Finance to ascertain if the COA needs assistance in some fashion.

Per AB, funds cannot be put in a reserve account outside of the ARPA account. They have to be expended by December 2024. AB advised that we need to hire a person now and be done with the position by December 2024 or have the data needed by that point and then ask for preferred funding.

LC stated that one of the things on the Work Plan was to advocate for a community social worker to work with children of older seniors.

LC asked if there was any other business.

PS said she was wondering about a program to get volunteer drivers to assist at doctors' appointments. TA advised that a few people showed an interest, but no one has asked for assistance.

TA advised that the Memory Café had engaged Peggy Cahill and the first Memory Café would be January 27th. TA said they were going through the list of past attendees and would be advertising more. Kay and Brendan Walsh have been invited to the first café to talk about their journey. TA advised that Rep. Tucker is very vocal about how important these Memory Cafés are. TA said that at the end of each café, participants would receive nutritional information and a simple recipe.

TA stated that the new clinician from NSCHP would be starting this coming Friday and will see what kind of support is needed.

There being no further business:

A motion to adjourn was made by JR, AB seconded, roll call was taken and passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 6:10 P.M.

Next Meeting: January 19, 2022

Respectfully Submitted,

Kathleen Fitzgerald, Clerk