

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

Date and Time: January 19, 2022 at 5:15 P.M.

Meeting Location: Via Zoom

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

Members Absent: Julie Carver (JC)

Absent: Teresa Arnold, (TA, Director of the COA)

Also Present: Leveille McClain (City Council Liaison), Cathy Hoog (CH, Executive Director-Salem Housing Authority)

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 December 2021 Minutes, seconded by PS, roll call was taken, and passed unanimously.

Old Business:

Sr. Housing Update: KM sent a lengthy email regarding updates from a very long Lee Fort Terrace meeting. The meeting included residents of Lee Fort Terrace as well as neighbors. KM advised as follows: They are looking to build a three-story building and the biggest issue is that only 53 units will be for seniors. They are looking to having working families live there. They have proposed 123 units with 123 parking spaces, most of which will be under the building. 70 will be low income and 60% affordable. Cathy Hoog from the Salem Housing Authority was on the panel, and the only representative

from Salem. Emily Achtenburg, a development consultant was also in attendance, but both of them were just observers.

KM said the Lee Fort Terrace Tenant Organization was very vocal and spoke strongly about what they were hoping for.

CH asked the COA Members what they would like to know and stated she was present to answer any and all questions.

KM stated that the Regensis Group seemed to go into kitchen table conversations and spread some good will. KM said what struck her was that only 53 units were designated for seniors. This would only be adding two additional units for seniors.

CH said there has been a lot of information shared on social media which was not correct. She said this was the third go as a site plan and said they do feel it is a feasible project. She stated they were looking to accomplish 125 units plus or minus and were looking at one-, two- or three- bedroom units. She advised there was a lot of complicated law about fair housing, and they need to be in compliance with State and Federal laws. She further advised that they wanted to accomplish an entirely affordable development and that a certain percentage would be low income and they were looking to have the development unrestricted. She said the 50 units would remain senior and disabled units.

LC asked if the units were specifically designated. CH said no. She stated that she had met the day before with the State to go over what they were looking to propose and any concerns and that a few caveats needed to be researched. She said advice was needed around the age component and where people land in the development. She said the ultimate goal was to have it unrestricted and to have it all affordable. She said they were hoping for 123 units, most three-story and goes into four-story. She said most of the parking would not be visible but hidden under the building. She advised that the huge focus was on raising this development above the flood plain.

The site is problematic but there is a big push for sustainability - passive housing design geared toward utilizing materials safe for the environment and to create a positive energy site. It would be all electric solar panels with maximum sun duration and would create energy. She stated that initially there was a lot of pushback and uncertainty, and people were not enthusiastic in redeveloping the site. She said they made a decision to work with the Regensis Group because they have a great track record to engage the community and to try to figure out what people want, need and value so those concepts drive the project. The design that will come out of it will be something that everyone values due to feedback. She said the style and location would be two building joined by a bridge. She said the next step was to finalize the application which will provide the SHA with a large chunk of money if awarded by the State. She said they were looking at tax credits and looking to the City for DPA funds and getting approval and funding would be incredible. She stated they have been at this since 2019 and have come a long way. She said the residents have helped drive a lot of the decisions. She said they are presenting this as a rescue mission. She advised that the current units are going to deteriorate and eventually sink into the ground.

LC asked if the residents have been involved from the beginning and on board. CH stated that it has been a process which began with a lot of fear and confusion. As time went on the residents helped a lot. She said the residents want to remodel the units but that there is some hesitance and some concern, but CH said they are assuring the residents that they will support people every step of the way.

Councilor McClain asked where the residents go during the construction or reconstruction. CH stated that ideally, they would transition to any of the one-bedroom units they have in their stock and that there were many options for people.

Councilor McClain asked how many one-bedroom units were in stock in Salem. CH said that there were 715 total in stock and the majority were senior and disabled. Councilman McClain also asked if all 50 people in these units wanted to stay in Salem, would they be able to? CH said definitely. She said ideally, they will place them wherever it makes sense to them.

LC said that at the beginning of this process we were concerned about displacement and that no one would be made homeless from this. She said there was a lot of anxiety but that we had assurances from CH that no seniors would be displaced.

CH said she could not be part of a program where people would be displaced and understood the fear and worry. She said they were trying to address all concerns one by one.

LC asked if it were possible to increase the number of low-income senior units to 60. CH said they were not limited to 50 and that the entire development was affordable.

LC asked if they met the requirements for senior housing now would be okay. CH said the entire project will be affordable and 60% and below are area median income for senior housing.

PS said what concerns her is the use of the term "affordable". She asked CH if she has been connecting with the Salem Housing Roadmap Project. CH asked what project that was. PS asked CH if she was aware that Salem has a whole AMI that is \$4,000.00 less than Boston.

CH stated that the idea is that if there were folks in that category that they would qualify. PS said that would work for working people, but not for seniors. If seniors go in at 60% that would not work

CH said they would like to create a super preference for returning people and another for senior and elder families. She said they still had some tweaking to do and that some things could change.

Councilor McClain mentioned the 50 units which would be calculated at 30% AMI or less and returning seniors would have first right, but asked if it was correct that those 50%

would be restricted at 30% AMI or less. He then asked if there would continue to be senior units in the future. CH said the State requirement is to retain units as they are.

KM asked if the senior housing waitlist was currently closed. CH said currently they have 5,434 elderly/disabled applicants on the list and 16,431 people on the family list. She said there is no shortage of applicants. She said every time they pull from the list, they pull between 150-200 applicants. She said approximately 70% will not respond or qualify. She said the process is very transparent and every Housing Authority has to do things the same way so it's more efficient and fairer. She said the negative is that people had the right to self-claim without proving it and it takes an enormous amount of time to figure out if applicants qualify.

LC asked if there were any other questions and there were none.

Salem Housing Road Map Project - PS said the forum for seniors looking for housing would be next week on January 25th. She sent the links to the Board Members. She said they were going to have a "meeting in the box", which are small meetings with Amanda Chiancola.

LC said she did not see any information from the previous meeting. PS advised she needed to open the website. PS said the form will give out a lot of information and the product is supposed to have stats and information that could be used for grant money. She said they were going to give the City all of the information about what Salem citizens want for housing.

Councilor McClain said he was concerned about seniors having access to Zoom, etc. PS said the way to make it accessible is to take a meeting in a box and do it yourself. She said the final date of submission was February 11, 2022.

LC said maybe in February at the CLC we could figure out a way to tap into the seniors. JR said that if the building reopened, he could get supplies paid for by the Friends. PS said it would have to be at the beginning of February before the February 11th deadline.

Councilor McClain said he would see if he could reach out to the Planning Department to carve out a little time to get additional feedback and maybe extend the February 11th deadline.

Mission Statement - KM said the only thing she would add that she left out was the word "sexuality" in the first sentence.

LC said with that addition, how do we feel?

JR made a motion to accept the revised Mission Statement and PS seconded. Roll call was taken and passed unanimously.

By-Laws - LC suggested we hold off on this until next month and said she would take a crack at the Bylaws and get out a draft.

Friends Update - JR said the Annual Appeal Letter would be going out at the end of this month and about 7,500 requests are going out. He said they still had almost \$60,000.00 even with the \$4,200.00 going out for Thanksgiving meals. He said they were hoping to get up to \$75,000.00 when the next appeal goes out. He said he had received a request from Rosanna and Terry for 150 Easter meals which would be about \$2,300.00 which has been approved.

Director's Report:

Nutrition/Kitchen:

As a public health safety precaution, the congregate luncheon has been suspended (1/4 to 1/28).

Equipment / tool price estimate from North Shore Wholesale Marketplace [\$25K to \$30K] to make the kitchen most functional. TA recommends that Erica Blumberg present to the Board.

We are continuing to look at ways to reduce waste because of no-shows.

2021 luncheon program data: August through December:

Analysis: 2021

	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
total count	485	497	415	376	477
waste	122	81	115	75	62
no shows	N/A	134	113	86	100
walk-ins	N/A	115	119	65	108
# days meals	20	21	20	17	18

Nutrition Education:

Kelley & Kerry had a guest COA participant last month for "Cooking with Kerry". The video spotlighted Neera Ahluwalia from India. She spoke about her heritage and about a classical Indian dish. Kerry then made an easier version of the dish that is quick, affordable, healthy and tasty. Here is the video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TVFMTVrQ-5E>

Social Services:

The Social Services department continues to be extremely busy even with open enrollment ending. In December, four gift baskets were donated by Salem residents for four seniors who do not have family or friends nearby to brighten their holiday season. The Salem Police Department donated four \$100 Market Basket gift cards to four seniors in need. The Tabernacle Church in Salem donated \$500 to go to a senior in need.

Some other information:

-7 Behavioral Health referrals were made in December, and we are seeing an increase in the need and are very thankful to have a partnership with North Shore Community Health. Many are on wait lists for months at other providers to see a counselor but with this partnership folks are booked 2-3 weeks out.

-14 fuel applications were submitted

-10 received of assistance with their SNAP app or benefits

-4 property tax exemption forms completed

-16 Covid related questions...booking boosters & answering questions on what to do if lost vaccine card.

The above info is just to mention a few specifics. Overall, in December, 326 seniors were serviced 729 times.

Programs/Activities:

Currently, we are not holding large events and group classes. We will monitor the current COVID situation and under the guidance of the BOH decide when those activities will resume.

We do have the fitness room and pool room open for seniors to come and work out/play. It has been pretty steady in those rooms.

Rosanna Donahue is checking in on seniors. This week she and Erica Blumberg put together goodie bags for seniors who needed a little visit. Rosanna and Van Driver Tyler Hrynyszyn delivered the bags on Tuesday.

Our building remains busy with the many COVID testing times, vaccination clinics and distribution of rapid test kits.

Transportation:

Transportation had been seeing a continued increase in ridership until we started to see Omicron take hold in Salem. We are currently making changes to our schedule in response to a reduction of activities in the building. We continue to take folks to the grocery store, medical appointments and all other services. We will have a staff change shortly as Tyler Hrynyszyn has accepted a full-time position in another community. He will be leaving us in the beginning of February.

On December 28th, MassDOT delivered our new van. DPW is in the process of getting the van ready to be put on the road but we are very excited about the new addition. We will be retiring one of the vans and are working with a local garage to help us make that decision.

Transportation is helping distribute hot meals to seniors who typically came to the center for congregate meals.

Memory Cafés:

The first Memory Café funded by the special Elder Affairs grant will be held on February 24th at 1 pm. We do have some people registered and continue to advertise. Rep. Tucker will be at our first. We have an excellent series planned and will share that with the Board soon.

Since the five-year plan is up, SFAA is restructuring committees. TA and Kathy McCarthy will be on a new committee which is the Community Life Center Engagement Committee. The goal is to create more participation at the CLC. Fred Norton and Kristin Macek are joining this committee as well.

There being no further business:

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

Next Board Meeting: February 16, 2022 via Zoom.

The meeting adjourned at 6:20 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kathleen Fitzgerald, Clerk