

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

Date and Time: March 17, 2021 at 5:15 P.M.

Meeting Location: Via Zoom

Members Present: Lynda Coffill (LC, Chair), John Russell (JR, Vice-Chair), George Barbuzzi (GB), Alice Williams (AW), Donna Clifford (DC), Kristin Macek (KM), Abigail Butt, (AB), and Julie Carver (JC)

Member Absent: Patricia Small

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

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 February 2021 Minutes, seconded by AB, roll call was taken, and passed unanimously.

Old Business:

Senior and Homebound Vaccines : The Mayor asked Teresa Arnold and her team to come up with a questionnaire to identify and determine homebound individuals and send it to Dominic Pangallo and to her. So far, 110-115 have been identified. Dr. Roberts, NSMC, uses the definition of bedbound to truly determine homebound. The Social Services Department is working on the list now. Cataldo Ambulance will probably be administering the vaccines.

New Business:

Friends Update: JR stated that there was a lot of conversation at this morning's Friends meeting concerning vaccinations for seniors.

Regarding a new generator, JR will speak with Joe Candelaria to see what size is needed. He said they will need to accommodate A/C, heating, and the kitchen, so a generator to accommodate the entire building will be needed.

Lee Fort Terrace - Plans are being made for 230 units. There are 56 units there now and looking to add 16 senior/vets/disabled units, but JR said he thought Salem could do better than that. KM stated it was very upsetting that only 16 new units would go to seniors/vets.

LC said the development is supposed to be mixed use and the number added is inadequate for senior needs. LC asked KM to keep the Board apprised regarding public hearings, etc.

There is concern about displacement of those living there. The SHA said that seniors will not be displaced, and other housing will be found for the seniors. A company would come in and pack them up, move them and repack them.

AB advised that the Town of Lincoln had gone through this years ago and is still feeling the effects. Seniors are still upset about how it was handled. She stated for some people this displacement was awful.

KM said she is willing to keep the Board informed on plans for Lee Fort Terrace. She said there are definitely some flood plain questions. She said the crossing floods out every time it rains. KM also stated that there are multiple residents who have been living there for years and relocation will be difficult for them. She advised that there was a Conservation Commission meeting coming up and that she would stay on top of that.

AB asked for clarification on the number of new units for seniors/vets/disabled and was advised it would increase from 51 to 66 units. JR advised he hasn't seen the exact figure yet, but it would be roughly 200 units. AB asked if adding an additional 150 units, would only 16 new ones would be affordable housing? She stated when talking with the Mayor about other cities having higher percentages, the Mayor said builders won't come and build because of percentages. AB stated Salem's density was going up and structures were beginning to look like other communities. AB said we needed to revisit this.

LC stated that Lee Fort Terrace is in terrible shape and needed to be renovated. She stated that we could mitigate as much as we could working with the Salem Housing Authority.

JR stated there was a middle ground, but we needed to do better. He questioned why a second floor couldn't be added. LC stated she heard it was cheaper to tear down and create new units rather than renovating what was there.

There was a discussion about flooding and JR advised that the street might flood, but the intended units were high enough not to cause a problem.

Fundraising: JR advised that so far with the mailings, the Friends are up about \$11,000.00 and between mailings and Facebook about \$13,000.00. He stated mailings were sent only to people who had given over the last three years. He advised that there was a little over \$50,00.00 in their bank account.

He informed the Board that the Friends would be paying for Easter dinner for seniors who had nowhere to go.

Director's Report:

The COA budget was presented to the Mayor on March 9th. TA said the meeting went well. TA will furnish the Mayor with some ideas on how to staff the kitchen and enhance the meals program to draw more people to the CLC.

-Transportation

Transportation is currently providing rides to all requested destinations. We are also providing rides to COVID-19 vaccination sites upon request. We are preparing to bring back John Tachuk to cover vacations and in anticipation of increase ridership due to seniors getting vaccinated and warmer weather.

As more van drivers are completing vaccines, Annie O'Shea is in talks with a few drivers likely to return. We first anticipate John Tachuk coming back as ridership increases.

KM advised that the Salem Farmers' Market would again be at the Bentley School at the beginning of the season and she wanted to give a head's up so transportation was made aware of this.

-Nutrition Education and Outreach

The Friends of the COA applied for the Cummings Grant to extend the nutrition and farmers market program and the building of the Healthy Snack Shack in partnership with Salem Youthbuild.

We applied and received the MCOA Service Incentive Grant in the amount of \$7,450 for raised vegetable garden beds at the COA which includes a partnership with Cape Ann Backyard Growers. Building will begin in a few weeks. The grant period is short; March-June to accomplish building, planting, nutrition education, and volunteer recruitment.

LC stated that the culinary school at the high school could possibly help.

Kelley Annese produced a few more nutrition /cooking videos with Kerry Murphy to be aired on Facebook and SATV.

-Social Services

The Fall brings fuel assistance and property tax applications. Social Services has already assisted 57 seniors with fuel applications and will continue through May 28 (extended deadline this year...usually April 30) and assisted 20 seniors with some form of property tax exemption.

We partnered with the Registry of Motor Vehicles to offer RMV Near Me several years ago (simply assisting with online applications and preparing for visit to RMV). This fiscal year, 33 seniors were assisted through Social Services. Joe Ericksberg has offered rides to the RMV using a COA van and nine seniors have received these rides.

We now have seven seniors signed up for RUOK wellness check program.

Vaccine registration help continues. At any given time recently, there are approximately 100 people needing assistance with finding a vaccine. We are helping those without computers and those who do not want to travel far.

-Programs and Activities

We continue to offer two in person chair yoga classes at the center. Zoom offerings continue to be Zumba, Muscle and Strength and Meditation. The Thursday balance class moved to a taped class. People can view it on SATV or have a DVD to use at home. The St. Patrick's Day Drive Thru Lunch on March 17th (today) was a success. We contracted with Jim McAllister to tape another lecture for SATV and Neil Diamond and Frank Sinatra tributes are being shown on SATV.

Councilman Dominquez, City Council liaison to the Board, said he wanted to congratulate the COA on the St. Patrick's Day luncheon and said they did a tremendous job.

-Staffing News:

Joseph Ericksberg has given notice to attend graduate school full-time at Westfield State University. His last day is tentatively scheduled for May 7th. This is a huge loss for the department as Joe has served us and Salem seniors very well. Of course, we wish him well. Human Resources will post the job opening this week.

-Opening Plans:

We continue to listen to guidance and hold small, socially distanced classes in the Great Room. As more people become vaccinated, we anticipate opening up a little more – probably in late spring. We will hold many outdoor classes as the weather improves to engage as many people as possible.

We do not have guidance from Elder Affairs or Mass COA on how to open Congregate Meals and general participation at this point.

We may purchase a tent or tarp for outside. AB said that the Lincoln COA purchased one last year and it has worked successfully.

-Medical Escort Driver Program

Beth Rennard approved our liability waivers and we will try to recruit drivers for individuals needing rides to medical appointments as another transportation option.

LC stated there was hope that the May Board Meeting could be in person.
Next Board Meeting: April 21, 2021 via zoom

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 6:00 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kathleen Fitzgerald, Clerk