

Needham Council on Aging Board Meeting

June 8, 2023

Present: Colleen, Schaller, Chair, Penny Grossman, Vice Chair, Helen Gregory, Dan Goldberg, Sandra Prinn, Ed Cosgrove, Anne Cosgrove, Carol de Lemos, Kathy Whitney, Sue Mullaney, Kate Robey, Ted Prorok, VFW representative

COA: Latanya Steele, Director Jessica Moss, Social Work, Stefan Grably, Transportation

SHINE:

Director of Public Health: Timothy Muir McDonald

Friends: Carol Ditmore, Anne Brain

- 1. Call to Order** The meeting was called to order by Ms. Schaller at 5:04 pm combination of in person and on Zoom.

2. Aging Services Division

a. Transportation Update, Mr. Stephen Grably

Stephen noted that the shopping trips are now on demand not a fixed route. Three new drivers are on board so this will help with needs. The trips are mostly to banks, Trader Joe's and CVS.

Stephen also noted that My Senior Center updated software now helps track the trips. Mike is retiring so Stephen is glad to have the third driver.

Stephen noted that the "environmentally friendly" wires in the bands have caused rats and mice to chew through the engine cords causing \$1600 in damage to the smaller vans. He noted that DPW has promised metal covers for the garbage cans but they need to be pushed on this issue as the animals will continue to climb into the engines otherwise.

In answer to Board questions Stephen noted they can't expand past the 1 pm return because the mandatory wheelchair lift training is not until September. Stephen is certified to train but cannot certify without the formal notation.

b. SHINE Update, Ms. Amy Gomes

Ms. Gomes noted they have been busy with presentations—2 at Needham Housing the most recent May 3, Mass Health Updates at the Waltham COA on May 2 and at Brookline COA May 23. They participated in the Lifelong learning fair in Framingham on May 9th. She noted that 5 billboards advertising SHINE's services are now up. The Counselor in person training was May 9th and the virtual was May 18th—These include SNAP issues and there are two more coming up in June. Ms. Gomes noted she thought they would be seeing more people prior to this date but the 65+ group where Mass Health will now look at assets after the pandemic emergency ending is just starting so she believes they will very busy over the summer.

c. Programming Update, Ms. Aicha Kelley

Ms. Kelley noted they are now planning events through January 2024. Jen has finished the most recent Compass which is about to be mailed and the online version is available. She noted they are emailing rosters to instructors to try to collect the payments. Some instructors have sent checks to Town Hall so Ms. Kelley is working on centralizing that process at the COA.

The Compass mailing files were also edited and updated as those who are out of town need to pay for it. Nineteen people were added to the paid roles. Ms. Kelley noted that June has continued to attract new participants. The continental breakfast at the café has continued to grow in popularity and that helps with the revenue stream. The Treasurer's office is still working on a software change that would allow seniors to pay by credit card.

The Board noted it is hard to figure out the payments but Ms. Kelley noted that Zoom allows the COA to meet more patrons than could fit in the building, for example for Steffi's yoga class so the programming will continue to be both in person and hybrid.

d. Social Work and Volunteer Report, Ms. Jessica Moss

Ms. Moss noted numbers are up; new social worker Isabelle Dick is starting June 12. The isolation workshop went well. Ms. Moss and the other social work staff are referring seniors on the wait list to Interface. SNAP Grant for FY 2024 renewed so CATH will be an intake site for another year. The taxi service is for 8 miles which includes Boston is going well; not as many people using it as during COVID but that may change in the fall. Ms. Moss is applying now to extend this grant. They just completed a survey for CATH library and are tailoring the hours to meet this student. In answer to Board questions Ms. Moss noted the taxi service is in the highlights, via social media and in the newsletter. She noted that \$80.00 round trip to Boston so the \$50,000.00 grant will not last long.

Update Ms. Steele's Director's Report

Ms. Steele noted last Saturday CATJH hosted the first Pride Month event partnering with North Hill and Speak Out Boston. 40 people were in attendance including a member of the Selectboard. There will be more collaboration with North Hill in the future.

Fitness room was open but the plan will be to open it on Saturdays in the fall and winter when there is more need.

Ms. Steele noted she continues to attend MCOA outreach and regional meetings.

DEI book club is continuing and will likely add a film to complement the book.

Beginning in July Dinner Bells will be sponsoring a monthly dinner from 5 to 7 pm. The goal is to have younger families and younger people overall attend.

3. Chairperson's Report, Ms. Schaller

Minutes approval

Mr. Cosgrove made a motion to approve the May 11th minutes; Mr. Goldberg seconded. The minutes were approved unanimously by voice vote,

Mr. Goldberg provided a brief overview of the Planning Board vote approving the Wingate third floor addition and 71 parking spaces.

Ms. Schaller also noted the third issue of the new Needham Observer online newspaper. This will be another space for COA news. It is free and registration is at needhamobserver.com.

4. VFW Representative Report, Mr. Ted Prorok

Mr. Prorok asked if coffee talk could be advertised more; the next one is June 28th.

Mr. Prorok noted that Memorial Day was a success. 2000 flags were placed between the Needham Cemetery and St. Mary's.

June 1 was the VFS general meeting and annual past commanders' dinner. The COA Board member Kate Robey was recognized for her volunteer work including decorating the post for many events.

Mr. Prorok noted that the Veterans will be riding on a flatbed truck in the July 4th parade.

5. Friends Board Report

Ms. Brain noted that Mary does a great job running the gift shop with many new items and just ran a very successful half-price sale.

She also noted that donations are down both to many people struggling with inflation.

Two events will happen this summer:

The annual ice cream social August 2

September 8 is the annual Strawberry shortcake social with a Friend's business meeting. No meetings of the Friend's board this summer.

6. Update on the CATH Space Study, Mr. Timothy McDonald

Mr. McDonald noted that the Town's capital plan for the next ten years has the Pollard and Mitchell school renovations at the top of the list and the DPW building. So small projects that can be funded in the half million to a million range is way to reach the top priorities of space study. He noted that the Board needs to provide its top three priorities and advocate for them with the finance and Selectboard during the 2023-2024 year to add items to the FY 2025 and beyond budget cycles.

The Board has had an extensive discussion of short versus long term goals.

The consensus reached was.

- 1) A Commercial kitchen so that traveling meals can be prepared there. BEI Needham has agreed with the Town Manager they will provide a 2 year notice to the town to vacate the meal preparation but the Town needs to be ready with an alternative. There were no bids on preparing the kind of balanced meals that cater to the various nutrition needs from commercial enterprises.
- 2) Swapping the fitness room with the game room. It is hugely popular, always crowded and needs space to run more classes and accommodate more equipment. Long term developing the basement to house a better game room is another priority (at approx. \$600,000).
- 3) Roof Deck adding pergola, shade structures and seating so that the outdoor space can be used more frequently and in different seasons.

There was also a discussion around a multipurpose, flexible space. The computer room could become what the high school has—laptops on carts that can be used to serve the SHINE needs and other computer lab type uses but stored at other times so the space can be used for programming or private meetings.

The Board agreed to discuss what is next in the fall after Mr. McDonald has met with the Town manager and has a better idea of what monies might be available. Mr. McDonald noted that the Library is slightly behind the CATH on their space study but is also working on parceling smaller projects. Mr. McDonald mentioned he will be meeting with the Library Director to discuss both space studies and how to move forward.

The Board also supports private space for the social work staff to meet with clients; this might not mean new offices but the social work is important part of the life of the CATH and privacy is important for this kind of meetings.

In answer to Board questions the renting of more parking spaces from the MBTA is a separate conversation from the space study. Right now, the conversation has started on renting 10-12 spaces along Hillside Avenue.

Old Business

None

7. New Business

None

Ms. Schaller asked for a motion to adjourn. Ms. Mullaney made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Goldberg seconded. The Board adjourned by unanimous voice vote at 6:35 pm

Respectfully Submitted,

Faith Crisley

Recording Secretary