

Council on Aging Minutes for Virtual Meeting on November 10, 2021

The meeting was called to order at 5:31 p.m. JoAnn Bernhard, Susan Gomberg, Janis Gray, Susan Millinger, and Linda Avis Scott were declared present by co-chair Scott. Absent: Melissa Makepeace-O'Neil.

Minutes of the Meeting of October 13, 2021: Motion to approve the minutes as presented was made, seconded, and passed by a roll call vote.

Business

The Council has been asked whether it would express support for the Senior Tax Work-Off and the Senior Tax Exemption 41C ½. Study of the issue is necessary before the COA can reach a decision. The co-chairs, Bernhard and Scott, had done preliminary research on both in order to give the Council some basic information.

The Tax Work-Off program can be adopted by the Select Board, which can also determine the amount of tax which can be worked off. Eighteen towns with populations of 3,000 or less are listed as having tax-write-off programs, but only four actually use it, including Erving, Williamsburg, and Monterey in Western Massachusetts. For small towns, having work available that seniors can do can be a challenge.

Tax Write-Off 41C ½ is an alternative to 41C, required by the State. 41C ½ would have to be accepted by Town Meeting.

The co-chairs will be sending relevant materials to the Council members as background for a discussion at the December meeting.

Financial Update:

The balance as of November 5: \$1,356.61 in the grant.

Expenses as of November 5:

\$120: FootCare by Nurses

Currently, the approximate balance is \$1,236.61

Grant Update:

The Council is reminded that although we do not have the figures for this year's grant, Shutesbury is so small that any change in the number of seniors in town (according to the 2020 Census) will not affect the size of the grant. In addition, members were reminded that the grant is not dependent on the Annual Report to the Elder Affairs Office.

The online form for that report for FY21 is not yet available.

Foot Clinic News:

Gomberg reported on the survey she did of all the clients who participated when the clinic was in Town Hall, asking how they felt about returning to Town Hall for the Clinic.

Survey Results: 15 of 16 clients responded

12 said they were willing to return to Town Hall, given the precautions described.
4 are no longer getting services provided in Shutesbury by the Foot Clinic Nurse: 2
who want foot care are getting the service elsewhere
1 misunderstood the amount a client was hoped to contribute; with the
misunderstanding cleared up, this client will again be getting the service the COA is
supporting.
1 will not come back to Town Hall until the pandemic is over.

The new fee structure, which will be in effect when the Clinic returns to Town Hall:
\$45 for each hour the foot clinic operates plus \$20 per client seen.
This means if six clients were served (each for 30 minutes), the cost would be \$135 (3 hours at \$45) plus
\$120 (6 clients at \$20 each) for a total of \$255.
In comparison, under the previous fee structure when Foot Care by Nurses charged \$35 per client, the
fee would be \$210 for six clients.

Gomberg was thanked for her work.

The Council members then discussed whether they were ready to restart the Foot Clinic in Town Hall.
Gomberg and Scott, who did the work involved in having the Clinic there, were at best ambivalent. Scott
is still primarily working from home, so all the work she did in opening the building and helping
Gomberg wrap up at the end of the session would be an extra burden. Gomberg pointed out that clients
coming early would have to wait in their cars. She thought that especially with the approach of winter, it
was not a good idea to expect seniors to wait in their cars. Council members agreed, thinking that it
would be better to start after the winter, in warmer weather, and that a later start, say at 9 a.m., might
be advisable even then.

The **Senior Housing Survey and the Age-and Dementia-Friendly Communities (ADFC) Survey**

In comparing the two surveys, Gray pointed out that the ADFC Needs Assessment lacked several
questions in the proposed COA survey she considered valuable. In the section on demography, the COA
Survey asked how many lived in the respondent's household. In the question about unmet needs, the
COA survey specified meal preparation and help with technology. The questions about where you would
be living asked whether you might alter your home to meet your needs.

Is the survey oriented more to urban than rural communities?

On the whole, the ADFC Needs Assessment was generally viewed positively by the Council.

An ADFC session will be held on Thursday, November 18, for discussion of the survey by the member
towns. Who can attend? Millinger was unable to attend; Bernhard volunteered. Gray plans to send in
suggested changes she noted as well as her thoughts about the questions.

Scott commented that at the next meeting we will have information from that ADFC session to
consider, and will need to think further about the survey and distributing the survey to Shutesbury
seniors.

Website content discussion:

-Gray suggested changing the name of “Information and Resources” to “Other Resources,” a suggestion which met with approval.

-A short paragraph on “Aging-and Dementia-Friendly Communities” will be needed, with a link to a fuller description of the program.

-Bernhard suggested adding a link to the Assessor’s Office with information about 41C, the Property Tax Reduction.

Membership on the Council will be discussed after prospective new member Tracy McNaughton, who joined us during the visit from Nour Elkhattaby Strauch, the Program Manager of LifePath’s ADFC, has been able to attend a regular meeting of the COA.

Unanticipated Items

COA email contained an item from MCOA: There will be a diversity training on LGBTQ required of all members by next March.

Next Meeting: Wednesday, December 1 at 5:30 p.m. Note: this meeting will be on the first Wednesday, not the usual second Wednesday of the month.

Motion to adjourn was made, seconded and carried unanimously by a roll call vote. The meeting was adjourned at 6:53.

Respectfully submitted,
Susan Millinger, secretary