

Council on Aging Minutes for Virtual Meeting on January 5, 2022

The meeting was called to order at 5:34 p.m. A roll call identified those present: JoAnn Bernhard (JB), Susan Gomberg (SG), Janis Gray (JSG), Susan Millinger (SM), and Linda Avis Scott (LAS). Absent: Melissa Makepeace-O'Neil. Also present: Guests Kevin Rudden, Shutesbury Administrative Assessor; Leslie Luchonok and Jill Marland.

Minutes of the Meeting of December 1 and November 10, 2021: discussion was scheduled for later in the meeting so that our guests might have priority.

Business

The Senior Tax Exemption programs:

Town Administrative Assessor Kevin Rudden gave a full and clear description of the tax exemptions for property available to seniors. Rudden showed us the Assessors page on www.shutesbury.org, where there are links to relevant forms and guides such as the *Taxpayers Guide to Local Property Tax Exemption for Seniors*. Mr. Rudden would like to see Shutesbury residents have access to the maxima provided by the Legislature for real estate; Town Meeting would have to approve these increases. He pointed out that the maxima in money and percents were set decades ago, and have not changed to keep pace with changes in real estate values or tax bills.

Mr. Rudden also explained the State Circuit Breaker Tax Credit. At Rudden's initiative, the 2021 Town Meeting passed a warrant article to petition the Legislature to let the Town adopt (by vote of Town Meeting) a local exemption based on eligibility for the Circuit Breaker tax credit; there is also a bill in the Legislature from the Massachusetts Assessors to accomplish the same end.

There are other exemptions for which seniors can apply.

Mr. Rudden is happy to answer questions about the programs and applications for the exemptions they provide.

Mr. Luchonok suggested that publicity was needed to inform seniors about the different ways of reducing their tax burdens. Mr. Rudden agreed. He would be happy to hold a virtual meeting to explain the options; he will set this up and communicate it in the next *Our Town* and on Town Announce.

Mr. Rudden commented that Shutesbury is too small to offer a Tax Work-Off program.

Mr. Rudden made clear that he is very sympathetic to the concerns Luchonok and Marland have been expressing. He wants Shutesbury seniors to have the maximum tax credit and exemptions that the Legislature has made, or will make, available. Some other towns have prepared a Guide for Seniors; Mr. Rudden would like to do this for Shutesbury.

Minutes of the Meetings of December 1 and November 10, 2021: A motion was made, seconded, and unanimously approved by a roll call vote to accept the minutes of the meeting of November 10, 2021 as presented. A motion was then made, seconded, and unanimously approved by a roll call vote to accept the minutes of the meeting of December 1, 2021 as presented.

Financial Update:

The balance as of the January meeting: \$1,096.61 in the FY21 grant.

December Expenses known as of January 5:

\$700 for Zumba classes

\$90: FootCare by Nurses

Remaining of the FY21 grant: \$306.61

Grant for FY22 Update: No new information is available about the size and arrival of the grant.

Discussion of how much has been spent of the FY22 grant (since July 1), to determine how much we might be planning on spending from the FY22 grant:

\$760 for Footcare by Nurses (an average of \$125 a month)

On Library-sponsored fitness classes:

\$1,040 for Gentle Yoga (January 2021-end of June)

\$1,250 for Zumba

\$1,365 for Therapeutic Yoga

Total: \$3,655.

Estimated future expenses: would include another \$750 for Foot Clinic and \$500 committed to Village Neighbors as an annual grant. Total including these past and estimated future expenses: \$4,905.

Library Director Antonellis is to be invited to the February Meeting to talk with the COA about how much the COA may be able to contribute to Library programming.

Annual Report to Executive Office of Elder Affairs (EEOA) has been submitted. JB reported that the new form is available online; the questions are easier to answer. The demographic questions we found ourselves unable to answer last year have been replaced by a question asking whether we have been collecting demographic data on age, race, etc.

Age- and Dementia-Friendly Communities Survey Update: Nour Elkhattaby Strauch, the program director at LifePath, wants to meet with one or more representatives of the COA to talk about the logistics of the Survey. LAS and JSG, who have relevant expertise, are available to talk with Nour. A meeting is scheduled for Thursday, January 13 at 10:30 a.m.

Next Meeting: Wednesday, February 9 at 5:30 p.m.

Motion to adjourn was made, seconded and carried unanimously by a roll call vote. The meeting was adjourned at 6:50.