

Council on Aging Minutes for Special Virtual Meeting on January 26, 2022

The meeting was called to order at 4:02 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: guest, Doc Pruyne, reporter for *The Reminder*.

Business:

This was a special meeting of the COA called to learn and discuss the results of the January 13 meeting of LAS and JSG with Nour Elkhattaby Strauch, the LifePath program manager for the Age and Dementia Friendly Regional Network. The purpose of the meeting with Nour was to find out more about the plans for distribution of the survey, and what Shutesbury's role in this process might be. The purpose of the survey itself is to collect data about the status and needs of the seniors in Franklin County and the North Quabbin, in order to discover what steps the Network should take to improve the lives of seniors, and to provide information useful in grant applications to support such actions.

Shutesbury's mailing list is for those 55 and up, though the survey is intended for those 50 and up. Nour said this was not a problem.

We were informed that: The survey is available now online and on social media. It will be open until March 11. There will be a press release. It was learned that some town will have dropboxes where the paper surveys can be returned; larger towns may also have places where individuals can pick up paper copies. However, the continuing presence of COVID does make it difficult to expect people to pick up the survey in an interior of a building. Shutesbury's Town Hall remains closed.

A paper mailing will be accessible; there is also a printable version online. If the COA can identify the seniors least likely to respond online, LifePath will cover the costs of mailing paper copies of the survey to those who need them, and provide return postage (a SASE.) LAS pointed out that those most likely to need a paper copy are the older seniors, who are less likely to have access to a computer or the internet, and also more likely to be homebound. There are approximately 129 seniors over the age of 75 some of whom live in two person households.

Nour plans to watch the numbers of returns coming in from the different towns so that he can notify towns with fewer responses. JSG thought that he will also be watching for the ages of those returning the survey, so he can pass that information along to the towns.

Phone support is available for those who request help.

What can Shutesbury do to promote the survey?

Publicity: JSG showed COA members the article she is planning to include in *Our Town*. The issue is expected to be disseminated the first full week of February. Some minor suggestions to improve the organization of this article were made.

LAS suggested there should also be a notice in *Town Announce*, containing either provision of a link to the survey or instruction to the reader to consult the online *Our Town* for the link.

The COA experienced some lack of clarity about what LifePath wants the towns to help with, and what LifePath will do itself. Originally, Nour was asking for two people from Shutesbury to answer any questions people might have; now he appears to envision questions being answered by LifePath staff.

There are pros and cons for either arrangement. Local people answering have the advantage of being known; the disadvantage of local contacts is that COA can't provide the immediate response that LifePath staff can provide in answering the phone or email. It was also unclear whether people are to contact Nour for paper copies of the survey or are to contact members of the Shutesbury COA.

It was decided to contact Nour for clarification; JSG will check with him and put the correct information in the *Our Town* article; LAS will use what JSG puts in the town newsletter and on the website in writing the *Town Announce* announcement; JSG will also send out the clarification to all COA members.

At the end of the meeting, the guest, Doc Pruyne, asked for a member of whom he could ask further questions. JB volunteered to help the reporter.

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 4:56.