

Council on Aging Minutes for Virtual Meeting on March 9, 2022.

The meeting was called to order at 5:36 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 were guests Tracy McNaughton and Acting Chief of Police Kristen Burgess.

Minutes of the Meeting of January 26, 2022: A motion was made, seconded, and unanimously approved by a roll call vote to approve the minutes of the meeting of January 26, 2022 as presented.

Minutes of the Meeting of February 9, 2022: A motion was made, seconded, and unanimously approved by a roll call vote to approve the minutes of the meeting of February 9, 2022 as presented.

Business:

Acting Chief Burgess reported briefly on the "Sand for Seniors" program. So far there have been 16 participants; 14 of these provided email addresses which will be shared with the COA. Village Neighbors' newsletter carried an announcement of the program. Burgess's next program will be a gift of sweets, "Spring Sweets," which may be held in April. The emergency preparedness kits are still on her agenda. Burgess learned that the seniors contacted like the idea of more communication with Shutesbury's police, asking in particular for a stop-by when the power goes out. LAS pointed out that the COA might be able to help Burgess's programs financially; Burgess was glad to know that. JB pointed out that trash bag handout day was a good time to reach a lot of residents.

Updates:

Foot Clinic: There were six clients in February. The question of whether Foot Clinic could go back into the Senior Lounge now that Town Hall is open again was raised. LAS will consult the Town Administrator for an answer.

Financial Update:

By the end of the fiscal year, the COA anticipates expenditures of \$2340 towards fitness classes. Since the COA is anticipating a grant of \$6,000 for FY22, before February expenses, \$3136.61 remained uncommitted.

February expenses:

\$260 for FootCare by Nurses

\$53.90 for postage for the surveys

Remaining as of the March meeting: \$2822.71

Future expenses of \$500 committed to Village Neighbors and an estimated \$800 for the Foot Clinic leave an estimated \$1522.71

LAS reported that the Select Board has sent in the paperwork, so the COA has its grant for FY23. The State has committed to the annual grant of \$6,000 for ten years. The COA will still need to turn in an annual report, but the Select Board won't need to fill out paperwork annually.

Update on the Age- and Dementia-Friendly Survey and related matters: The Survey was mailed out to 53 senior residents. Village Neighbors (VN) expressed regret that it did not contact Shutesbury COA in deciding to send the survey to all VN members in Shutesbury. Dina Polizzi, a Shutesbury member of the board of VN, volunteered to join Shutesbury COA to provide mutual communication, but she is unable to do so because of a conflict with the COA's established meeting time. Both VN and the Shutesbury COA affirmed their desire to communicate with one another about activities of interest to both.

JSG reported on the February virtual meeting hosted by LifePath, which she attended as one of about 20 from Franklin County and the North Quabbin. James Fuccione of Massachusetts Healthy Aging Collective (MHAC) introduced *Healthy Aging for All: A guide for promoting inclusion in aging and dementia friendly communities*. The guide is intended to give organizations like LifePath's Aging- and Dementia-Friendly Communities suggestions from MHAC which could help them achieve their goals. The guide has been piloted in several Massachusetts communities. Fuccione pointed out that "Age-Friendly environments foster health and well-being and the participation of people as they age. They are accessible, equitable, inclusive, safe and secure, and supportive." Fuccione's Zoom power point presentation of the guide was followed by discussion of affordable housing, one of the areas identified by the group as a challenge in our region. Notes summarizing the discussion were emailed to participants.

The Geezette: Sally Fairfield, the editor, has not yet been contacted to see if she is willing to put out an issue this spring. LAS will check with Sally about this.

Legislative Update: SM reported on a virtual meeting she attended this past winter, a legislative briefing held by LifePath on the subject of staffing crises involving personal care workers. A number of regional leaders (and at least one state leader) of a variety of organizations employing personal care workers spoke of the issues to an audience including Congressman McGovern, State Senator Comerford and State Representative Blais. There is a serious staffing shortage due in large part to low wages and aggravated by the pandemic. Ceilings on rates make it impossible to raise wages to pay staff appropriately. Another issue is the need to bring training standards up to date: they have not changed since the 1990s. Massachusetts is one of only five states which haven't recently updated training standards. There were at that time two bills which addressed these problems. For the good of the senior population, especially in rural areas like ours, it is very important to address these concerns.

Unanticipated items:

Discussion of Membership: Guest Tracy McNaughton is a potential new member of the COA. She was asked what questions she had. McNaughton expressed interest in being COA's liaison with Village Neighbors.

Tasks before the April Meeting: LAS is to contact Sally Fairfield about editing an issue of the *Geezette*; LAS is to contact the Town Administrator about FootCare by Nurses being held in the Town Hall.

Next Meeting: Wednesday, April 13 at 5:30 p.m.

Motion to adjourn was made, seconded and carried unanimously by a roll call vote. The meeting was adjourned at 6:46.

Susan Millinger, Secretary

