

COA Meeting Notes

February 10, 2021

In accordance with Covid regulations set out by Gov. Baker, this monthly COA meeting was held via conference call.

In attendance was members Earl Pearlman, Peg Nogueira, Diane Howell, and Carol Kotros. Also in attendance were Sue Carlson, Vice President of the Friends of the Mendon Elders and Amy Wilson Kent, Center Director. Ann Vandersluis and Jenn Talamini were absent.

The meeting was presided over by Earl Pearlman, Co-chair and was called to order at 10:04am. Amy Wilson Kent, Senior Center Director took the roll call and reviewed the protocols for conducting a teleconference meeting.

Following the agenda, the first order of business was the Acceptance of Reports for January 2021. The Secretary's report (motion to accept made by Peg and seconded by Carol) Treasurer's report (motion made to accept by Peg and seconded by Diane) were unanimously accepted.

Rather than give her report next, Amy decided it was best to intersperse her report with the discussions to follow so they would be time to ask pertinent questions once the topic was raised.

Sue Carlson informed the Council that the Friends would be losing their Treasurer by June. Ann Gonyea will be relocating to Virginia. Her dedication and expertise as Treasurer will be missed. Sue and Amy also explained that the Friends of Mendon Elders (via Charles River Bank) has been accepting some donations for the pantry as a 501C3 non-profit as is required by some donors. Sue also mentioned that the yearly dues of \$5 is currently being collected by mail or drop-off to the center.

Old Business- Amy informed the Council that the Food Pantry never looked better. She credited Janet Hubener, our outreach worker, with devoting over half her time spent at the center providing food and assisting with fuel assistance to those most in need. I will also add that both Amy and Janet have done above and beyond during this pandemic working without a third staff member and under these stringent rules for social distancing.

The pantry was the recipient of many donations in monies and supplies which has led to it being fully stocked. With the donations the Center has received, Amy has been able to restock the much needed (and short supplied) paper goods. Amy also asked that the Council consider designating Alanna DuBiago Bodio, one of the founding Neighbor Brigade members, as "Community Liaison" to the Food Pantry.

Alanna has been updating the Mendon Ma Bulletin Board, via Facebook, almost weekly, with requests to stock the food pantry based on the pantry's current need. With her assistance, much needed fruit juices, fruit cups and nutritional items have been dropped off at the gazebo for

delivery to our Mendon food recipients. The motion was unanimously accepted. This will be publicized in an upcoming issue of the Town Crier and the Senior newsletter.

In the same update, Amy also wanted to recognize the efforts of college students Aiden Fitzgerald for organizational work at the center and Geoffrey Rochat who has personally done “tailored shopping” at his own expense for the center and providing laundry products and canned meats. Amy also praised the work of two dedicated tax abatement workers who have stocked the pantry with all the donated items. All items have been checked and are within “acceptable” use by date. Honor society students also contributed to the needs of the pantry as their service projects.

Program updates-

The Tri-Valley Monthly Meal (“Go and Grab”) has been a great success. Beginning in December, through the generosity of Dick and Betty Ferrucci, we were able to provide 45 meals to seniors in a safe and holiday spirited procession of cars in the Center’s parking lot. “Santa” also joined in the festivities and Diane Howell made up 45 gift bags of necessities and extras to go along with the boxed lunch. Thanks to the local scouts, beautifully handmade Christmas cards completed the package and were received most gratefully from our seniors.

The Grab ‘N Go meals continued in January and the Ferrucci’s again provided the financing for the 20 meals. Thanks to the Worcester County Sheriff’s office, another “goody bag” was added to the meal bag. Peg baked a dessert shared with the participants.

We expect a fine turnout for February’s \$3.00 fajitas boxed lunch. Peg will provide dessert.

For the month of March, an Irish meal of corned beef and cabbage is expected to be “grand”. A senior center volunteer will be making homemade soda bread to add to the meal. It is scheduled for March 17.

For April, a Marlboro organization “Hearts to Home Meals” has contacted Amy about providing a no-cost meal of turkey or codfish to our participating boxed lunch seniors. They are anxious to make people in this area aware of their business. No date has been set as yet.

Beautification- the Friends have already approved up to \$500 for the landscaping and flowers at the center. In the past, a teacher and his students had done the work for the cost of supplies and pizza but if the pandemic is still with us, we may not be able to use the school services. Instead we would use the money to pay for his landscaping business’s services. It was agreed to by all present on the call.

ABMI- emails have been sent by both Jenn and Tyler (ABMI Liaison) but no concrete plans yet made for future programming. Amy would have liked to have Earl’s Valentine piano concert re-broadcasted and after obtaining funds through the Mendon Cultural Council, Amy is working on a Celtic Music program for March televised on ABMI Cable.

Volunteer Appreciation Dinner- No further progress made as there is no reopening date set yet. Diane did have the idea of a “Sock Hop” which was greeted with much enthusiasm by the members present.

30th Anniversary-Peg reported no further discussions being held until a reopening date is set.

Senior Architectural/Engineering Study Update:-no new developments

Reopening Considerations-Amy has not received any positive feedback as to a reopening date. The State has asked COA’s to provide transportation to seniors needing rides to get vaccinated against COVID but drivers are reluctant to expose themselves and in turn, their families to the potential exposure. Amy did say that drivers would be considered “essential” and be inoculated early.

FY’22 Budget-Amy reported that the Outreach position, previously held by Janet Hubener is being upgraded to be in line with the Administrative Assistant’s position (hourly rate). That will put the two workers on an even footing as they may be expected to cover for each other as each is only an 18 hour per week position. Amy is putting the finishing touches on the job description which will be titled “Administrative/Outreach Coordinator.

Amy welcomed our new Admin Assistant Lina Remillard to the Center. She is busy working on the monthly newsletter. We look forward to meeting with her personally.

The 2020 yearly statistics were sent to all of us via email and Amy went over the numbers. Because of the pandemic, our volunteer hours, program participation and numbers of individuals served were lower. Still the center was able to serve 560 individuals and 65 got fuel assistance. Even though being open to the public for the short time, the community was able to make use of our facilities. Amy’s end of the year report featured a thank you for the community support we received. Amy made us aware that the town’s total population has decreased slightly and so has the senior population. Currently, the seniors make up approximately 22% of the total Mendon population.

Goals and Events- Once we are open, there was a discussion of having a monthly non-alcoholic “happy hour.”

We agreed to continue having the Grab “N Go monthly luncheon and a suggestion was made to possibly have a Grab “N Go Craft activity if there was an interest in it. Lina, our new Assistant, enjoys crafts. Amy asked us to please think about activities that the center could do for its participants.

New Business-COA members were reminded by Amy to be sure and complete the State mandated Ethics Training which is due by April 9th. We are to provide a copy of our certificate to both Ellen Agro and Amy. Also, if you have not acknowledged the receipt of the Summary of the Conflict of Interest Law to Ellen Agro, Town Clerk, please do so-via email is fine.

Covid 19 Vaccines and Registration Assistance-Amy apprised us of the difficulty seniors were having trying to sign up to get the vaccine (registration issues) and staff has been collecting names, phone numbers and email addresses and sending out information to seniors re: locations as they become available. Sue Carlson was thanked by Amy for sharing the phone number for the Gillette Stadium vaccine program is 888-623-3830.

Some of us were aware that Milford hospital has begun vaccinating as well as Hannaford in Uxbridge .Soon the Collaborative of the towns of Mendon, Uxbridge, Northbridge and Douglas will be holding a clinic at the Uxbridge High School on Wednesdays, beginning with adults age 75 and older. They hope to have 100 doses per town. Folks interested in the Uxbridge sight can complete a SURVEY on the Town of Mendon's Covid page.

Other issues. There were problems with the Phone System at the center due to internal changes. Amy was not made aware of these beforehand. She was unable to create her own "outgoing" message. This has been fixed and a promise of another "hard line" phone for Lina as well as the option to "press 1 or press 2, for the person one wants to speak to directly. It will save time by not having to transfer calls.

Open Forum- no issues brought up by the COA members.

Amy is in receipt of a beautiful quilt donated by the Nipmuc Math Club. She is looking for suggestions as to doing a raffle, or having an article in the newsletter with an entry attached to the Friends membership drive so if one pays their dues or joins and send in the entry, they will have a chance to win it, or any other ideas we might have.

Earl closed the meeting at 11:12am

Respectfully submitted

Peg Nogueira Co-Chair