



OAKHAM COUNCIL ON AGING

MINUTES OF 3/08/24

MINUTES: for regular meeting of March 8, 2024 at 12 pm at Town Hall

Attending: Barbara Wreschinsky, Clare Hendra, Rick Hendra, Priscilla McGlynn
Becky Austin, alternate

Not Attending: Janice Handrahan

Also attending: Melanie Silva, Pauline Dwelly, Paul Rochette, Lucy Tessnau,
Aaron Langlois

Approval of Minutes: Clare moved to approve, Becky seconded, and the motion passed without dissent.

Follow-up on Last Meeting:

Becky followed up with her insurance agent on whether, as a volunteer, she might be covered by her policy. The agent said she'd check on that and Becky will get back to us on what she determined at the next meeting.

Report from the Chair (Barbara W):

- Barbara has put together a report on what we've done as a COA over the past 8 months. The accomplishments cover everything from new computers to getting our books in order, electrical work to phone referral lists. This will all go into next year's annual report to the Town. Barbara thanked Lucy for putting this year's annual report together.
- On matters electrical: Mr. Moran has completed the electrical work inside the Senior Center, and he's willing to come back and replace some ceiling tiles and change out the current bulbs for LED lighting as a gift to the Town. Our thanks to Mr. Moran!

- Barbara's list of all the activities and things we've done these past 8 months is printed out and available for review in the SenCen.
- Clare asked if Barbara was able to get the computer running again. She confessed turning to the Building's Computer Guru for help: Aaron L. He professed to simply hitting the Power Button. Others had tried that, but he held it for 30 seconds... Our thanks to Aaron for that and for the excellent Senior Center Pennant he obtained for us from Amazon for outside signage.
- Clare thanked Barbara for her report and foresaw its value in helping us put together next year's annual report.

Treasurer's Report:

- Clare said she didn't have too much to report because the accounting period is just being closed out now, and the Town Treasurer, Wendy Graves, told Clare that deposits haven't been posted by the Town Accountant since November.
- Laurie Bartkus, the Town Accountant, is behind because she has the Excise Taxes and Real Estate Taxes coming in back-to-back, and those take priority. The deposits have been made, just not posted.
- Clare hopes to have more next time on the accounts.
- She's also still trying to find out when the second half of the Formula Grant will be coming in and has called our agent at Elder Services, Frank Adams. Again, she should have more next time.

Coordinator's Report:

- Melanie was happy to report that the Fitness Classes are going well and attendance has been "amazing".
 - She's currently talking with North Brookfield and Barre about a new home for Zumba, at least on Mondays but preferably for both days, for consistency.
 - We'll have Lisa Holloway leading yoga classes starting next month as well.
 - The walking group is up to 7 or 8, which is good exercise and good community building too.
 - Melanie has worked up a Waiver Form for our fitness classes, suggesting people consult with their doctor before starting an exercise program. Barbara suggested we publish a general disclaimer alert in the Herald.
 - We have Lunch Bunch outings scheduled, and 2 movies a month

- In April, Dena Hengst is coming; in May, Nicole the nutritionist will be here.
- And Melanie's planning a field trip/Brown Bag Lunch concert at Mechanics Hall in Worcester. We need 8 people to make good use of the Elder Bus she arranged for.
- She's also working on trips.
- Melanie's signed us up for 2 activities with Hartman's and 2 more activities with Bemis.
 - Melanie isn't asking for any money; two grants she applied for came in, one for \$600, one for \$700, both for Hartman's (2 activities)
- Barbara moved to accept Melanie's report. Clare seconded. Approved unanimously.

Old Business:

- Barbara has the Release for Use of Medical Equipment waiver that was produced by the Select Board, and it's available for review. It covers all the questions of liability we were concerned with.
 - The idea is to put the signs Lucy that was good enough to get for us tacked up on the storage unit, saying you take the equipment on your own responsibility; please consult your physician before using.
 - We are going to need forms that can track who's taking what item.
 - We'll need their address, etc.
 - To do that, we'll need a way to tag the equipment that we own so that we can track it.
 - We need to know where things are and who has them.
 - We'll also need to get rid of overstock equipment, commodes, etc.
 - Paul was good enough to put up a rack and Melanie brought in some shelving which should all help get stuff off the floor.
 - Clare reminded the Council that we'd set up an Inventory Task Force
 - to organize and tag everything, inventory it, and then work up a form for checking things out.
 - It was postponed until the Selectboard came up with a waiver form. Now that we have that, we should set that team to work.
 - Clare recalled that it was she, Becky, Jan, Judy, and invited Paul, if he'd be willing, as he's been so helpful with this already.
 - Clare has started researching asset marking tools;
 - Aaron said he'd seen an offer of \$35 for 500 asset tags,

- which should stick to the items securely. That sounded good.
- The team that was there agreed to meet on Friday, April 5 at 2:00 pm, in the Selectmen's Meeting Room.
- **Policy on Home and Phone Visitation:**
 - Barbara proposed the following policy following up on our previous discussions and deliberations:
 - No member of the Council on Aging should transport any unrelated senior for the purpose of COA events or personal appointments.
 - Secondly: no member of the Council on Aging should make any in home visits to seniors. Outreach needs should be met with phone visits, and putting phone requests into the hands of professional resources. Lists of those resources have been posted by the phone
 - Clare suggested we check that wording against the Rutland Senior Center's, just to get more formal language.
 - But there was no disagreement on the policy positions Barbara laid out.
 - Rick thought it would be good to have the policy in writing so we could review and approve it next time.
 - Clare said it might be good to consult with our local COA rep, who's in Barre.
 - So: we agreed to revisit this policy next time with a written, vetted policy we can review.

New Business:

- **The question of By-Laws for the COA:**
 - Barbara framed this discussion by going back over her 8-month review and talking about the Outreach Coordinator position:
 - By-laws would have made the available positions clearer.
 - She suggested the Outreach Coordinator title, not realizing it was an already established title for a paid position in a senior center.
 - She talked about the things we have done and need to do, both as regular COA members and as officers.
 - So how do we turn all this we've done and need to do into By-Laws?
 - Rick asked if there were any committees in Town that have by-laws. Just the Town's By-Laws, Lucy thought.

- Rick asked again how we know the length of terms on the COA?
- Is 3 years just a tradition?
- Lucy said it used to be 5 but they shortened it to 3, “they” being the Dept. of Elder Services.
- Barbara said it is 3 years now, and you can re-up for another 3 years, then you have to take a year off before you can serve again.
- Lucy said this all comes out of the Executive Office of Elder Affairs. And that’s Frank Adams, who’s been there for 20 some years.
- Rick asked next about the rotation of officers. Lucy said we’d make our own rules on that. Elder Services wouldn’t have a rule on that.
 - Clare suggested we have a conference call with Frank Adams
- The discussion moved on to job descriptions. Becky urged we keep them simple so they don’t have to be changed, and there was general assent.
 - Barbara read some sample COA job descriptions that came from the Dukakis administration, and everyone seemed good with those
 - Becky said it made sense to let people do what they’re good at.
 - Lucy explained how the Selectboard came to rotate positions: it was their own rule, as it would have to be for us.
 - As it happens, we’ve all been appointed to the COA for a one-year term. The Selectboard will decide how to stagger them;
 - Barbara asked how they’re going to stagger those positions.
 - Lucy suggested pulling names out a hat: first one gets one year, the next two, the next three – and then repeat.
 - Rick suggested we lay out the positions and let people volunteer for them – for the one year or two-year positions or whatever.
 - Becky suggested we try to set it up so we don’t lose too many critical positions at one time.
- Barbara asked how we should proceed to draw up by-laws?
 - Rick suggested that we either have a committee or we have one person draw something and bring it back for everyone to review.
 - He thought these might be simple enough – especially with the model we had from the Dukakis Era – for one person to pull a proposal together.
 - Then he volunteered himself and Clare to do it, and bring something back next time.

- Aaron reminded the COA that any time there is a quorum of members, it's a meeting and needs to be posted.
 - Rick and Clare should be okay working on the by-laws
 - But the Equipment Committee, as they're now calling themselves, would constitute a quorum, so that gathering should be posted with an agenda.
 - Rick said he'd take care of it.
- **Bulk Mailing the Herald:**
 - Barbara recalled that we'd discussed another bulk mailing of the Herald this spring. And she suggested it would be good to do it again.
 - We have some info items we'd like to make sure everyone is aware of, like the disclaimer/waiver for fitness programs and the loan of durable equipment.
 - Aaron suggested that we get info on the Rutland Regional Alerts number in there too, as some seniors have to sign up for it – including those who are giving up their landlines for cell service.
 - Rick asked when the folks who are putting together the Herald would like to receive it.
 - We're looking at 632 homes, a lot of items to assemble which will take some time and effort.
 - And, Aaron noted, we should avoid bringing the mailing to the Post Office on Fridays and Mondays. Those are busy days for the PO
 - Rick asked when he should have the Herald ready for this bulk mailing.
 - The 25th is a time we agreed to earlier and it should work.
- **Announcement:**
 - Aaron wanted to let us know that the Leicester Regional Public Health Coalition is putting in for funding a regional social worker – something we spoke with them about when they were here.
 - This will be especially important for homebound seniors.
- **Buddy Phone-Check System**
 - Barbara asked Lucy about the history of this idea, which she read about in the records.

- Lucy said they tried it at the suggestion of Police and Dispatch, but it never really caught on for one reason or another.
- It was agreed that this was a good thing for seniors to arrange on their own, if they were home alone.

▪ **Changing the COA's Regular Meeting day:**

- Melanie and Barbara thought we might consider this, but then thought better of it. Withdrawn.

Aaron informed us that the YouTube of this meeting will be available within an hour, and could be posted on our Facebook page if Melanie would like to.

Motion to adjourn: Rick moved and Barbara seconded the motion to adjourn, and it was approved without discussion at 1:22 pm.

