

Groton Council on Aging
The Groton Center
163 W Main Street
Groton, Massachusetts 01450
Council on Aging Director, Ashley Shaheen
Board Meeting Minutes

Date: January 10, 2022

Location: The Center

Time: 1:00PM meeting (on zoom) called to order by Jean Sheedy Chair

Attendance: Chair Jean Sheedy, Vice Chair Paula Martin, Secretary Dottie Zale

Members: Judy Palumbo O'Brien, Mihran Keoselan, Helen Sienkiewicz, Pascal Miller. Absent: Therese Keoselan and Peter Cunningham.

Director Ashley Shaheen

Guests: Mark Haddad Town Manager, Melissa Doig TOG-HR Groton,
Lauren Marcello Community Engagement Specialist.

Minutes: The Minutes from December 13, 2021 were accepted with one correction, the next meeting will take place on January 10, 2022.

Other Business: Mark met with the Board to clarify the town's hiring policy. Mark also related that Ashley could invite anyone that she chooses to meet with the candidates and review their resumes. The Town Manager (in this case Mark) and The Center Director (in this case Ashley) choose the final candidate. Mark then takes the appointment to the town Select Board for ratification. Mark added that he had great faith in Ashley's final decision.

Mihran wanted to be clear that the letter he had written to the Board and Ashley was only meant to be a suggestion to Ashley that she consider inviting someone from the Board to be at the vetting process. He felt some of the Board members had many years of experience at The Center and that experience could be helpful. All agreed the information from Mark was very informative and Mihran's letter and recommendations would be helpful in the future.

Introductions: Ashley introduced Lauren Marcello to the Board. Lauren said that she had started at TheCenter on January 3, 2022. Lauren reviewed her education and past experience. Lauren said she was very excited to be in Groton (Lauren is from Rhode Island). There will be a "Welcome" luncheon for Lauren on February 9th at 12:30PM. The lunches will unfortunately be to go. Ashley encouraged everyone to attend and she hopes as many members as possible will be able to attend.

Director's Report:

*On December 19th the Nashoba Board of Health notified The Center that a participant who had attended the luncheon on Wednesday, December 15th had tested positive for COVID-19. All individuals that had attended the luncheon were notified. The Center was closed on Monday, December 20th for a deep cleaning. Follow up calls were placed a second time to those individuals that were at the luncheon to see if they had questions. These calls were much appreciated. The Town closed the Center from December 28th at noon thru January 17th, 2022. Due to the increase in cases/exposures Town Hall and The Center were both closed to foot traffic but residents were encouraged to call the main line with all inquiries. Meals on Wheels, Transportation Services and virtual programs were being offered. Judy asked if there was a charge for the virtual programs? Ashley said no, but to date those programs have been poorly attended. Members have expressed disappointment at The Center's closing but understand why it was closed. Meanwhile the staff continues to reach out to members.

*Current Programing:

The January/February newsletter was e-mailed to all members in the database on December 30. The number of programs exceeded the available amount of space in the newsletter, so an insert was created. The 'new' news letter kicked off the "Reinvest In You" initiative which will guide members on how they may want to spend their time i.e. programs, courses, getting in shape, trips or volunteering, 'Fitness Class Pass' and many new programs. The most popular upcoming programs are Tax Aide which will be overseen by Pascal Miller, Wendy Prest-Artist

on Exhibit, and Tom Schorn's Woodworking presentation. The importance of wellness calls and checks remains paramount during these uncertain times. Paula expressed concern regarding the Foot Care program being stopped when The Center is closed to the members, last time it was considered a medical need. Was there anyway to continue the program? Ashley will look into it.

Most members understand why The Center is closed but it remains a life line to the community. Ashley reported The Center banner will go up January 24th and the updated Website will be available to members and the public. Programs are set up for the spring, we all hope The Center will be back to normal. Friends of the Elderly are on board with our "Reinvest In You" program.

* MyActiveCenter:

MyActiveCenter is the online registration option offered through MySeniorCenter, the database used for sign-ins at The Center, organizing rides, inputting data, etc. We are hoping to launch this program within the May/June newsletter. This will be one option for registrations, we will continue in person and phone registrations. Front desk volunteers will receive training lead by COA staff in late January. At the February Board meeting the COA staff will roll out the program to Board members for their input on the system.

* Extended Hours:

There will be a pilot program of extended hours starting April 25th. For 8 weeks, on Mondays, The Center will be open for extended hours. The target audience is those residents that are still working and cannot access The Center during the day. Transportation will be provided where needed. Programming will consist of a Fitness class, Games/pool, fitness center and Topic of Interest presentations.

* The Center Speaker Series:

The speaker series is on target to re-launch with a mini-series, scheduled for April, May, and June. Additional information is TBA. RiverCourt Residences is confirmed to provide

refreshments.

* COA Staff Update:

Lauren Marcello, newly hired Community Engagement Specialist started, on 1/3/2022. Lauren is now undergoing extensive training on the Department's policies, procedures and protocols. Lauren is looking forward to meeting all who are involved with The Center. There will be a "Welcome" Lunch for Lauren on 2/9/2022, all are encouraged to attend.

Tina Maeder is continuing to support the Outreach Program and Sara Raveret is continuing with overall Departmental support. The Outreach/Van Dispatch position has been posted and applications are being accepted until 1/28/2022. Due to the current COVID climate we are exploring the hiring of a per diem van driver to build our resources as transportation is a vital service that we provide. The Town has approved both the COA Department and the COA Van's budgets. The Town also approved a 15hour/a week Departmental Assistant Position in FY 23.

With the newly organized Department there is a need of additional office space for our Professional staff. We are exploring ways to create additional office space within the office wing. We hope this will increase privacy and confidentiality for our members.

Eddie Wenzell continues to dispatch and schedule rides for the transportation program. Effective 12/28/2021 we have limited the number of passengers to 2 at all times. Paula commented that during the last Center closing we were able to have 3 passengers on the bus. Ashley said she will try to put together some transportation stats.

*Outreach:

During the winter months there is an increase in need for support and social services. Residents feel isolated and alone, illness and falls increase. The Department has continued to meet with and communicate with TRIAD, representatives from the police and fire departments and the Nashoba Board of Health this further helps the Department know of new clients that may need assistance.

*Donations:

The COA staff extend appreciation to the following individuals and programs that contributed over the holidays for seniors in need and for enhanced programming: Therese and Mihran Keoseian, The Friends of Groton Elders, Ebi and Desiree Masalehdan and an Anonymous donor.

The next Board meeting is scheduled for February 14th. Mihran agreed to sub for Dottie as Secretary at that meeting.

Chair Jean Sheedy adjourned the meeting at 2:10PM.

Respectfully submitted by Dottie Zale