

COA Board Meeting Minutes February 12, 2024

The Groton Center

Date	Monday, February 12, 2024
Time	1 pm
Location	The Groton Center
Board Members in Attendance	Pascal Miller, Chair Tony Serge, Vice Chair Berta Erickson Carole Carter (via Zoom) Judith Palumbo O'Brien, Secretary Michelle Collette Lois Young Dottie Zale, Acting Clerk
COA Staff in Attendance	Nändi Munson, Community Engagement Specialist
Guests in Attendance	Mark Haddad. Town Manager

Agenda Items and Notes

<p>Open Meeting</p> <hr/> <p>Acceptance of the Minutes</p>	<p>Pascal Miller, Board Chair officially started the meeting at 1:06 p.m. The meeting began with a discussion about the need for someone to take notes for today and future meetings. Dottie volunteered to record the minutes.</p> <hr/> <p>One member noticed an error in the wording of a motion regarding the formation of a new subcommittee. The member explained that the vote recorded in the minutes reflects the final vote on the motion as amended, but it should clarify that the vote on the amendment happened separately before the final vote on the entire motion.</p> <p>ACTION:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A motion was made by Lois Young to approve the minutes with this amendment. Michelle Collette seconded the motion. • All voted in favor.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update on the Center Building 	<p>TOPIC: Concerns about the new rental agreement policy as it relates to community non-profits.</p> <p>At the last Board Meeting Paula Martin expressed her concern (along with others) about the fees for town non-profit organizations.</p> <p>DISCUSSION: Pascal Miller discussed the situation with Mark Haddad the Town Manager. Mark explained that the policy was implemented because there were incidents in the past where the building was left</p>

	<p>unsecure. Mark is responsible for the building and needed to be sure that the Town’s 5.5 million dollar investment was secure.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The first step has been to hire a building monitor to address these concerns: i.e., securing the building, handling technical and building maintenance issues and be generally helpful. • Mark Haddad is exploring alternative solutions in lieu of charging town non- profit organizations. • The Town Manager will report to the Board after meeting with the Commissioners of Trust on Wednesday. • The Town Manager is committed to finding a solution that protects the building while also being accessible to non-profits.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update on Director and Department Assistant Positions: 	<p>KEYPOINTS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There have been 33 applications for Director, 7 to 10 are strong, and four applicants were excellent. • The goal is to present the finalists for interviews within 3 weeks and have a decision by the first of the month. • The Council Chair will work the Town Manager to schedule interviews with the finalist candidates. • A new Departmental Assistant has been appointed; her name is Erin Trainor. Erin has relevant experience and community connections and will start tomorrow. • The transition of a new Director will allow Nandi Munson, currently Interim Director, to return to her Community Engagement role and program activities.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Annual Department Report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The COA Annual Report, based on the calendar year, was submitted to the Town Hall where it will be kept on file and included in the Town’s Annual Report. • Copies are available at Town Hall and at Town Meetings. • Please see entire report for details and further information.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COA Monthly Departmental Report: 	<p>The Gala to celebrate The Center’s Accreditation was a great success and well attended by the public along with many notable speakers. See complete report for details.</p> <p>DISCUSSION: The Board members all agreed that Roger Shaller was inspirational and memorable. This led further to a discussion on training for the Board and staff on CPR and specific emergency measures for Roger. There will be a follow-up with the Fire Department.</p> <p>Successful programs noted were :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wednesday’s Lunch and Learn Programs • Tony Serge’s “Sharing Our Stories” Meetings • AARP Tax Aide, which starts February 8th • The Grief and Loss Support Group • Transportation Program <p>There was a discussion regarding collaboration with Groton Neighbors to share rides and other services.</p>

	<p>Other Items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency Preparedness Forms were sent out to residents in the mail. The results will be shared with the COA, Fire and Police Departments. • Some Board members felt many people have privacy concerns regarding the forms and the Lock Box program. • Educating the public is ongoing; the Fire Department will present an informational session on Feb.23 at 10 am.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TREAD Program and AARP Tax Program 	<p>Pascal spoke on the following programs:</p> <p>TREAD PROGRAM – helps qualified residents pay a portion of their real estate taxes. The money raised for this purpose is generated from donations.</p> <p>KEY POINTS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over \$14,000 has been collected, \$10,000 from the Lowell Five Savings Bank, the rest from community donations. • The deadline for applications has been extended to April 1. • Publicity for the program is needed. <p>AARP TAX Program - The COA offers a free tax preparation program in partnership with the AARP Foundation Tax-Aide.</p> <p>KEY POINTS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serves seniors and low to moderate-income individuals, however, open to everyone regardless of age or income for preparation of most common returns. • Volunteers are IRS-certified and receive annual training. • Services available 9 am to 2 pm every Thursday in Groton. • The program is a national network of volunteers numbering over 27,000. • The COA is one of 600 to 700 sites in Massachusetts.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sqaunicook Sportsman Club, Bylaw Review Committee , Garden Club, Friends, and Grange Updates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sqaunicook - There is no additional information at this time. • Bylaw Review – No additional information at this time • Garden - Currently dormant – no activity. • Friends – Gail will report at the next meeting. • Grange - The Treasurer is willing to present at the next meeting.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Groton COA Update 	<p>Children/Infant Changing tables in public buildings:</p> <p>KEY POINTS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A young mother inquired about the absence of changing tables in the new community center restrooms, and the need to advocate on their installation. • Michelle Collette discussed the issue with town officials and received approval for adding changing tables to both woman’s and men’s rest rooms. Michelle Collette emphasized the importance of accessibility for families. • Michelle will continue to advocate for changing tables in public buildings. <p>Public Participation and Communication:</p>

	<p>KEY POINTS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tony Serge reported on the Master Plan and lack of communication and awareness about the ongoing Master Plan and lack of public participation and the importance of The Center being involved due to potential impact on seniors. • Distribute surveys and other information from The Center and through other organizations. • Idea to have the Select Board Announce upcoming events and initiatives at the beginning of the meetings. • Master Plan Meetings should be announced on the Town website, and were placed in electric bills. • Community Engagement to be discussed at next meeting. Highlighted the opportunity to have a COA table at the fall Groton Fest event to promote services and connect with residents. • Suggestion to collaborate with other organizations to share information more effectively.
Additional Notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lois Young reported on the wonderful generosity of members of The Center and others in donating to the Ayer Shelter. • The shelter will need baby things as a mother is expecting. • Transportation remains a problem. • Michelle Collette reported on a MLK Day event called Katies Closet. • New school age socks were requested; hundreds of pairs were donated.
Closing of Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Michelle Collette made a motion to close the meeting. Lois seconded the motion. All voted in favor. • Pascal Miller adjourned the meeting at 2:33 pm.
Future Meeting Date	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Next meeting was scheduled for Monday March 11, 2024 at 1:00 pm at the Groton Center.

Respectfully submitted,
Dottie Zale. Acting Clerk

Judith Palumbo O’Brien, COA Board Secretary
March 6, 2024