

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MINUTES FEBRUARY 4, 2008
APPROVED**

Present: George Dillon, Jr., Chairman; Stuart Schulman, Clerk; Peter Cunningham; Mihran Keoseian

Absent: Joshua A. Degen, Vice Chairman

Also Present: Jeff Ritter, Interim Administrative Officer; April Iannacone, Office Assistant

Mr. Dillon called the regular meeting of the Board to Order at 7:00 p.m. and reviewed the agenda for the public.

Martha Campbell, Council on Aging (COA) Director, RE: Vigorous Minds Program

Martha Campbell started by introducing Tory and Samantha, the two High School Students that have been volunteering at the Senior Center since the beginning of the year. She then spoke about the Vigorous Minds program that she would like to initiate at the Senior Center. The company that runs the program has agreed to contract with the Town to be the first test site for Senior Centers, at no charge for one year. She felt that this would help in working towards the Accreditation for the Senior Center. They would then ask for a \$2 donation from each senior that uses the program. She has asked Steve Webber to look things over to make sure that everything is ok before proceeding. They would try to use the card system that they currently use where the senior would swipe the card each time they use the program. At the end of the month they can generate a report of that person's fee from the card, and then have them write a check to Vigorous Minds directly. The intent is to get seniors out of the house to stimulate and exercise their brains, and then allow them to socialize so they do not end up home alone all day depressed. The program would use a scoring system that would show improvement, and also provide for some competition to get better scores. After the first year it would cost a few thousand dollars to sustain, but they would look towards donors and fundraisers to keep it budget neutral so that the cost does not come back to the Town. If it cannot be done, then they will not continue with it.

Mr. Dillon stated that he had spoken with Steve who had stated that it was a good program, but it seemed that it was geared more towards individuals than municipalities. Martha replied that it was a private program. Right now it is being used in Assisted Living programs, and anyone using the program is pleased with it and the company.

Mr. Schulman asked what happened if someone did not pay their bill. Martha replied that if people don't pay, which does happen now with other programs, there are donations that would cover some of the extra costs. They would not chase people down for the money.

Mr. Schulman then asked if there would be any drawback to the seniors being in front of computers for long periods of time. Martha replied that the program is only 20 minutes, and then they would be able to draw that person towards other activities to socialize.

Mr. Dillon asked if this would be something that the seniors could only use at the Senior Center, or if they could use it at home. Martha replied that this would be strictly for use at the senior center. If someone wanted to do it at home they would have to have online access, they would have to work with the company directly and pay for the program.

Mr. Ritter stated that he recommended trying the program as a test site, and then revisit things next year to determine if they would continue.

Mr. Dillon stated that as long as the agreement that the Town is to sign is all set, then it is really up to the Senior Center to decide.

Mr. Cunningham thought that it was a good program and was worthy of pursuing, but agreed that the final document should be seen and reviewed before they sign.

Mr. Keoseian stated that he would like to help fundraise to help support those who would not be able to afford to use the program.

Martha Campbell, Council on Aging (COA) Director, RE: Local Transportation

Martha stated that transportation ridership on the LRTA has dropped by 56%. She has been receiving letters from the community with complaints about the LRTA service, so she would like to see what could be done to improve the service. She has researched MART, and there are 19 towns that are all pleased with the way that each town gets their own van because service is improved. The LRTA is using one van for both Pepperell and Groton due to the ridership decline. The Town is wasting budget funding paying for service that they are not receiving. Right now seniors are dropped off at the Senior Center by 9:15 am, and then they are left until picked up at 4:00 pm. Some seniors may not

have the endurance to stay all day, and if the Center had their own van again they would be able to be picked back up in 2 or 3 hours if necessary. The Senior Center would have control over the schedule. The LRTA also does not go to Hospitals or Doctors in Nashua or Concord where a lot of the seniors go for care.

Mr. Dillon asked if they went to these towns when the Center had their own van. Martha replied that they did go to these towns, and the Senior Center did their own dispatching. At that time the van service also brought seniors to events, so she is looking into bringing that option back.

Mr. Cunningham stated that he is familiar with the problem, and has had a meeting with the LRTA and the COA. The service in a community this size is limited. A year ago they had tried to enhance the service, but then things went down again and currently they are not meeting the Town's needs. For the money the Town is being assessed, we are not getting the proper service for it. They need to look at who can give the best package and level of service for the money assessed.

Mr. Dillon asked if some of the \$47,000 for the MBTA could be used for registration. Mr. Cunningham replied that it could fund the level of service. Martha stated that if they don't use the funds they go back to other communities.

Mr. Ritter stated that the Department of Revenue (DOR) cautioned that before the Selectmen take a formal vote to change the service, they get a copy of the agreement and allow the DOR to review it. There is also a new State law that is coming regarding people over 80 and driving.

Martha stated that the AARP is requesting a mandate that everyone over 70 be retested for their license every year, which may cause a lot of people to lose their license. She does not believe that this is a bad thing, and thinks most seniors would give up their license if they knew they had transportation available.

Mr. Keoseian asked if there was a timeline in place to have a decision. Mr. Ritter replied that they were hoping by July 1st. Mr. Keoseian then stated that it would be best to get a comparative analysis of the other towns using the LRTA to determine if they are consistently falling short on services.

Mr. Dillon asked how many communities were using each of the two services. Martha replied that Tyngsboro, Pepperell, Groton and Westford are all using the LRTA, and Harvard, Littleton, Ayer, Shirley, Townsend and Bolton are using MART.

Marie Melican stated that Westford is extremely happy with the service they get from the LRTA, but that is because they get 3 vans and have huge ridership levels. The LRTA will even take seniors to their vet visits for their pets. Martha stated that Westford has a budget of \$90,000 for this service. Mr. Cunningham stated that the amount of money that Westford is paying is above what is assessed.

The Selectmen reached a consensus that they would support looking further into this option to change the local transportation service, and Mr. Cunningham agreed to assist in the process. The Board then thanked Martha for her time and information.

OTHER BUSINESS

Great Ponds Advisory Committee Appointment, Nancy A. Todd and Wayne Addy

Mr. Schulman moved to appoint Nancy A. Todd and Wayne Addy to the Great Ponds Advisory Committee for a one year term to expire on June 30, 2008. Mr. Cunningham seconded. Unanimous vote.

Election Worker Appointment, Connie Sartini

Mr. Schulman moved to appoint Connie Sartini as an Election Worker, term to expire June 30, 2008. Mr. Cunningham seconded. Unanimous vote.

Mr. Dillon stated that the Selectmen had received a letter from the DOR dated January 25th in response to the letter they had sent on January 23rd. They sent 2 backup letters indicating that their evaluation of the process began on November 9th and then the final certification took place on November 28th. They are stating that things were done according to regulations, but they did not explain the process. Mr. Cunningham stated that in reading both letters they do reference a public disclosure process, which may be one of the issues. Many stated that they were unaware, and he encouraged that going forward there be a greater level of public outreach. The Board Consented to send another letter to the DOR for further explanation of the process.

REPORT OF THE INTERIM ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

Mr. Ritter stated that the Affordable Housing group met on Thursday morning and agreed to a set of interview questions. This morning they proceeded with interviews which were educational and enlightening. Over the next few weeks they will get recommendations to help with making the decision. The second phase of the Budget Hearings

will take place this Saturday. Things are moving slowly on the initial interviews for Town Counsel, but he is working through it. They have received another proposal this week, and all of the company's are committed to staying within the budget. The Nashoba Valley Technical School District will hold their annual local official's breakfast will be held on Friday, February 8th at 8:30 a.m. If any of the Selectmen would like to attend, please let him or Patrice know as soon as possible. Mr. Dillon and Mr. Cunningham stated that they would attend, and Mr. Keoseian and Mr. Schulman stated that they were unable to attend. Lastly, he has received a DVD from the MMA Annual Meeting regarding the economic future of the State and the process of Revenue Sharing. It is a 12 minute DVD that he would like to show the Board this evening.

SELECTMAN LIAISON REPORTS

Mr. Cunningham stated that he took part in the Affordable Housing interviews. Both candidates were highly qualified and experienced. Groton is the first community to send out an RFP of this nature. Tomorrow morning he will be at the Florence Roach School reading a book to a second grade class.

Mr. Schulman stated that he would also be at the Florence Roach School tomorrow reading to a fourth grade class.

Mr. Dillon stated that he was part of a group to prepare for the Police Union negotiations, and Mr. Cunningham was also part of that group. Last Tuesday night he met with the 43D Infrastructure Committee, and tomorrow night both the Infrastructure Committee and the Parking & Traffic Committee would be meeting at the library. They have gotten a good head start on the 120 day timeline. Lastly, on Wednesday night at the Groton Dunstable Regional High School Library a State Representative will give a preliminary education equivalent report.

MINUTES

Mr. Cunningham moved to approve the regular meeting minutes of November 26, 2007. Mr. Schulman seconded. The vote was 3 in favor (F.D., S.S., P.C.) and one abstained (M.K.).

Mr. Cunningham moved to approve the regular meeting minutes of December 3, 2007. Mr. Schulman seconded. Unanimous vote.

ADJOURN

Mr. Schulman moved to adjourn at 8:35 p.m. Mr. Cunningham seconded. Unanimous vote.

Approved: _____
Stuart Schulman, Clerk

_____ respectfully submitted,
April Iannacone
Office Assistant

Date Approved: *March 31, 2008*