



COUNCIL ON AGING and ADVISORY BOARD

Meeting Minutes

October 24, 2023

Present: Joan Belle Isle, Sandra Davidow, Naomi Krasner, Julie Norstrand, John Pelletier, Robert Pierson, Ellen Penso, Sue Rasala, Eric Rosenbaum, Nancy Scammon, Laura Shaw, Dan Shaw

Absent: Mary Glendon, Ena Lorant, Maria Meyer, Susan Schlesinger, Allison Sharma, Tom Shoemaker

Staff: Mignonne Murray, Liz O'Connell

Welcome/Call to Order/Vote on Minutes

Joan Belle Isle called the meeting to order at 7:34 PM. The minutes from the September 2023 meeting were approved.

Joan recognized John Pelletier's wife, Karen Wilfrid, who has just been published. Her young adult novel, *Just Lizzie*, was published by Clarion Books, a division of HarperCollins.

NewCAL Update

Re-bidding for contractors will be completed on December 7, after which time Josh Morse's office should have news. The opening of NewCAL is planned for spring/summer 2025. Now the COA needs to consider furniture, fixtures, and programs.

Ideas for new programming include a discussion group for seniors living alone; Aging in Place series; supper club; choral group; day trips (Nancy Scammon at Parks & Rec plans these); housing programs; a program on home renovations. Incorporate city directors and resource providers into programming. The contractor's list at the Senior Center is a plus. Would it be possible to get a(nother) van for trips when NewCAL opens? COA members would like to invite Ilana Seidmann, program coordinator, to next month's meeting to discuss ideas. Surveying seniors was another suggestion.

Aging in Place – New Scams

Eric Rosenbaum reported that scams target elders, mostly. There are computer scams, washed checks (mail). One Newtonian was scammed out of \$813K! This year, 111 scams have been reported thus far. During Covid, there were many unemployment scams—in one week the Newton Police Department received 100 calls. A more recent scam is a lottery scam. People are asked to purchase gift cards in order to receive their lottery winnings. There are grandparent scams, contractor scams. Scammers come into a town – maybe ten or twenty of them – and do things like make a hole in your roof, start to fix it for you, and then leave town with partial pay and the roof not fixed. The majority of scam situations don't get solved. The police need district attorneys on board to pursue the scams, but there are so many that the district attorneys' offices can't take all cases.

To avoid post office fraud/washed checks: (1) pay electronically; (2) mail things only from inside the post office. For overall safety: lock your doors and windows at night, especially on the first floor and basement. Check on your neighbors. Newton is basically safe, but sometimes bad things occur.

Police have seen some hate incidents during the last couple of weeks, but not hate crimes. There are no patterns to the scammers. Police get one or two calls every day from people who have been scammed. There is no typical profile of those who are scammed. Eric noted that AI/deep fakes are making things worse. There has been no uptick in ransomware issues in Newton.

Senior Services Update

Mignonne Murray announced that the Senior Center will be offering new services through Friendship Works. Currently we offer Friendly Visiting; we will be adding Friendly Helping (up to 3 visits on average to help with packing, tech tutoring, etc.) and Medical Escorts. A 20-hour staff person, Karen, will work part-time at the Brigham House; she will coordinate the volunteers for this program. The Senior Center pays a contract fee to Friendship Works. Friendly Visiting is difficult to keep up because most volunteers do not want to visit an individual for ten consecutive weeks. Julie Joy and Emily Kuhl will be very involved with Friendship Works programs.

Kathy Rizza from the Newton Fire Department is coordinating the Senior Safe Program. The Fire Department will present to the community on Thursday, November 16, at noon at the Hyde Center. Through the Senior Safe Program, the Fire Department will also conduct in-home safety checks.

The NewMo SeniorPlus program is underway. Currently 69% of rides are for seniors (previously senior rides represented less than 40% of activity). This is good news, since NewMo is budgeted through the Senior Center, grants, and the Planning Department. The number of cars on the road has been cut in proportion to the number of overall rides. Elizabeth Lund and other staff members are tweaking things, e.g., as of next week, one more car will be added to the fleet, bringing the number up to five. Staff are also looking for other efficiencies to decrease waiting times.

COA Membership and Reorganization

Newton's history of having two groups—the COA and the Advisory Board (AB)—is unusual and harkens back to the time when the Department of Senior Services was established. At the time, two groups were needed to meet the needs expressed by seniors involved during this transition.

Joan Belle Isle noted that in some communities, the COA runs the Senior Center. In Newton, the Department of Senior Services runs the Senior Center, with the COA being a part of that operation. Joan is proposing that since we have openings on both the COA and the AB, the two groups be combined into a single group. This change would allow for the COA to establish committees headed by COA members and whose members could include non-COA members. Joan welcomes the thoughts of the group; people can email her or discuss the matter now. The group discussed and generally supports this move.

Joan and Mignonne will meet with the Legal Department to see what this change involves. Currently the COA and AB have separate by-laws. Joan and Mignonne will report back after speaking with Legal.

Other Business

Needs Assessment Update

Joan and Mignonne have met with Kathy Burns from UMass. Interviews with key influencers, including Chiefs Gentile and Carmichael, Linda Walsh, and Mayor Ruthanne Fuller will be happening this month and next. Following these interviews, focus groups will be established.

November Meeting

For November only, there will be only one meeting, including both the COA and Advisory Board.

Housing

John Pelletier shared that the Federal Housing Administration has allowed ADUs to be considered as part of a mortgage.

The meeting adjourned at 9:10 p.m.