



## COUNCIL ON AGING and ADVISORY BOARD

Meeting Minutes  
December 19, 2023

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

**Absent:** Mary Glendon, Ena Lorant, Maria Meyer, Eric Rosenbaum, Nancy Scammon, Susan Schlesinger, Allison Sharma, Tom Shoemaker

**Staff:** Mignonne Murray, Liz O'Connell

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### **Welcome/Call to Order/Vote on Minutes**

Joan Belle Isle called the meeting to order at 7:32 PM. The minutes from the November 2023 meeting were approved.

### **Senior Services Director's End of Year Report – Mignonne Murray**

Mignonne provided statistics on Senior Center activities since July 1, 2023, when the new software, MySeniorCenter, became available. At least 1,200 unique individuals have used the Center, with fitness and special program attendees representing the largest groups.

Since the NewMo Seniors+ program was initiated in September 2023, we have logged approximately 2,000 rides per month—69% of rides were for seniors and 34% for very low income and disabled persons. The top two destinations were Newton-Wellesley Hospital and the Golda Meir House. 49% of senior rides were for medical appointments. Financially, \$275,000 in funding for NewMo comes from the Senior Services Department budget; \$30,000 comes from the Commonwealth, and an enormous amount comes from grant money (for example, we received \$188,000 in funding from MassDOT). Ridership fees do not have a significant impact on NewMo costs. The Senior Center's transportation program went out to bid recently. In the future, we may be able to share with Parks and Rec their small bus.

Current staffing at the Senior Center is 6 full-time and 3 part-time employees. The positions are funded by both the City of Newton budget and formula grants. Funding becomes available as of April 2024 for the new Deputy Director position.

It was suggested that we share our data with the City Council members, as they would be very interested. See attached End of Year Report for more information.

Mignonne reviewed the current priorities of the NewCAL project. The top three are the staffing plan; fixtures, fittings, and furniture; and hours of operation. COA members were asked for input on potential uses for the wonderful, brand-new kitchen and dining room that we will have in NewCAL.

Joan Belle Isle asked how the COA could support Mignonne during this time. COA members first and foremost are ambassadors and advocates for NewCAL. Members discussed having a brochure to help promote NewCAL during this next year. It is anticipated that the new name for NewCAL will be

announced at the time of the groundbreaking. The challenge right now is that we don't have a design for the new logo. Members discussed using high school seniors, a pro bono branding/marketing company, or art students. Several avenues of promotion will be needed to reach all audiences, of all ages. We need to saturate the market with information; we also need to keep diversity, equity, and inclusion in mind in our materials.

### **NewCAL Update**

Joan Belle Isle reported that the second round of bids was opened on December 11 and a contractor was selected. Costs will be higher than anticipated, which is not a surprise. The Senior Center went before the Public Facilities and Finance Committees, and also City Council, seeking approval for the cost increase. Thirty million dollars (\$30M) in NewCAL funding was approved by all Committees and the City Council as of December 18. NewCAL is now fully funded. The City anticipates that the new center will be opened in summer 2025. The lawsuit filed by some citizens is still pending. The Court has ruled that it won't entertain another request for a restraining order against the project's progressing.

### **Needs Assessment Project Update**

Our next step is reviewing the draft questionnaire, the single most important resource for gathering data for the needs assessment. The COA must identify ways to get the survey out to the community besides the mailing to 5,000 randomly selected individuals. Sandra Davidow will work on this. Discussion included providing online access to the survey as well as distributing paper copies at various locations, e.g., the Senior Center, the Library, City Hall, senior housing developments. Joan Belle Isle noted that the survey will allow us to drill down on the needs of solo agers. COA members are also considering ways to reach caregivers/the next generation.

Five thousand surveys will be mailed in mid-January. They must be completed by mid- to end of February.

### **RUOK Program Update**

Robert Pierson provided a status report on RUOK. Eric Rosenbaum supports RUOK; he will connect with Chief Carmichael to learn how he views it. The Chief will be familiar with RUOK since he came from Walpole, where it is used. Next step: the Isolation Task Force will work with Eric Rosenbaum and Chief Carmichael. It was suggested that the COA draft a letter/statement of interest that could be sent to Chief Carmichael since community support can carry the most weight.

### **Springwell Update**

Naomi Krasner reminded COA members that Springwell always needs volunteers in Newton.

The meeting adjourned at 8:55 p.m. Joan Belle Isle wished all the best to everyone for the holidays.