

Newton Council on Aging/Advisory Board Meeting

Tuesday, November 25, 2014 - 7:30 p.m.

Newton Senior Center, 345 Walnut Street, Newtonville, MA 02460

Attendance: N. Brown , B. Dugan, C. Gibson, H. Gunner, JE Heffron, A. Hoffman, M. Knapp, N. Krasner, E. Lorant, D. Murphy, S.Paley, E. Picard, J. Picard, M. Knapp, C. Rose, N. Scammon, CA Shea, T. Shoemaker, D. Sostek, E. Wade,

Staff: Jayne Colino, Director of Senior Services.

Guests: Alderman Amy Mah Sangiolo, Rick Reilly

Notified: H. Haywood, A. Cooper,

I. Welcome. Call to order. Minutes accepted. Everyone introduced themselves.

II. Chair/Director's Report

A. Report on Program and Services Committee, Newton Board of Aldermen

The Program and Services Committee of the Newton Board of Aldermen asked NDSS Staff and the COA/AB and the Executive Department to attend a meeting to talk about the proposed name change for the Senior Center. Dori Zaleznik, represented the Executive Office. The concern was that a change in name was being discussed without the involvement of the DSS and the COA. The committee members asked good questions and commented on the change in the structure of social services for seniors. "Proposed" changes have actually already occurred and will be discussed further during the budget process. The Program and Services Committee asked D. Zaleznik to inform the Mayor that the name "Senior Center" should not be eliminated from any notifications of activities in this building and not just referred to as "345 Walnut Street". Emergency egress from the Senior Center basement was discussed. There was discussion about the use of J. Colino's and A. Bailey's time managing the building for programs not related to seniors. Other COA/AB attendees were not scheduled to speak but were asked to comment. The Program and Services Committee decided to hold the item for further conversation. Alderman Sangiolo, who was in attendance at the Programs and Services Committee meeting and at this COA/AB meeting of 11/25/2014 said the report on the P & S Committee meeting was accurate. Jayne has had a subsequent meeting with the Mayor and D. Zaleznik about the state of the egresses of the building. Alderman Sangiolo said that if the building is going to continue to be used, the needs of the building need to be ranked higher on the CIP ranking. A follow-up meeting has not been scheduled with the COA, but we are still at the beginning of the conversation.

The other major issue discussed at the Programs and Services Committee meeting is the change in social services. Up until this year, there had been three case work and outreach worker positions. The new configuration was that the third position is designated supervisory. There was concern that this represented a decrease in services for Seniors. D. Zaleznik stated that it was not a decrease.

Concerning the Veterans Services Center, the majority of the time of the Veteran's Services Officer will be in the Senior Center. The VSO will be working closely with the social service team. There was a concern about adequacy and quality of space. The downstairs offices have flooded several times in the past resulting in the presence of mold and the removal of carpeting. The VSO's role is no longer combined with the weights and measurements position.

B. Staff Changes

Jayne spoke about staffing changes. We have gone through and are still going through much change. In the last year 5 staff in senior center positions have retired or resigned. Staff and COA members are interviewing candidates. It is complicated hiring for so many new people at the same time. Once hiring is completed there will be a new team. J. Colino and A. Bailey are stretched in terms of time and are trying to do the work of the unfilled positions. Putting the newsletter together is an example. Beth Dugan offered a student to help with the Jan/Feb newsletter.

It was strongly suggested to work first on the social services positions because the need has been so strong. There is a new director of Social Services, Rachel Nenner-Payton, who will end up with emergency calls if no other social worker is available. At this time we are still meeting our city-mandated social service metrics and this will be watched closely. Social Service Staff are having more phone time instead of face to face meetings, and providing more referrals for services. The new social work positions will now serve all ages. COA member asked if Thanksgiving as the beginning of the busy season will increase demand. Currently, there is much going on: Medicare open enrollment, fuel assistance, and the reality of seniors worried about being stuck in the house in bad weather. A huge concern is about sharing smaller resources. People who cannot be served by Newton could be sent to the Brighton office of ABCD for fuel assistance. Since the Healthy Aging data base shows that Newton is higher than the state average in depression there is concern about being able to meet the need with changes in social services.

There is a concern that actions have become "transactions instead of relationships" and more people will be referred to other agencies.

III. Discussion

Members commented that there seemed to be a lack of interest by City Hall regarding the needs of Seniors. Members discussed drafting a letter to the Mayor. A small group will get together and write a letter of concern to be brought back to the COA for review. It will be important to identify the key points that are of concern right now? For example, the concern about overall access to services.

We are working to engage more seniors to be spokesperson for themselves and other seniors. In Brookline there is a livable city advocate committee that is separate from the council on aging. For some reason, seniors, especially the "silent generation" have difficulty advocating for themselves. Let's start the ball rolling here. Letter draft team: B. Dugan, C. Gibson, D. Sostek, D. Murphy, and N. Krasner.

IV. Membership report: Two resumes submitted for positions on the COA Advisory Board. Appointments will happen but things are going slowly. Changes in HR, along with so many staff changes are causing appointments and hiring to be slow but they are getting worked on as fast as possible.

V. No Springwell report.

VI. The Senior Citizen's Fund letter is ready to go out. The mailing list has expanded to over 3000 (from 600). Steve Holmes, original president of the Senior Citizen's Fund, passed away and his wishes were

that donations be made to the Senior Fund.

VII. Jayne is looking for input into the bidding process for transportation. The current contract expires this June and will need to be re-bid in March. Holly and Beth will help.

VIII. The Housing Group is developing a guide book on what is available for housing in Newton. Donna is looking for any other resources. She will call Jim Shaughnessy in the assessor's office.

IX. Jayne is now on the Engine 6 list. They are a housing advocacy group. Their next meeting is 12/2.

X. Marian Knapp, Holly Gunner, Andreae Downs, TAG Group; Fran Godine, Engine 6; Chris Steele, Economic Development Commission; and Marcia Cooper, Green Decade; and Andrea Kelley, Newton Villages were invited by the mayor to attend a meeting to discuss Austin St. on Nov. 5, 2014. Staff also attended (J. Freas, E. Tapper, N. Hyde, *[Note: Chryse Gibson recused herself and left the COA/AB meeting to avoid any perceptions of potential conflict of interest.]*) Marian raised a potential conflict of interest and presented the concern to the COA/AB. After the November 5th meeting, Marian talked to others persons who attended the Austin Street meeting with the Mayor to determine if they had concerns. Each "commission" member saw their position differently. J. Colino said that we might want to contact the law department to clarify any concerns about conflict of interest. The discussion will be continued at the next meeting.

XI. Old business/new business:

- Over 50 people signed up for Thanksgiving Dinner which is catered and donated by Whole Foods. Cabot's contributes ice cream. Thanksgiving placemats have been made by Cabot School 5th grade students. Boston College dorm students made centerpieces
- The food drive and toy drive began last week. Newton Senior Center is a drop off point for both.
- The Tiger's Loft is holding a monthly luncheon for 60 people. The next luncheon is Dec. 9th.

Next meetings:

- ***Executive meeting December 11,2014***
- ***Advisory Board meeting December 23, 2014***

Meeting adjourned 9:35.

Submitted by Carol Rose, Secretary