

MINUTES
NEWTON COUNCIL ON AGING
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2012

A meeting of the Newton Council on Aging (NCOA) was held at the Newton Senior Center (NSC), 345 Walnut Street, Newtonville, MA on Tuesday, February 28, 2012. The meeting was called to order at 7:25 p.m. by Marian Knapp, Chair.

Commissioners Present: Nancy Brown, Mary Clafin, Marian Knapp.

Commissioners Absent: Audrey Cooper (notified), Louise Hauser (notified), Howard Haywood (notified), Susan Paley (notified).

Advisory Council Members Present: Shirley Farnham, Holly Gunner, Norman Hartstone, Jo-Edith Heffron, Adele Hoffman, Ellen Krasney, Joyce Picard, Ernest Picard, Carol Rose, Dena Salzberg, Carol Ann Shea, Ruth Sherman, Diane Sostek, Jeanne Stolbach.

Advisory Council Members Absent: Kenneth Chang (notified), Robert A. DeSimone (notified), Margaret Dwyer, Eric Rosenbaum, Nancy Scammon (notified), Tom Shoemaker (notified).

Staff Present: Jayne Colino, Director of Senior Services, Newton (NCOA/NSC).

Guest Present: Judy Fischbach.

The **Minutes of the January 24, 2012 meeting of the NCOA** were moved, seconded and approved as written. **Marian** welcomed attendees and asked for introductions from all.

Chair's/Director's Report. Strategic Planning Update. Recent group and individual interviews were conducted by staff and NCOA members eliciting views, etc. of 30 Newton organizations/ individuals (80% female, 20% male). Major concerns: lack of accessible transportation, affordable housing, isolation and lack of social interaction. Additional needs: help/ support for caregivers, enhancing existing programs, and costs of home care. 17 of those interviewed expressed willingness to review an original draft of the forthcoming Report and Recommendations of the Strategic Planning Team. Thank you to the NCOA members who made phone calls to respondents. On 2/29 the Strategic Planning Consultants, NSC Staff Members and Marian will meet to share data collected thus far, discuss the overview of the strategic planning process and plan the Retreat schedule. Data updates/collection at Newton Senior Center included: 1) During the past month COA member(appointee), Diane Sostek has spent hours at the Center interacting with participants to collect current personal data (names, addresses, DOB, etc.) in order to have accurate DOB information and to eliminate duplicate entries and errors in the database system. 2) Each year The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston provides a limited number of passes for NSC participants. This year the NSC will hold a lottery for distributing the tickets. Data from that lottery and data gathered from other similar type programs will be utilized for strategic planning process.

Membership. Ellen reported that the Nominating Committee is looking for 3 new Commissioners. Vacancies have resulted from completion of terms by Mary Claflin, Ellen Krasney and Tom Shoemaker. They all want to remain involved and gave asked for an appointment to the Council on Aging Advisory Board. Many thanks to them for their work on our behalf! Currently we have one new candidate for the NCOA Advisory Board, Judy Fischbach (who is attending this meeting). “The Packet Project” describing the NCOA and its members will be available soon for NCOA members. Jayne pointed out that our NCOA By-Laws require regular attendance by members. When unable to attend a meeting, members are expected to notify Marian or Jayne beforehand. Should a member be absent for 3 consecutive meetings, the Council may request termination of membership; 5 absences in any calendar year will constitute consideration of dismissal.

Senior Citizens Fund of Newton. Nancy described the SCFN as a (501c3) which functions essentially as a “Friends’ Organization” to the Newton Senior Center. Three of our NSC members serve on the 9-member SCFN Board (Audrey Cooper and Carol Ann Shea, Co-Chairs and Nancy Brown, Treasurer). A fund-raising campaign is initiated annually (in November or December) by a single mailing to a list which has evolved to 800-1,200 recipients, primarily those supporters who have given in the past. The Fund’s latest appeal letter focused on the younger senior, 60+, due to unemployment, underemployment and ineligibility for Social Security—with need for financial assistance with heating and prescription costs, etc. In addition to individual donors, the Fund has benefited from a recurring contribution from Whole Foods (previously, Bread and Circus, who committed to support in response to a request at the time by Mayor Theodore Mann). The Fund’s support has provided purchase of furnishings for the NSC, funding for design and ongoing maintenance of the garden, purchase of kitchen equipment, week-end staff for Sat./Sun. programs (as a pilot), computer upgrades, a new back fence, upholstery cleaning, NSC swipe cards, as well as providing financial support in unusual situations for individuals needing immediate emergency assistance.

Legislative Report. Jayne reported that the City Budget process continues. The Department of Senior Services (which since 2006 includes the NSC) is 1 of 24 municipal departments in Newton. It primarily provides for our senior population the NSC, transportation and social services. Monies accrue to the Department through several programs: City, State, Federal (CDBG). Additionally, revenue comes from individual participants’ fees for the Center’s programs. This Program Revenue, which covers the cost of NSC’s program offerings is not part of the Senior Services budget. Its proceeds go into Revolving Accounts (Transportation, Programs). There is also a separate Memorial Gift Fund for the Department. Holly Gunner reports that Newton’s budget is over \$300 million and less than 1% of the total is provided for seniors (who represent 22% of Newton’s population). Jayne mentioned that there are about 200 volunteers affiliated with the NSC who provide about 30,000 hours, on

an annual basis. Note that there is a 17% cut in CDBG grants across the Nation. Jayne is hoping that the City will cover the reduction of CDBG funds to Newton which affect NSC staff salaries. Jayne also notes miscellaneous funds that accrue to the NSC, including the profit (\$7k last year) from the NSC store and income that might accrue from Bake Sales held when Voting takes place in the (newly established) polling site at the NSC. Jayne reported that there was a 17% increase in the number of seniors in Newton last year. The Governor has proposed a rate of \$6.42 per elder be provided to each community for FY13 Formula Grant allocation (line item 9110-1002). If approved this would increase from \$6.25 in FY12.. Councils on Aging are asking for \$7 per elder; this would reflect a \$1million increase to this line item. The House Budget will be released at the State House during the 1st week in March. Ruth Sherman reported that a 24% cut in funds for Nutrition programs through ASAPs has been proposed (Line item 9110-1900). NCOA members are asked to contact their Representatives about these cuts. Further information on this legislation will be forthcoming to members from Jayne.

LIAISON REPORTS

Springwell. Adele and Ruth are our two Representatives from Newton to the Board of Springwell (previously known as West Suburban Elder Services). It is our local Area Agency on Aging, mandated by federal legislation to administer Title III funds (granted to COAs) for residents 60+ years old. They administer free, private pay and state-subsidized services for Newton and the other 7 towns in their catchment area. E.g., home care (through contracts), I+R, transportation and nutrition programs, etc. They are also funded to provide Protective Services and Elder at Risk programs. (A summary is attached as an addendum).

Housing. Joyce presented an overview of Newton's housing stock. Of particular importance, the waiting period in Newton for "subsidized" housing is 3 to 10 years, depending upon the building size/number of "affordable" units, etc. About 7% of Newton's housing stock is subsidized for income eligible persons. The State requires that communities develop 10% of their housing stock for income limited people. In Massachusetts a Section 8 Voucher system exists, wherein the amount of reimbursement depends upon the specific community's housing market. Payments to landlords are augmented by the program but owners must be willing to rent to tenants with Section 8 Vouchers (and there are very limited numbers of vouchers, which are hard to come by). Potential tenants must negotiate directly with owners; owners must be willing to accept partial payments from renters plus rent balances from the government. On 2/13/12 a meeting was convened in Newton to discuss whether or not Newton has a housing problem. A major problem: the unavailability of affordable AND reasonably priced housing. (A summary is attached as an addendum).

Program Committee. Carol Rose reported on her telephone meeting with Jeanne regarding Future Speakers for our NCOA meetings. It was noted that at

our March meeting, Alice Bailey will attend the NCOA meeting in Jayne's absence and will describe her role as a staff member at the Newton Senior Center. Howard had suggested inviting Alice Ingerson as a Guest Speaker about the Community Preservation Act in Newton. It was agreed to invite her for our April or May meeting, requesting a 30-minute presentation followed by 15 minutes for Q+A. Future presentations might address housing, transportation, isolation. One presenter might be Stephanie Pollack, Head, Transportation Advisory Committee, Newton; another topic might be Livable Neighborhoods. Note that Kathy Laufer, Social Worker, NSC will speak on April 19th on Housing as part of the Life Transitions Series at Newton Free Library, co-sponsored by the NSC. Future dates: Services, May 10 and Transportation and Programs, June 14. All programs begin at 7 p.m.

Transportation Report. Holly had been scheduled to report at this meeting but due to the late hour, she graciously agreed to bring her Report to our March meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, March 27, 2012 at 7:30 p.m. at the Newton Senior Center.

Respectfully submitted,
Jeanne Stolbach, Secretary