

COUNCIL ON AGING—MAY 24, 2022

Present: Joan Belle Isle, Sandra Davidow, Beth Dugan, Mary Glendon, Naomi Krasner, Maria Meyer, John Pelletier, Robert Pierson, Sue Rasala, Nancy Scammon, Susan Schlesinger, Allison Sharma, Laura Shaw, Dan Shaw, Gordon Szerlip

Absent: Tyrone Hooks, Ena Lorant, Julie Norstrand, Joyce Picard, Eric Rosenbaum, Lisa Samelson, Tom Shoemaker

Staff: Jayne Colino, Liz O'Connell

Call to Order/Review/Vote on Minutes

Joan Belle Isle called the meeting to order at 7:35 PM. Laura Shaw moved that the minutes of the April meeting be approved; Naomi Krasner seconded. The minutes were approved.

Introductions- Guests and Staff

Guests and staff were invited to introduce themselves when they spoke. City Councilor Alison Leary introduced herself as a guest invited by John Pelletier.

Presentation by Mark Development on the Crafts Street Senior Housing Development

Presenters: Attorney Stephen Buchbinder; John Martin, Elkus Manfredi Architects; Damien Chaviano, Principal, Mark Development; Joseph Whalen, Sara Padilla, Jason Rich, and Alfonso Valencia, Senior Resource Group

Property developer Mark Development and operations experts at Senior Resource Group (SRG) have established a 50/50 partnership for the Crafts Street project located behind Marty's Liquors and Whole Foods on Washington Street in Newton. This is a senior housing and elder services project, which will include 105 independent living units, 52 assisted living units, and 28 memory care units. Since the health care and elderly services components were specialized, Mark brought in SRG. SRG's retirement communities are accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF).

The project is focused on the 60+ age group, i.e., senior retirees. There is no entry fee. Mark Development has partnered with NewMo for transportation services at other sites and intends to with this property as well. They presented tonight to answer questions from and ask for the support of the COA, as they await clearances from the City for the usage of a couple of lots.

Slides from the presentation will be part of the minutes.

Isolation Committee Report – Dan Shaw, and Members Laura Shaw, Robert Pierson, and Susan Schlesinger

The Committee has been examining the underlying issues of Social Isolation and Loneliness (SIL). The causes include chronic medical conditions, family stress, the pandemic, acute life changes and a disruption of social networks. SIL results in an increased risk of health issues—including mental health issues, chronic conditions, and death. There is no one solution for all. There are a handful of solutions for a handful of problems. The first goal of the committee was to figure out ways to identify people at risk. The committee has learned that solutions require many resources and working together with other organizations.

Some fixes for SIL:

- (1) The “Are You OK?” program, run by the Norfolk County Sheriff’s Department and Fallon Ambulance. Seniors receive a morning call, automated and monitored by staff, between 6am-10am daily. The time of the call is based on the preference of the senior. The service is free and designed for older people living alone. To implement something like this in Newton, we would need a part-time administrator, plus the cost of a phone line and automated phone system. The software costs approximately \$750. Presented by Robert Pierson.
- (2) Gather older adults to meet regularly to discuss SIL. Through discussion, we will engage people we know individually. This group could possibly be an outcome of the June 15th showing of *All the Lonely People*. Presented by Laura Shaw.
- (3) Install “chat benches” in Newton, perhaps at the Senior Center/NewCAL, the Library, and other places. These benches have a sign on them: “Would you like to have a chat?” They are volunteer staffed and could be for all ages. Chat benches began in the UK. The goal is to make connections. We could consider working with other senior centers on this; there is a chat bench in Bridgewater. Presented by Dan Shaw.
- (4) Focus on people at home who don’t want to go to the Senior Center or have a Friendly Visitor. The idea is to mobilize volunteers (maybe mental health professionals) to call these individuals and start making connections. Presented by Susan Schlesinger.

Anyone who is interested in this work can contact Dan Shaw.

Nomination Slate Open for Officers: Vice Chair and Secretary

Vice Chair – Naomi Krasner was re-nominated and accepted the nomination to continue in this role.

Secretary – Sandra Davidow was nominated and accepted the nomination.

Treasurer - There is a hold on this position resulting from our review of the by-laws.

Nominations remain open until June 28, the date of the June End of Year dinner meeting.

Updates

- Mass DOT project – to replace the bridge near the Newton Marriott and add a roundabout involves a complete redesign of the area and may include changes at the Ash St. intersection. Alison Leary reported that there are many issues around this project, which will be paid for by the Commonwealth. City Council is deadlocked. Anyone who supports the project should contact his/her City Councilor and John Pelletier.
- June End of Year dinner meeting – June 28th, 6pm. Sandra Davidow is organizing; stay tuned for an email from her. COA and AB members, Senior Citizen's Fund members, and Senior Center staff are invited.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:29pm.