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SALEM COUNCIL ON AGING REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING MINUTES

Date and Time: February 21, 2024 at 5:15 p.m.

Meeting Location: In person and via Zoom

Members Present: Lynda Coffill (LC, Chair), John Russell (JR, Vice-Chair), Kristin Macek (KM, Secretary), Eliud Alcala (EA), Michelle Bettencourt (MB), Michele McHugh (MM), George Barbuzzi (GB) and Patricia Small (PS)

Absent was: Abigail Butt (AB)

Also Present: Teresa Arnold, (TA, Director of the COA), Councilor John C. Harvey and Lisa Peterson, Chief-of-Staff for Mayor Pangallo

Clerk: Joanne M. Roomey

I. MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

LC called the meeting to order at 5:15 p.m.

II. APPROVAL OF THE JANUARY 17, 2024 REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

A motion was made by JR to approve the January 17, 2024 Regular Meeting Minutes. Seconded by MB. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion was carried unanimously.

III. SALEM FOR ALL AGES UPDATE - SPECIAL GUEST: CO-CHAIR LISA PETERSON

Ms. Peterson, who is co-chair of Salem for all Ages, gave an update regarding the Health and Wellness Guide they created, both in Spanish and English. This guide will be continually updated to provide information on health-related programs and services for older adults. She said there are many factors that impact our health. While adequate nutrition and physical activity are important, social activity, access to behavioral health services, and safe, affordable housing also play a major role in our health and well-being. Another project of the group is to defeat Ageism. Their main goal is "spreading the word"

in hopes to achieve awareness. There is a billboard on Canal Street, and they have put up posters at the CLC. The group wants to defeat Age Discrimination and let folks know what it is and how they can manage Ageism. Also, they will be hiring a Behavioral Health Consultant to address behavioral health needs of older adults. For more information, you can go online at: www.SalemforAllAges.org/healthandwellness

IV. OLD BUSINESS:

a. Senior Day Update

Senior Day is Saturday, June 1st at Forest River Park from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. The committee has secured a tent, tables and chairs courtesy of the Friends of the COA. Gift cards have come in to help purchase food. Root will supply salads/slaw of some kind and we will purchase food to grill.

We are charging \$5 per person and working on the registration process. Per the Salem Police Department, we do not need police detail. TA is awaiting a call back from the Fire Department to see about having an ambulance on site should someone take ill.

After Jeff Schwartz from the Salem Chamber of Commerce put a call for sponsorship out to the members, Kristina Petty from the Hawthorne Hotel called, and they are supplying gift cards to the restaurant to accompany awards and an extra one for a raffle. King Lewis Engraving and Gifts has volunteered to donate and engrave plaques for the seven people chosen as outstanding seniors.

Tony Malionek has agreed to provide music. A dozen resource tables will be on the grounds. Nominations for Outstanding Seniors are coming in slowly. We will better promote Senior Day in the March newsletter. The committee will talk about program format at the next meeting on February 29, 2024.

b. Kitchen Update

DMS Designs were informed by their engineers that unfortunately, they cannot exhaust directly on the side wall due to the equipment required. They are looking at a couple of other options and will keep us updated as they know more. JR said it will cost more money and will need to dedicate money to the update before June 30, 2024.

c. MetroBridge Update

MM, Julio Mota from the mayor's office, LC and TA have had bi-weekly meetings with the Boston University students or staff from the MetroBridge program. The students are helping the COA staff to identify barriers as to why more Spanish-speaking older adults are not using COA services. A survey is being developed and Julio Mota and Rosanna Donahue from the staff are identifying Spanish speaking older adults who are willing to be surveyed.

d. Advocates for Positive Aging

LC said this group meets monthly and has discussions about aging issues that folks encounter. The COA will cosponsor workshops with the Positive Aging group.

e. Continued Advocacy

The Board discussed separating the COA from Park, Recreation and Community Services and changing Teresa Arnold's title from Director to Director of Senior Services. This way, it could open the COA up to more funding. Councilor Harvey had a discussion with Ilene Simons, the City Clerk, regarding the ordinance. He will contact Solicitor Beth Rennard to review. Once the Board is updated, LC will recommend next steps and meet with Mayor Pangallo.

Letters were written by LC to the Massachusetts Congressional Delegation in support of the extension of Medicare low-income outreach and enrollment efforts. A letter was also written in support of the NSCDC application for funding for the senior housing at El Centro on Lafayette Street and the 9 Peabody Street project. These advocacy letters were brought to her attention with quick deadlines. Therefore, the letters had to be submitted prior to the February Board meeting. The letters were written by LC herself and do not indicate Board approval.

V. NEW BUSINESS:

a. Medicare Cuts

The State's Medicaid (MassHealth) PCA program is starting to make cuts. It is proposed to reduce PCA hours and not give an increase in wages. LC received an email regarding Federal Budget Funding Packages for Medicare. She wants to inform folks about their rights for Medicare. LC wants to send a letter to Congressman Seth Moulton urging him to support continued funding for Medicare low-income outreach and enrollment efforts in the next funding package, to maintain and improve the health and financial well-being of Medicare's most vulnerable beneficiaries.

A motion was made by PS to approve sending a letter out to Congressman Moulton. Seconded by GB. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion was carried unanimously.

b. Friends of the COA Report

JR, TA and Rosanna Donahue met this morning with the Friends, and they voted to donate a \$100 gift card to Market Basket to support the project with MetroBridge. Whoever takes the survey will be entered into a raffle for the gift card. They also have voted to pay \$1,300 for chair yoga for six months of classes. The Friends approved \$4,950 for 275 Easter meals, (the intended cut off is at 250) from Brother's Deli to be delivered to folks on Easter morning, March 31st. They are also going to support a "sing along" twice a month for \$60. The annual appeal letter went out and volunteers stuffed 7,000 envelopes. JR said the Friends have an \$80,000 CD in the bank that they want to roll over. JR said they need to start spending the money and suggested getting room darkening shades for the Great Room at the CLC. Their fund-raising goal is \$100,000.

c. Director's Report

Social Services:

- Fuel assistance applications are taking much longer this heating season to process due to staff shortages and the growing number of applications. This causes many of applicants' stress level to increase, not knowing how much or when they will receive fuel assistance. We are doing our best to ensure applications mailed are completed correctly with all supporting documents so the screening process can move along. We are also trying to explain to folks the reasons why there are delays and we try to ease their minds.
- We are referring more problem cases to Hannah Levine in State Rep. Manny Cruz's office for errors in applications or different information provided under the MassHealth system.
- Salem Housing Authority, as of January 9, 2024, had 3820 elderly and 4615 disabled under 60 on the wait list.
- Due to the Lee Fort Terrace project, no one was pulled from the Salem wait list in 2023. We are hoping now that the Lee Fort Terrace residents have been relocated, we will begin to see some movement in the wait list.

Transportation:

- Transportation has not had any significant changes within the last month. Our schedules and staff remain consistent outside of John Tachuk taking a three- month leave for medical purposes.
- We are waiting for word on the grant application for three new vehicles and will start to make decisions about the fleet following the outcome.
- Upkeep on the vans is constant. We would like to return fleet repair and maintenance where it belongs, to DPS. According to DPS Director, Ray Jodoin, DPS continues to be understaffed so they are unable to service our vehicles. Therefore, we use a few local garages familiar with our fleet.

Dining Services:

Congregate Lunch Year Over Year: Calendar January to December 2022 to 2023. In 2023:

- Served 1092 more meals
- Wasted Meals small decrease (70)
- No Shows up by #294, Walk-Ins small increase (80)

2023 %

- 17% no show
- 12.8% waste
- 12.5 % walk in

January 2023 From Our Kitchen meals

- Sold 50 meals
- Revenue \$250
- Split was half & half *From Our Kitchen* and Title III-C Congregate Meal Donations

Programming/Activities:

- Student nurses from SSU have been here every Wednesday this month. This is a very interactive group that has developed wonderful relationships with our seniors. The groups have been doing weekly blood pressure checks, assisting with the food bank (helping seniors carry their grocery bags to cars and vans) and writing up recipes using the ingredients from the weekly food bank.
- We had our Valentines Day party on the 12th. Seniors enjoyed dancing to live music. On Thursday, February 15th, the seniors celebrated Chinese New Year with a special lunch.
- We have a new class on Mondays; MAT Pilates for spine health. This class is being taught by Eme Mizioch.
- We are collaborating with the SSU Occupational Therapy Department again this year to offer a spring wellness series. Students and faculty will be offering six different workshops on Thursdays at 10:00am. The first lecture is on February 29th and is entitled "Occupation, Health and Aging".
- Special thanks to volunteer James Eric Rogers for hosting a Valentine craft on the 9th of February. Participants created cinnamon and applesauce heart ornaments. James will be leading a twice-a-month sing-along starting in March.

Memory Café:

The monthly cafés are going well. This month will feature a sing-along with local musician TMaxx. March is a trip to the Kitty Cat Café and Adoption Lounge in Peabody. In April, we will have a Sound Healing session.

VI. OTHER BUSINESS:

On February 7, 2024, LC sent a letter out to reviewers expressing her support for the North Shore Community Development Coalition for funding from the HUD FY 2022 Section 202 Supportive Housing for the Elderly Program.

VII. NEXT BOARD MEETING: Wednesday, March 20, 2024

VIII. VOTE TO ADJOURN

There being no further business to come before the Council on Aging Board this evening, JR moved to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by PS. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion was carried unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at **6:30 p.m.**

Respectfully Submitted,

Joanne M. Roomey
Board Clerk

Know Your Rights under the Open Meeting Law M.G.L. Chapter 30A ss. 18-25 and City Ordinance
Sections 2-2028 through 2-2033.