

Northampton Council on Aging Meeting
Thursday, October 14th, 2021, 3:30 pm, Due to the Covid-19 emergency,
this meeting was conducted via Zoom Video Conferencing

COA Minutes

Call to Order: Cynthia Langley called the meeting to order @ 3:32 pm

Present: Cynthia Langley, Jeanne Henry Hoose, Marie Westburg, Janet Yurko, Laura Scott, Aurea Domenech, Michael Ford, Ben Capistrant, Carolyn Sandel & Anne “Val” Romano

Excused: Bob Dionne, Gerriann Butler

Cindy Langley welcomed new member Carolyn Sandel

Public Session: Theresa Soper attended the meeting. She expressed her desire to learn more about the council and possibly become a member in the future

Review and Approval of Minutes: A motion was made to accept the September minutes by Michael Ford and 2nd by Val Romano. The minutes were approved by the Council.

Announcements: Jeanne Henry Hoose said they have posted information in a few galleries as well as the Chronicle to find 12 artists for the upcoming year. The closing date for applying is in January. Cindy explained to those that might not know that the artwork exhibited at the Senior Center is solely by older adults.

Director’s Report: Marie explained that we have received very positive feedback on the renovations to the Senior Center. Patrons have mentioned repeatedly that the changes are warm & welcoming and the counter more accessible. There’s no word yet on the date for the flooring to be completed. We have hired the third staff assistant to complete the team. Amber Grady will start on October 25th. Marie has put in her request for Capital Improvements (FY’23-’27). Upgrades include painting the remainder of the rooms. Highland Valley Elder Services has awarded us a grant to be used for free transportation/fares to qualifying patrons. Also, HVES awarded us a grant for tech upgrades needed to establish virtual senior center programming. These upgrades will

allow us to reach homebound older adults who might not be able to join us in person for every class or are wanting a more structured approach to socialization online. Other senior centers have joined in a regional partnership to share recordings and other programmatic resources . The Friends group has raised \$11000 towards purchasing new age friendly furniture. Upcoming events include an online gift basket auction and the Holiday Pie fundraiser. Both will be advertised in the Daily Hampshire Gazette in hopes that the general public will purchase items. . A shredding event, cancelled for November, will try to be rescheduled in the spring. Building rentals are starting up slowly. The city's Central Services Department continues to be short staffed. The Winter Farmers Market will start on Nov 20 from 8 am - 4 pm.

Assistant Director's Report: Janet is confident that we have a strong support staff in place. The volunteers are being placed where their skills can best be used. The ambassador roles have so far been filled with 8 volunteers. They have been learning how to use our iPads and MyActiveCenter.com site so they will be able to answer questions. The Bistro volunteers have already been at work during our lunches. They are working out really well. The Coffee Shop is still a work in progress. The POS system has not yet been installed and a printer is on order. In the interim, coffee and tea are available in the Bistro to patrons. A new volunteer is being trained to help with social service calls and support for Michele, the Senior Center's social worker. We are continuing to establish and expand the tech loan and training program. The Youth Works program, through Community Action of Pioneer Valley, has young people who are interning in Hampshire & Franklin county, who are willing to help us. Hampshire county would offer 2 hours (3x per week) in person. Franklin county will set up a hotline for patrons offering 2 hrs (2x per week). Jeanne Henry Hoose asked if you have to be a member for tech help. Tech loans are only available to Northampton residents but out of town members may also utilize the tech help. Marie reported that it would make sense to allow our regional partners to participate if there is room, and we will assess this overtime. We are holding in person renewal appointments to help educate patrons about our safety protocols as well as on the many offerings available through MyActiveCenter.com. So far we have held over 600 membership renewal meetings. Marie stated that there are assessments by parenting agencies such as The Executive Office of Elder Affairs to determine what is needed for funding to bring support to all senior centers who want to establish tech loan and training programs. Currently there is a grassroots effort to make it happen. If the internet becomes a utility here in Northampton, it would be hugely beneficial to our older adults. Until that time, we need to continue to help them. As part of Marie's vision since beginning as Director she reported that she is moving forward with increasing financial aid options as part of her efforts to make the center more accessible and more true to its mission as a non-profit rather than fee-based. The center is asking for more money from the gift account to help fund this financial aid program to make it accessible to people who are under the 250% of poverty guidelines .

Old Business: Cindy Langley spoke about the Pioneer Valley Age Friendly Action Plan. Approval is needed by the Mayor, then reworked with any changes before going to AARP.

New Business: Many of the council members mentioned all the good news shared during today's meeting. There was a discussion about November's meeting date as it would fall on Veteran's Day. It was decided to

hold the meeting one day earlier.

Next Meeting: November 10th, 2021, 3:30 pm, Northampton Senior Center (via Zoom)

Adjournment : Motion to adjourn was made by Anne “Val” Romano, 2nd by Ben Capistrant

Meeting adjourned @ 4:08 pm