



Council on Aging

September 12, 2013 – 9:00 AM - **Minutes**
181 Hillman Street, Building 9

****View Agenda****

Board Members Present:

Bruce Duarte, Chair
Patricia Costa, Vice-Chair
Virginia Morrison, Secretary
Esperanza Alejandro-Berube
Inez Mello
Stanley Ociesa
Jane Stott
Joan Swain
Mary Sullivan
James Sylvia

Also Present:

Debra Lee, COA Director
Pamela Amaral-Lema, COA Administrative Specialist
Jordan Duarte, Downtown Center Coordinator
Lidia Rodrigues, Hazelwood Coordinator

Excused:

Cynthia Wallquist, Director of Community Services

The meeting was called to order at 9:02 AM by the Chairman, Bruce Duarte

Secretary's Report

Mr. Duarte welcomed Mr. Ociesa back after a brief health condition, and stated he appreciates everything Mr. Ociesa does for this board and for the seniors of New Bedford. Mr. Ociesa received a warm welcome, applause, and well wishes.

Old Business

Mr. Duarte asked for all of the senior center coordinators to be in attendance for the board meeting. Ms. Lee informed the board that only two of the coordinators were in attendance due to the fact that Ms. Foley had her open house on this date, and Ms. Main was unable to leave her center because of the activities going on. Ms. Amaral-Lema introduced Ms. Duarte as an energetic, enthusiastic, caring, and welcoming addition to the Downtown senior center and to the COA. The board asked her to describe what she has planned for the Downtown senior center, and Ms. Duarte explained her goals. She wants to attract the seniors who live in the New Bedford Hotel to come in and join some of the new and exciting programs she has added to the center. Ms. Duarte has added a knitting group and a trivia group. She would like to reach out to the Regency high rise which is diagonally located to the NB Hotel since the COA is now offering free transportation for seniors to go to any senior center in New Bedford. Ms. Duarte is thoroughly enjoying her new position, and reaching out to seniors and finding out what activities they really want to see added to the center. She also stated there are 105 seniors in the NB Hotel, and that is focus is encouraging seniors to out of their apartments to socialize and enjoy themselves. Mr. Duarte stated that if there are 105 seniors in the NB Hotel and only six or so seniors attend on a daily basis, and we should work together to get them into the center by doing outreach work. The board welcomed Ms. Duarte to the COA, and asked her to reach seniors who use to attend, and see if they are interested in attending again. The board welcomed Ms. Duarte and asked her to keep up the good work. Ms. Rodrigues, Hazelwood coordinator, stated she had over 100 seniors attend her open house on Tuesday, September 10th, and it was a huge success. The Oaks provided the meal, and Victor Fonseca and R-Jay were the entertainment. Ms. Rodrigues is bringing new activities such as: strength and conditioning, arts and crafts,

yoga, line dancing to improve physical and mental health. Mr. Duarte stated there is a large Spanish population in the south end of New Bedford and trying to reach out to them with programs they will enjoy. Ms. Lee stated there is a new employee who will be filling in on Mondays at Hazelwood with board games, bingo, and dominoes called Marathon Monday. Also, the new employee is fluent in Spanish which will be a fantastic addition. Lunch is served every Wednesday and Friday at Hazelwood provided by Coastline Elderly Services. The board thanked both coordinators on the wonderful job they are doing, and to try engaging more seniors to participate in programs.

Boston Medical Transportation:

Boston SRTA Medical Transportation has begun with SRTA providing the service out of New Bedford every Tuesday with the pickup location from 181 Hillman St. parking lot. There have been two seniors, who have used the service, and one of the seniors needed to go to a different hospital in Boston, and the COA called SRTA and they were willing to bring the senior to the hospital even though that hospital was not listed. The SRTA service offers transportation to over ten Boston hospitals for a price of \$25. Ms. Lee stated SRTA is committed for a year. The board stated the COA should advertise the bus transportation to Boston at the different doctor offices in the local area to get more awareness.

Senior Center Hours:

Mr. Duarte restated the new hours for the senior centers are:

Buttonwood Senior Center -Monday-Fridays 9AM-5PM

Brooklawn Senior Center- Mon, Thurs, and Friday 9AM-3PM, and Tues. and Wed. 9AM-4PM

Hazelwood Senior Center- Mon, Tues, and Thurs. 9AM-3PM, and Wed, and Thurs. 9AM-4PM

Ashley Senior Center- Monday-Friday 10AM-4PM

Downtown Senior Center- Monday-Friday 9AM-3PM

Senior Support Center located on 181 Hillman St. should be ready by late October. There will be activities such as: support groups, cake decorating classes, woodworking classes, and other programs to attract seniors to the new center.

A motion to approve the minutes for September 12th was made by Mr. Sylvia, and seconded by Ms. Mello. The motion was unanimously approved.

Chairman's Report- Mr. Duarte

Mr. Duarte stated he received an email from Ms. Wallquist stating she will try to make the board meeting. Mr. Duarte and the board said things have been running smoother with Ms. Wallquist and Ms. Lee's constant interaction with the board by informing them of the weekly ongoing of the COA. Mr. Duarte said he would like more outreach to the Spanish population by trying to incorporate activities of interest to them. Ms. Lee stated that the new coordinator who will be filling in at Hazelwood the days Lidia is off is fluent in Spanish which will help to attract Spanish seniors to the center. Mr. Duarte also reminded the COA staff and the board about Esperanza Alejandro-Berube who is a board member is always a resource and an asset if the COA needs any assistance in trying to reach out to Spanish seniors. Mr. Duarte asked if the COA has heard anything from the UMASS students, and Ms. Lee stated the new school year has just started so they should be hearing something soon. Mr. Duarte asked about Ms. Mello's Friends of the Elderly and if they could use the room at Buttonwood to start a little shop up. Mr. Duarte restated that there should be more outreach to increase the amount of seniors using the SRTA transportation. Mr. Duarte said he has noticed the senior support center has been making progress, and the workers have broken through Ms. Lee's office.

A motion to approve the Chairman's report was made by Ms. Costa and seconded by Mr. Ocies. The motion was unanimously approved.

Directors Report – Ms. Lee

Ms. Lee said the COA has received the grant from Executive Offices of Elders Affairs for the amount of \$150,120 which is \$8 per elder and there are 18,765 elders in the city of New Bedford. Ms. Lee said there are more elders in the city, but they are using older figures from 2010. Ms. Lee is excited about the hard work and progress that the grant process took, and there were no questions or complaints from EOE. The grant pays for the extra hours at Buttonwood, and also the salaries of the clerk, receptionist, dispatcher, drivers, and substitute drivers. Mr. Duarte asked what pays for outreach and the EOE grants covers the outreach costs.

Ms. Lee also stated that she unofficially heard that the COA was approved for \$5000 from the Coastline Title III grant at the health fair that was held at Coastline Elderly Services. Ms. Lee said the past few years the COA has received \$3,000, and when Ms. Lee applied she asked for \$7,500, and received \$5,000 which is close to the half way mark. Also, Coastline stated that everyone received a cut from their grant reward, and the COA was the only one to receive an increase. George Smith from Coastline Elderly Services was the COA's greatest advocate, and was excited for all the new things Ms. Lee and the COA are doing, and wanted to grant Ms. Lee an increase in her first year as Director. The increase in the grant will help pay for the extra substitute driver to fill in on the extended hours of the senior center and free transportation to stay later in the afternoon hours.

Ms. Lee stated she was on a television show with the Mayor's Wife, Ann Partridge talking about the new extended hours at the different centers, and also the new hours have been printed in Senior Scope and Senior Scene in the Sunday's Standard Times newspaper. Also, nearby agencies and senior centers have been informed about the new extended hours at the senior centers to increase senior awareness of what is being offered in their community. Ms. Lee stated that Elaine Coelho is the COA new activities liaison, and her new duties are to reach out to the high rises in the city to help increase senior awareness of programs being provided.

Ms. Lee reported that the COA and Parks and Recreation are collaborating in a Walk with Ease program to increase physical activity in seniors by walking at Buttonwood Park and Fort Taber. The Walk with Ease program is funded by a grant provided by the Arthritis Foundation in the amount of \$4,000 which covers the cost of a physical therapist instructor, and a backpack kit which includes a handbook, and pedometer (tracks steps), and information to supply the knowledge of how beneficial walking is to one's health.

Ms. Lee stated she will be attending the quarterly COA Directors meeting at Coastline Elderly Services on September 25, 2013.

Ms. Lee said she met with Sheryl from ARAW and they are willing to give funds to provide with assistance to help elderly women who live alone. ARAW is going to give a discretionary fund to get gift cards from various local supermarkets to help women be able to get extra groceries to last the month.

Ms. Lee stated that she and Ms. Amaral-Lema met with Zachery Meunier, the muralist, to discuss ideas for the wall in the art room. Mr. Meunier stated thinks a view from the top of Union St. and Pleasant St. to make the room look wider. Mr. Meunier showed excitement about doing the art mural on the wall and probably the COA would have him contracted to teach art classes in the new space on Hillman St.

Ms. Lee told the board that she is a member of the MAP team for the Grinnell Mansion which helps place seniors and disabled individuals who are in need of assistance. Ms. Lee has made two referrals for seniors who are in need of housing.

Ms. Lee is excited about the wellness group moving over to Hillman Support Group. There are four seniors who attend the group on a weekly basis, and find it a comfort to have support from their peers.

Ms. Lee stated that she and Ms. Amaral-Lema have been meeting with the senior center coordinators every two

weeks so everyone can keep informed on the daily activities and on-goings at the centers.

Ms. Lee reported she is looking into different city owned property for a social day program. She has been in contact with Economic Development and Matthew Morrissey about the Phillips Ave. School for a potential site. Social Day is an unmet need in the city of New Bedford.

Ms. Lee informed the board about training at the Westport Council on Aging on October 7th from 12:30PM-3:30PM, and asked any board members they are more than welcome to attend the seminar.

Ms. Lee spoke about the Pat on the Back employee recognition program that helps boost the morale of the employees, but also improves the employee interaction by acknowledging the greatness of appreciation and working as a team unit.

Mr. Duarte asked Ms. Lee if she has the proper staff to run this agency now with the new employees and Ms. Lee stated that her staff is competent, and ready to serve the great seniors in the New Bedford area.

A motion to approve the Director's report was made by Mr. Ociesa and seconded by Ms. Swain. The motion was unanimously approved.

Correspondence

Ms. Lee received a correspondence from Ms. Costa from the board about the mural, and some different avenues Ms. Lee could take on approaching to find a muralist.

Mr. Duarte and the board members thanked Ms. Duarte and Lidia for their hard work and for also taking the time to inform the board of all of the activities going on at each of their centers.

The board members welcomed Ms. Ociesa back and stated how it is seeing back out in the community.

Ms. Mello told the board and the COA that she loves her new IPAD and how wonderful it is to have technology and all of the resources at your disposal.

Ms. Payton, the former Administrative Specialist, sent a thank you to the board members for their thoughtful gift for her retirement and for the years of working together, and collaborating to help the seniors in the community.

There was a motion to adjourn made by Ms. Swain and seconded by Ms. Alejandro-Berube.

Meeting adjourned at 10:25 AM

Respectfully submitted

Virginia Morrison, Secretary