



Council on Aging

November 14, 2013 – **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
Joan Swain
Jane Stott
Mary Sullivan

Also Present:

Debra Lee, COA Director
Cynthia Wallquist, Community Services Director
Pamela Amaral-Lema, COA Administrative Specialist

Excused:

James Sylvia

The meeting was called to order at 9:07 AM by the Chairman, Bruce Duarte

Secretary's Report

The advisory board members read over the minutes from October 17th meeting. There was only a minor correction to be made on a spelling of a board member's name.

A motion to accept the minutes from October 17, 2013 meeting was made by Mr. Ociesa and seconded by Ms. Sullivan. It was unanimously approved.

Mr. Duarte said he spoke with Ms. Lee regarding SRTA's Boston Transportation and she informed him about SRTA being dedicated to this project for a year. Hopefully, the Boston Transportation will pick up even more and continue longer than a year. Mr. Duarte asked Ms. Lee and Ms. Amaral-Lema about SRTA's outreach work pertaining to the Boston Transportation and Ms. Amaral-Lema stated she has been in contact with local human service and health agencies to inform them about this much needed medical transportation to Boston. Ms. Lee and Ms. Amaral-Lema also informed the board members that awareness about this transportation has been made to the Boston hospitals. Many physicians are aware and have been trying to schedule clients' appointments on Tuesdays. Ms. Lee also informed the board members about the possibility of SRTA adding another pickup location to New Bedford since the Fall River location has been underutilized. Ms. Duarte made a recommendation to Ms. Lee about being a guest on Phil Paleologos's radio show to inform seniors about the Boston transportation and new programming at the senior centers. .

Hillman St. Expansion is going really well. Mr. Duarte stated he likes the colors on the walls, and the mural in the art room once finished will be wonderful addition. The surroundings have improved and there is now a warm and welcoming ambiance. Mr. Duarte stated the hallway leading to the Council on Aging offices is cracked and a dangerous hazard for seniors walking to the COA, and Ms. Lee informed the board about repairs eventually being made to the hallway and repairs to the roof.

Mr. Duarte asked if the Buttonwood Senior Center hours have changed to the extended earlier hours versus the

later afternoon hours. Mr. Ociesa stated along with the other board members about the safety concerns for seniors with the winter weather and early night fall. Ms. Lee said they are contemplating the change in hours and that the COA staff is also concern about the safety concerns with the winter hour change. The seniors have stated they are looking forward to the breakfast program starting. Coastline Elderly Services is providing the breakfast meal for a \$1 donation (the meal includes steel oatmeal, fruit smoothie, fresh fruit, juice, and coffee). Brooklawn senior center is also looking into adding a breakfast program to their location since they have a Veteran's group and an active early morning group at their center.

Ms. Lee stated the new Hazelwood activities coordinator, Marisol Grant, is now working four days a week. Ms. Grant has found a Zumba instructor and the class should start sometime in early January 2014. Seniors are excited about this new exercise program that is currently unavailable at the other centers. Ms. Grant's new hours are Monday-Thursday, 9AM-3PM.

Mr. Ociesa asked about his suggestion from the October 17th meeting about the outreach to the Portuguese community in the north end of New Bedford. Ms. Lee said Ms. Foley is working on innovative ideas to bring in Portuguese patrons to the center. Ms. Lee spoke about the outreach work that has been made to the different high-rises and elder housing complexes in the city which has brought new participants to the centers. Ms. Lee stated Ms. Coelho has visited with Mannomet Place and Taber Mill which are located in the north end of New Bedford.

Chairman's Report- Mr. Duarte

Mr. Duarte stated he didn't have much in his report since things are going very well at the COA and he stated he is impressed with all that has been going on at Hillman St. Mr. Duarte stated the only thing that he is preoccupied with is the lack of participation from the Friends of the Elderly. The move forward has been stagnant. Ms. Alejandro-Berube stated she has tried to reach the UMASS students and the department head. Mr. Duarte and Ms. Mello stated that if it could work out with UMASS it would be a great collaboration. Mr. Duarte asked if there may be one more attempt to contact the head of Gerontology at UMASS Dartmouth to find out definitively one way or another if this will go into fruition.

Mr. Duarte stated the Boston transportation has been slow. Ms. Lee stated it is a narrow time frame and the lack of availability may defer individuals to use the service. Ms. Amaral-Lema stated she has contact from local agencies (Southcoast, Hawthorn Medical, Outlook VNA, and Veteran's transition home) to inform them about the service, and also a few of the Boston hospitals (Tufts Medical Center, Mass General, Mass Eye and Ear, and Boston Medical Center) have been notified about the services. Hopefully, the service will have increased participation.

A motion to accept the Chairman's Report was made by Mr. Ociesa and seconded by Ms. Mello. It was unanimously approved.

Director's Report- Ms. Lee

Ms. Lee stated she and the staff members are enjoying the new space at the Hillman St. Administrative offices. She has received positive feedback about the new space and the optimistic feel it has now for seniors coming in for services.

Ms. Lee stated she no longer has a Shine volunteer, and it has become extremely busy with Medicare open enrollment. Ms. Lee is the only Shine counselor at the Council on Aging. We can refer Spanish speaking individuals to the Immigration Assistance Center.

Ms. Lee stated mark your calendars for the second Friday in January. January 10th is the date for the Hillman Street Support Center open house. The open house will be held from 11AM-2PM.

Ms. Lee stated the artists will start painting the mural soon. They have projected the image onto the wall and will continue to work on it until the open house. The imagery on the wall will include the whaling history, and the textile mills in New Bedford. Since New Bedford is number one fishing port in the country, the mural will capture the historical aspects of the city.

Ms. Lee stated the Hillman St. expansion will be a support center. It will offer more supportive peer groups for widow/widowers, Alzheimer's support, cake decorating, wood working projects, art classes, yoga, and strength and conditioning, and computer classes. Ms. Lee stated there is a volunteer librarian who has been working on cataloging the books, and is really eager to help out at the support center.

Ms. Lee spoke about how the free transportation to the senior centers has gone over well. Seniors are excited and have been calling to make appointments for the free transportation. The coordinators along with Elaine Coelho have worked on getting the information out to the community and there has been an overwhelming positive response.

Ms. Lee said there will be a free Tai Chi class held at the Brooklawn senior center beginning in January of 2014. There are over 25 seniors signed up for this exercise/wellness program.

Ms. Lee said she is planning an annual New Bedford Council on Aging fundraiser to help pay for the electronic tracking system for the senior centers. Ms. Lee is hoping to have senior health organizations help sponsor the lunch, and the proceeds from the tickets would aide in the cost of the tracking system which is approximately \$14,000 for four senior centers. Ms. Lee said she would like a silent auction. Mr. Duarte said to invite politicians and state representatives. Mr. Duarte said it sounds like a good idea. The board members offered their assistance in helping get donations for the event. The tracking system will be easier for the seniors to sign up for events and transportation services and the tracking will aid in the reporting responsibilities. The tracking will also enhance our ability to have the information necessary to apply for grants more readily accessible and user friendly.

Ms. Lee spoke about the need for the Social Day Program. The social day requirements include 50 square feet per senior in attendance. Ms. Lee is looking into the possibility to house a social day program at the Hillman St. location.

A motion to accept the Director's report was made by Ms. Costa and seconded by Ms. Swain. It was unanimously approved.

Director of Community Services Report- Cynthia Wallquist

Mr. Duarte stated his appreciation to Ms. Wallquist regarding her open communication with the board members.

Ms. Wallquist spoke about her snow removal project that has 60 senior and/or disabled individuals enrolled. There are 30 enrollees being paid for by the Council on Aging, and the other 30 enrollees are paid by the Disabilities Commission. The deadline for the snow removal application is November 15th. The requirement for snow assistance removal is a physician's note stating the individual has a physical disability and is unable to remove snow. The other requirement is one has to be a home owner unless the lease specifically states it is the tenants obligation for snow removal. If there are any excess funds by the end of winter they will be used to help pay for cosmetic home repairs for seniors or disabled individuals. PAACA is the snow removal company. PAACA provides early morning and weekend service. There is a first priority status for individuals who need medical assistance or home care assistance with the snow removal.

Ms. Wallquist spoke about the "Fresh Start" committee. The "Fresh Start" committee helps senior/disabled

individuals with de cluttering concerns. The committee contains a licensed social worker, and other human service workers to help individuals with the complex issue of hoarding. Ms. Wallquist spoke about a grant she is applying for that will help aide the “Fresh Start” objectives and aide.

Ms. Wallquist discussed the new coordinator, Marisol Grant, who has been filling in at the Hazelwood senior center while the previous coordinator is out on leave. Ms. Grant is working four days a week. There is a new exercise program, and computer classes at Hazelwood senior center. Starting in January 2014, there will be a hot lunch for the Monday exercise and computer group at Hazelwood. Also, a cold lunch will be offered on Tuesday for the two exercise groups that partake in the classes.

Mr. Duarte stated he is very pleased with the way things are going with the assistance of Ms. Wallquist, Ms. Lee, Ms. Amaral-Lema and the rest of the Council on Aging staff.

A motion to accept the Director of Community Services report was made by Mr. Ociesa and seconded by Ms. Mello. It was unanimously approved.

Correspondence

Ms. Lee spoke about the New Bedford Ballet Company donating 100 tickets for seniors to attend “**The Nutcracker**” on December 11th.

The next Council on Aging Advisory Board meeting will be held on Thursday, January 9th, 2014.

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Mr. Ociesa and seconded by Ms. Costa. It was unanimously approved.