



Council on Aging

January 9, 2014 – 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
Joan Swain
Jane Stott
Mary Sullivan
James Sylvia

Also Present:

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

Excused:

Stanley Ociesca

The meeting was called to order at 9:04 AM by the Chairman, Bruce Duarte

Secretary's Report

Mr. Duarte opened the meeting with a roll call of board members in attendance. Mr. Ociesca was unable to attend the meeting. Mr. Duarte asked the board members to review the minutes from the advisory board meeting held on November 14, 2014. There were no objections or questions to the minutes.

A motion to accept the minutes from November 14, 2013 meeting was made by Ms. Swain and seconded by Mr. Sylvia. It was unanimously approved.

Old Business

Mr. Duarte asked Ms. Lee about the status of the ARAW grant she applied for in October. Ms. Lee stated she was approved for a discretionary fund of \$2,000 to assist elderly women with gift cards to Market Basket for grocery aide. The gift cards will be given in \$50 increments as a one-time aide for elderly women. A.R.A.W stands for The Association for the Relief of Aged Women. Ms. Lee explained about the need of food assistance from seniors when she stated that she receives call from seniors saying they do not enough food to make it until the month.

Mr. Duarte asked about the grand opening of Hillman St. Senior Support Center, and Ms. Lee stated it will be held on Thursday, February 13th from 11AM-2PM. Ms. Lee stated the invitations were in each of the board members' folders. Ms. Lee stated she has been in contact with the Mayor's office and they have been informed about the upcoming grand opening. Ms. Lee also said she is going to be a guest on Phil Paleologos's show to discuss the grand opening and speak about the different activities/programming at the senior centers. Ms. Lee also said Ann Partridge has asked Ms. Lee if she would be a guest on her show again to discuss programming and concerns of seniors.

Mr. Duarte spoke about the positive feedback he received from Ms. Connelly from the Mayor's Office regarding the time change at Buttonwood Senior Center. The earlier hours of 7:30AM-3:30PM has better suited the needs of the seniors especially since the new breakfast program offered at the senior center has received an

overwhelming affirmative response. Mr. Duarte stated there were 23 seniors for the first day of the breakfast program which was a great turnout. Ms. Lee stated Brooklawn Senior Center offers their breakfast program on a eat it there or take it to-go basis. The Veteran's Group that meets daily at Brooklawn Senior Center usually takes their breakfast home. Mr. Duarte asked if someone needs a ride to one of the senior centers to eat breakfast does the Council on Aging provide the transportation service. Ms. Lee answered by saying the free transportation service will pick seniors at their home and bring them to the centers for breakfast or any other programming they would like to participate in and then the van service will bring the seniors back home. Ms. Lee stated a 48 hour notice is much appreciated, but if someone calls last minute the dispatchers will try to fit them into the schedule. Mr. Duarte stated Coastline Elderly Service has rented out the kitchen space at Boa Vista to prepare the breakfast meals for the various meal sites. Ms. Mello said she hopes seniors will come in to eat breakfast and afterwards stay for an activity at the senior center.

Ms. Lee stated she had a dance instructor view the space at Hillman St. to see if there was an opportunity to host a special needs line dancing class at the new support center. The dance instructor said the space was too small, and Ms. Amaral-Lema and Ms. Lee recommended the space at Buttonwood Senior Center. There is a new special needs line dancing class at Buttonwood Senior Center on Tuesdays. The first class had over 22 participants.

Mr. Duarte spoke about the new coordinator at the Hazelwood Senior Center, Marisol Grant. Marisol Grant is now working five days a week until the status of the employee on leave is known. Ms. Grant has brought a Zumba class, and she also has reconnected with a potential lead for a computer instructor. Now there are two new programs added at Hazelwood Senior Center's Monday schedule. Ms. Lee also stated there may be a new conversational Spanish class. Mr. Sylvia asked if there is any other location for computer classes, and Ms. Lee stated there will be a computer lab added to the Hillman St. Support Center and computer classes are also taking place at Hazelwood. Mr. Duarte requested Marisol Grant's presence at the next board meeting on February 13, 2014 to discuss the programming, future goals and transition at Hazelwood Senior Center. Ms. Mello stated she stopped in Downtown Senior Center and said it is a shame that seniors aren't utilizing that center, as Ms. Duarte, the activities director, has much enthusiasm and positivity exudes the center. Ms. Lee stated there has been a decline in participation due to the cold temperature in the Downtown Senior Center.

Chairman's Report- Mr. Duarte

Mr. Duarte stated the change in hours for Buttonwood Senior Center is going well and the breakfast program has picked up stamina. Mr. Duarte is optimistic about the earlier hours and breakfast program that will attract seniors to participate in the center.

Mr. Duarte spoke about the Downtown Senior Center and how it is not attracting seniors like the COA and board members hoped it would. Seniors have complained about the cold temperatures in the Downtown Senior Center and this has caused a decline in attendance numbers. Mr. Duarte stated the heating in the Downtown Senior Center is antiquated, and does relate with their concerns about the colder temperatures. Mr. Duarte explained how there are many nearby high rises in the vicinity of the New Bedford Hotel and that he is surprised that there are not many seniors utilizing the center. Ms. Mello stated maybe with the better weather coming soon there may be an increase of participation at the Downtown Senior Center. Mr. Sylvia spoke about a possible change in location for the Downtown Senior Center. He spoke about the fact that at one time the Downtown Senior Center was bustling and was the hub for many seniors in the Downtown area. He also stated maybe a change in location where the center is not located in a community room of a high rise may attract outsiders to participate. Another issue brought about the Downtown Senior Center is the lack of parking.

Mr. Duarte spoke about changes made within the Council on Aging in the past and that he wants to be notified and he in turn will notify the board members. The board members want to be made aware of major concerns or changes going on. Mr. Duarte has asked for this new protocol to be made to allow the board members to have better awareness and to be involved in the daily operations at the Council on Aging. Mr. Duarte spoke about how smoothly and well things are running since Ms. Lee has been at the helm of the Council on Aging.

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

Director's Report- Ms. Lee

Ms. Lee stated she will be a guest on Phil Paleologos's show on WBSM. Ms. Lee is going to speak about the new senior center hours and programming, and the upcoming grand opening of the Hillman St. Senior Support Center.

Ms. Lee spoke about her meeting with Cecil Hickman, VFW Post Service Officer, about assisting veterans with support groups geared towards PTSD, and family support groups. Ms. Lee is excited about the future partnership to help enable more therapeutic and beneficial outlets for veterans.

Ms. Lee stated she and Ms. Amaral-Lema are taking a four day bereavement training class. The knowledge and training will help assist Ms. Lee and Ms. Amaral-Lema to lead groups in bereavement services. The training is being offered from YWCA. Ms. Lee stated there is a need for seniors to reinvent themselves since many seniors have lost their spouses and loved ones. Many seniors feel alone and isolated due to loneliness and limited connection to the community.

Ms. Lee informed the board members about the Community Development Block Grant meeting her and Ms. Amaral-Lema attended at Carney Academy on January 8th. The Community Development Block Grant helps fund the salaries of most of the senior center staffing and activities liaison. Ms. Lee stated a volunteer from Buttonwood Senior Center was also in attendance and spoke about the importance and benefits of being a volunteer.

Mr. Duarte stated Ms. Wallquist is valuable in regards to finding grants to apply for to help fund these services.

Ms. Mello asked the other board members if they would like to tour other nearby Councils on Aging to view their facilities since they are housed in one location. The date was planned for Thursday, January 23rd.

Ms. Lee spoke about how successful the annual holiday party held at Fort Taber Recreation Center was with over 140 seniors in attendance. Even though the weather conditions were poor that day there was still a great turnout.

Ms. Lee spoke about the client from the Downtown Senior Center who threatened the then Downtown Activities Coordinator in January 2013. The court order stated the client is able to attend the community room located in the New Bedford Hotel, but Ms. Lee questioned since the Council on Aging rents the space from the Housing Authority what follow up measures should there be in reacquainting to the center. Mr. Sylvia stated about being on a six month probationary period where if the client had another outburst or altercation she would have to follow up with the Council on Aging administrative staff and Council on Aging advisory board members to discuss future on goings within the senior center.

Ms. Lee stated Ms. Amaral-Lema did an exceptional job overlooking things while Ms. Lee was on vacation for two weeks in December.

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

Director of Community Services Report- Cynthia Wallquist

Ms. Wallquist spoke about the first snow storm in the beginning of January and how the Clear Path program

shoveled out 56 houses. To apply for assistance for next year seniors will have to fill in the application this summer.

Ms. Wallquist talked about the luncheon that was held on December 11th for the Cranston RSVP seniors who donated the dolls for various human service and health agencies in the City of New Bedford. The doll presentation was wonderful and things went very well. The Cranston seniors are willing to make more dolls if the supplies are paid for.

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

Correspondence

Mr. Duarte and the board members asked for Ms. Grant's presence at the next advisory board meeting that will be held on Thursday, February 13th at 9AM.

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